

CHAPTER II

ETHNOGRAPY OF NONG TAO VILLAGE



This chapter will provide ethnographical data of Nong Tao village collected¹ between October 2004 - February 2005. Ethnographical data includes geography, demography, history, economy, village structure, religion, language, and education.

2.1 Geography

Mae Wang district is located in the southern part of Chiang Mai province, approximately 37 kilometers from the city. 80 per cent of its land is mountainous, covered with forests. It is composed of 5 sub-districts² and 57 villages.

Nong Tao village is situated in Mae Win sub-district of Mae Wang district. The village is 1,100-1,200 meters above sea level, and around 38 kilometers from a Mae Win sub-district administration organization. Mae Win sub-district consists of 49 communities in 19 villages: 13 Karen villages, 4 Northern Thai villages, and 2 Hmong villages. The village area is about 8000 rai (1400 hectares) in which 1500 rai (20 percent) is residential area and 6500 rai (80 percent) is forest area. About one third is under private landholdings, one third under the clan system and one third is communal.³

Using local transport (pickup trucks, public vans, or motorcycles), the 130 km trip from Chiang Mai city to Nong Tao village takes about two hours. The road grows steeper and rougher from Ban Kard, 42 kilometers away from the village.⁴ A road of 150 meters was paved with asphalt in 2004, but the village has mostly dirt roads.

¹ Translators were required for field research. They are a late 20s male Japanese, a late 20s female Thai from Phrae, a mid-30s male Karen from Chaing Dao, and a mid-20s female Karen from Mae Hong Son.

² Ban Kard, Don Pao, Tung Ruang Tong, Tung Pi, and Mae Win sub-district

³ Pati Joni Odochao, "We Believe in the Community" from the Regional Community Forestry Training Center for Asia and the Pacific E-letter, November 2, 2001, p.9.

⁴ In 1977 the paved road was constructed.

Figure 2.1.1: Elephant Trekking in Mae Win

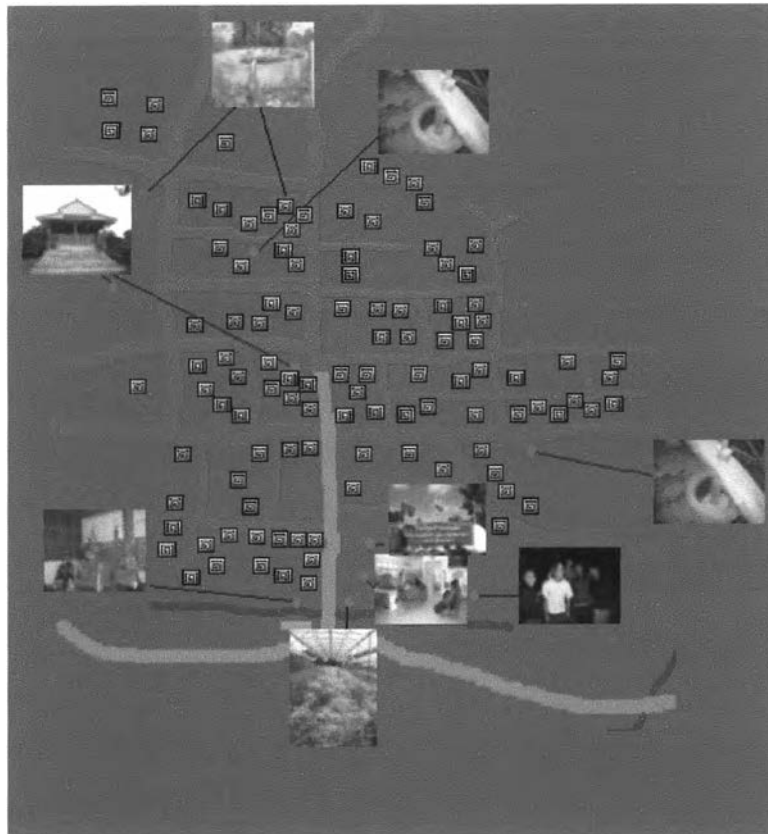


Source: Author's photograph












Figure 2.1.3: Map of Nong Tao Village

Not scaled

MAP OF NONG TAO



LEGEND

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
|  TEMPLE |  HEALTH CARE CENTER |  RESERVOIR |
|  CHURCH |  YOUTH CENTER |  SIL O |
|  KING'S ROYAL PROJECT |  PRIMARY SCHOOL
(BAAN NONG TAO SCHOOL) | |
|  PAVED ROAD |  DIRT ROAD |  RIVER |

Source: Author's drawing

6500 rai⁵ of the forest area is divided up into 3 sections:

1. Protected forest (4000 rai)

The Government prohibits deforesting and hunting in the protected forest. This area is the origin of headwaters and has many herbs and natural medicines.

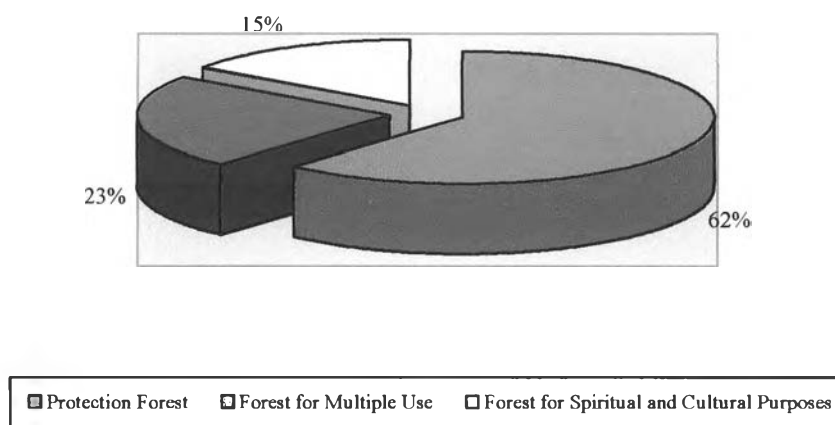
2. Forest for multiple use (1500 rai)

The locals are allowed to fell trees and hunt in a certain restricted area for domestic use or sell non-timber products. According to community law, however, commercial use of timber is banned. In addition, those people who fell trees have an obligation to restore the forest subsequent to felling trees.

3. Forest for spiritual and cultural purposes (1000 rai)

This section is used for traditional cultural and spiritual beliefs, such as burial grounds and hallowed forest. It is forbidden to deforest this sanctified area, and thus wild animals and natural resources are conserved.

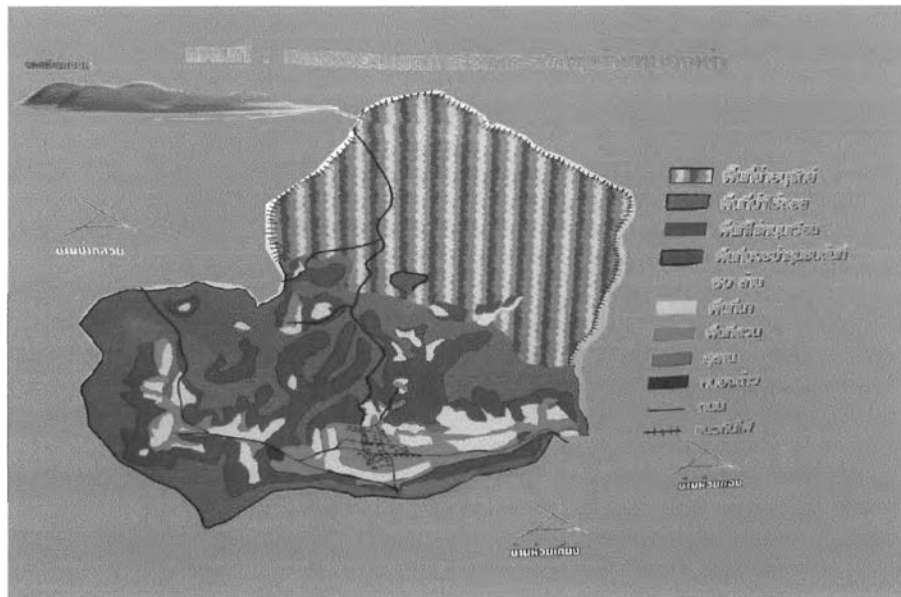
Figure 2.1.4: Forest Types and Its Proportion



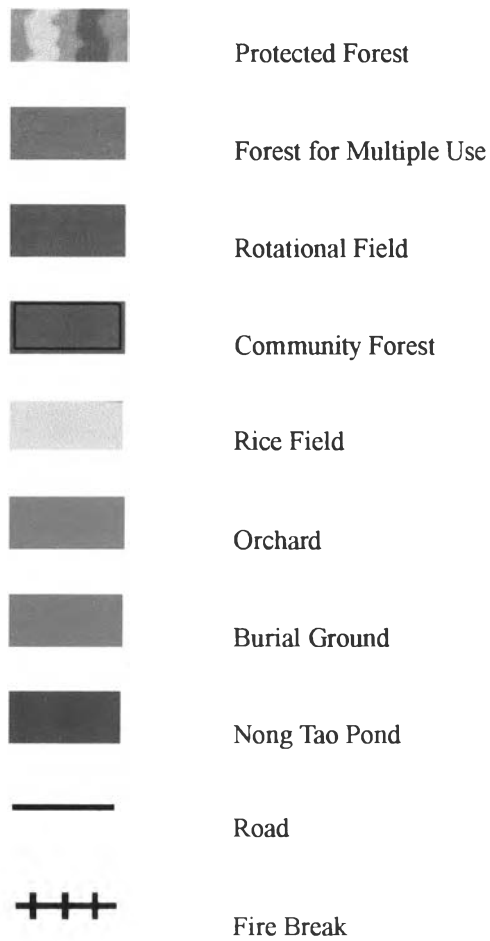
Source: Author's chart

⁵ 1 rai is equivalent to 1,600 square meters.

Figure 2.1.5: Map of Forest Types in Nong Tao



Source: Drawn by Pati Joni, a former village leader in Nong Tao



Community forestry was established as the Public Welfare Department implemented a policy on opium poppy replacement by cash crops in 1972, and when the Royal Highland Development Projects was initiated in the watershed area in 1981.⁶

The aim of rotational fields is the dynamic management of the field and the ecology subject to a form of agriculture that will optimize both ecology and productivity. Farmers cultivate diversified crops,⁷ combined with livestock, to maintain the original ecology, since each one of them needs diverse kinds of minerals and natural resources to develop. Rotational fields allow the ecosystem to recuperate from damage by agriculture.⁸

⁶ Pati Joni Odochao, "We Believe in the Community" from the Regional Community Forestry Training Center for Asia and the Pacific E-letter, November 2, 2001, p.9.

"Community forestry in Thailand originates from two main roots. First, indigenous forest management has a long history in inherently diverse ethnic cultures. Most of them have been practiced for generations without any formal written rules and regulations, unnoticed and unrecognized by the state and the Thai public until a decade ago. . . . The second root of Thai community forestry was introduced by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to Kasetsart University as a social forestry curriculum in 1984, and then was promoted by the state in the 1985 Thailand National Forestry Policy." The International Network of Forests and Communities (INFC), op. cit.

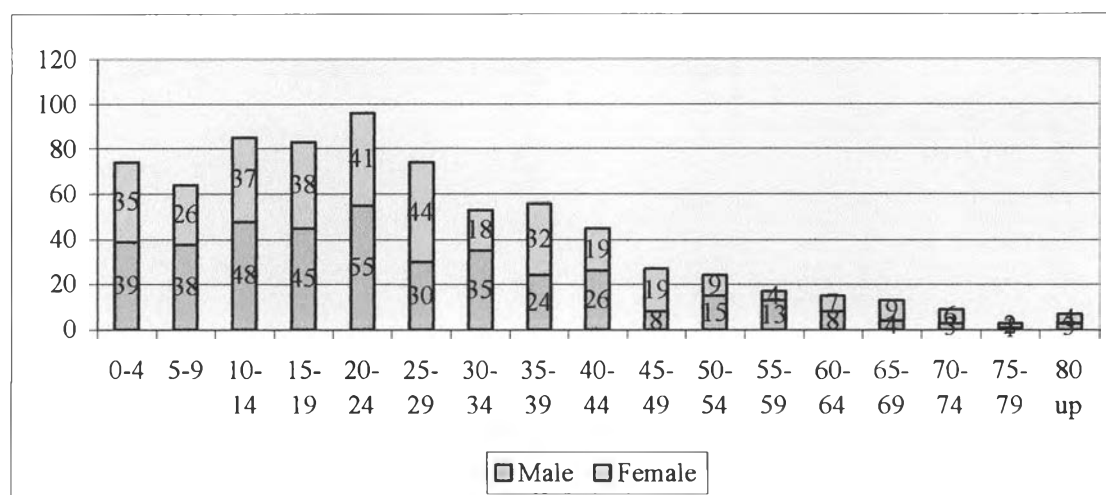
⁷ According to a villager, 30 varieties of sub-crops are nourished in Nong Tao: corn, chilies, pumpkins, lettuce, baby carrots, zucchinis, sugarcane, guavas, bananas to name a few.

⁸ Cf. *Rai Mun Wian Chabab Yor* (Slash-and-Burn Agricultural System: Status and Change), A booklet presented at the Seminar on Rotational Fields by the Faculty of Sociology, Chiang Mai University, October 15-16, 2004.

2.2 Demography

The entire population of Mae Win sub-district is 10,689 including 5,427 men, and 5,262 women.⁹ Nong Tao village has a population of 745: 395 men, 350 women.¹⁰ The number of households in Mae Win sub-district is 2,167, and in Nong Tao village it is 134. Population density is 311 people per square kilometer.¹¹

Figure 2.2.1: Population of Nong Tao Village



Source: Nong Tao Health Care Center

The large number of youth entering their reproductive years suggests there will be increased pressures on the land in the future.

In 2001, Nong Tao was inhabited by 569 people (297 male, 272 female).¹² It had 31 percent growth over four years. This is partly due to their marriage patterns.¹³

⁹ *Banyaai Sarup lae Kohmun Samkan Ampur Maewang Changwat Chiangmai (Information on Mae Wang District, Chiang Mai Province)*, from Mae Wang district office, September 30, 2004, p. 6. (in Thai).

¹⁰ From Nong Tao health center, as of 2005.

¹¹ Population density is calculated by population of 745 divided by the residential area of 2.4 square kilometers (of the overall area 12.8 square kilometers).

¹² "Raigan Garn Fuk Park Patibat Gan Sangkom Songkro 2" (Report of Social Welfare Workshop 2) A paper submitted to the Faculty of Social Welfare, Thammasart University, 2001, p.7. (in Thai).

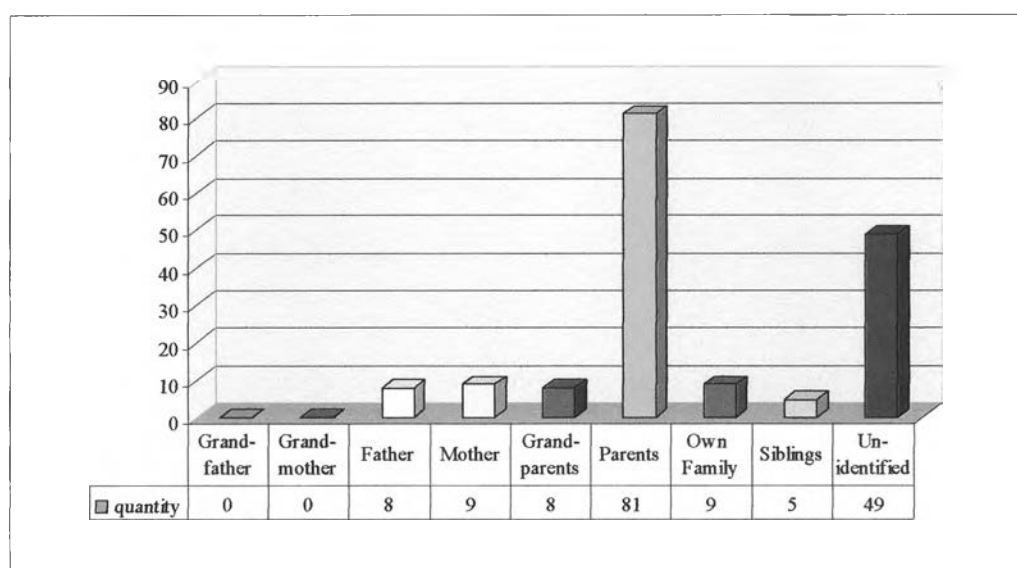
¹³ Kwanchewan Buadaeng (2001:104) reports that in the Sgaw Karen village of Mae Chaem district, Chiang Mai province during 1998-1999, of 13 wedding ceremonies only 2 were between brides and grooms from the same village. Out of 11 ceremonies, 6 were from neighboring villages and 5 were from villages in different districts. "Karen hamlets and even large villages are not demographically independent. Karen marriages are up to 30 percent village exogamous, the ideal pattern being that the

They typically wed a native from another Karen village. Whether or not they move to Nong Tao, however, is a matter of personal choice.

Thus there is distribution of relatives around each village, binding villages to one another in a far-reaching web of relationships. Land deficiency will be critical with a swell in population in the near future, since no further land is permitted to be cultivated in Nong Tao.¹⁴ By virtue of such relationships, an individual who has limited access to land in his or her own village may claim access to land through relatives in several other villages.¹⁵

Approximately 15 percent among a total population of 745, or 106 people, are above 15 years of age and unmarried. 29 of the 106 members live outside the village.¹⁶

Figure 2.2.2: Family Structure: with Whom Individuals Live



Source: Author

groom moves to the house of his bride's father; eventually he may establish a new household within the bride's father's village." Peter Kunstadter, 1979, op. cit., p.137.

¹⁴ "Today the limits of expansion and new settlement have been reached in many places. No new large patches of unoccupied land are available . . . As a result of very high rates of Karen population growth, the demographic balance has shifted today so that the Karens are now a majority in hills where there were only Lua' 120 years ago." Peter Kunstadter, "Socio-cultural Change among Upland Peoples of Thailand: Lua' and Karen – two Modes of Adaptation" in *Proceedings of the VIIth International Congress of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences, 1968, Tokyo and Kyoto, Vol. II, Ethnology*, (Tokyo: Science Council of Japan), p.9. For further details, refer to chapter 2.1.4. Karen remain majority still today.

¹⁵ Peter Kunstadter, 1979, op.cit., p.138.

¹⁶ 24 of 106 are employed in Chiang Mai and 5 are doing a bachelor's degree, as of January 19, 2005.

The Karens have a nuclear family as a basic unit of society, and the village is still a matrilineal, kin-related residential area. When one gets married, his or her family will establish household in the same compound as his or her parents' house, so that they can still support each other.¹⁷

An average number of family members is around 4-5 people. Men and women both work at subsistence agriculture, but men do wage labor, while women do not. Women raise the children and work in the fields. Moreover, women control the distribution of money and food. That children use a mother's family name implies that they have a matrilineal kinship system.

Karen marriage is traditionally monogamous and life-long. Nowadays, however, a few couples have divorced. Karen teach children to respect the elders and so children believe they should care for their parents when they grow older.

2.3 History

There are three narratives explaining the root of Nong Tao (turtle pond): first, Nong Tao is situated about 800 meters away from the pond in the south, whose shape resembles a turtle, second, the pond is inhabited by a number of turtles, and accordingly Nong Tao was named after it, and third, once upon a time, Karens engaged in warfare with another tribe, and the God of Karen tumbled down to the ground. The area (not just the pond) has since been designated as Nong Tao, which in Karen signifies 'fall'.

Figure 2.3.1: Nong Tao Pond



Source: Author's photograph

¹⁷ In contrast to Kunstader, my research found that a new couple may move to the compound of either the bride or groom's parents. See footnote 56.

As stated by elders, 700 years ago the Lua had lived in the vicinity of Nong Tao,¹⁸ until they moved south 300 years ago and the Karen moved in. There were numerous Lua temples, vessels, and debris scattered about. Also an irrigation canal has existed for 500 years. The story continues that the Lua disregard for their traditional beliefs caused a natural disaster, which resulted in the Lua's death and removal from the area. The piles of rocks that cover Nong Tao are regarded by Karen villagers as proof of the legendary disaster.

Nong Tao village was made up of 8 assemblages that migrated in 1969: 1. local people; 2. people from Nong Yen and Nong Bon villages in Mae Wang district, Chiang Mai province (the poorest cluster); 3. people from Mae Jam district, Chiang Mai province (who lived on the other side of Inthanon Mountain); 4. people from Sa Merng district, Chiang Mai province (merchants); 5. people from Yuak village, Wiang Sa district, Nan province; 6. people from Khun Yuam district, Mae Hong Sorn province (merchants from another province, and who now take an important role in Nong Tao village); 7. people from Khun Puay village, Mae Wang district, Chiang Mai province; and 8. people from Sa Pok village, Mae Wang district, Chiang Mai province.

Some clusters frequently relocated from one to another in the area. The reasons are as follows: the requirements of agriculture and livestock, epidemic, internal arguments, unethical village leader, and natural disasters. They rotate habitations, however, within a small range and near the previous ones.

Pati Joni, a local wise man and former village leader, informed me that the site of Nong Tao village was moved to the other areas many times because of disease and rule-breaking by former spiritual leaders and village leaders. The last time was around 50 years ago. Pati Joni is the first villager who moved to the present area where the water supply is nearby and suitable for agriculture.

In 1908, the Thai Government granted a British company a license for their timber industry. Previously, the Karen did not recognize the market value of timber. The company hired the Karen who possessed elephants for dragging logs. Since then, many Karens have been engaged in lumbering for foreign companies because the wages are better than those from farming. This has had the two effects of dramatic deforestation in the region, and the increasing consumerism of the Karen.

The Hmong from another village started visiting Nong Tao roughly 80 years ago. They brought in deer and bull meat and bartered with Nong Tao villagers for rice. Not only did the Hmong carry in wild animal meat, but also a variety of seeds, including

¹⁸ See also Charles F. Keys (1971, 1979) for an historical background. See Kunstadter (1968, 1979) for a description of Lua-Karen relations.

opium poppy seeds. At first the villagers used opium as a painkiller, but afterwards they became addicted. In those days, the Thai Government promoted opium poppy cultivation as the main income generating activity for the Karen and taxed their income. Although the villagers benefited economically from opium, it led to the breakdown of law and order in the village. In addition, according to one informant the villagers suffered severe poverty during World War II.

A prohibition on opium was announced in the late 1950s. The policy on opium replacement by cash crops by the Public Welfare Department was implemented in 1972 and later the Royal Highland Development Projects came to work in the watershed area in 1981. Community forests were established during this period after they stopped opium poppy cultivation. These areas previously used to grow poppies were removed from cultivation and were designated as community forests.

Around 60 years ago, the villagers asked to register as Thai citizens, and establish Nong Tao as an official village.¹⁹ The villagers who register received necklaces to show citizenship.²⁰ Since then, official village leaders have been set as mediators between the Government and the villagers. Until now, there have been eleven village leaders. The present leader is Jae Dee Jorwalu.

One of the consequences of becoming Thai citizens is that the Karen also had to pay taxes. In 1940 according to the Government, it taxed buffalo. Around 1945, the government commenced taxing the villagers for the land, however, most of the villagers avoided paying tax. In 1956, the government registered housing in Nong Tao, but at present the villagers pay taxes neither on land nor on households.

In 1969, government officers, staff of the United Nations and Buddhist monks visited the village to disseminate Buddhism and develop agricultural techniques. At the same time, the government officers persuaded the villagers to stop growing opium poppies. By educating the villagers about natural resource management, most of the villagers ceased cultivating poppies. Poppy cultivating, however, had already damaged natural resources. The government programs also improved hygiene and education in the community.

For development programs, the temple was used as the center to educate the villagers about how to use modern medicine to cure sickness. The United Nations also

¹⁹ During the registration process, many villagers' names were inaccurately transliterated into Thai. This led to a variety of bureaucratic problems for the villagers. For example, a former village leader, Pati Joni's ancestral surname, Jakoche, was inaccurately registered, because officials transliterated his name into Thai, Odochoa. From an interview with the said person. See also "Peter Kunstadter, 1979, op. cit., pp.148-149.

²⁰ See appendix 5.

supported the villagers by guaranteeing the price of vegetable seeds such as beans and carrots, in order to replace cash crops and opium production. After the King's Mother visited the village in 1972, a school was built and teachers were sent to Nong Tao village. In 1974, the government decided to build a road to Nong Tao village. Since then, Hmong and drug dealers from outside had access to the village for opium trading. At that time, the government officers allowed people to grow and use opium in Chiang Mai province.

2.4 Economy

The villagers are mainly engaged in subsistence agriculture for direct consumption. Only the surplus will be sold to neighbors or shared with relatives. Most villagers maintain a sustainable life-style, however, now some families have changed to produce goods for trading. They sell their crops through middlemen, so that they cannot control the price of their products.

Kunstadter writes that "there is a strong desire to accumulate, but not for display, not for redistribution, not particularly to enjoy, not to improve position within Karen society or to earn access to Thai society, but rather, apparently, to control productive resources and thus to ensure one's own economic security."²¹ An advisor of the youth association²² expressed his viewpoint:

I do not need to purchase and possess more than enough. One of *tha* phrases, 'rice is the most precious. Man is the most fundamental.' Nowadays, people appreciate what he has, not who he is.²³

Kunstadter says that although there are individual economic differences and although economic gain is a strong personal motive, there is little or no lasting economic differentiation. Although there are opportunities for individual geographic mobility and economic change, and many changes of fashion in styles of Karen religion, there seems to be no tendency for fundamental socioeconomic transformation of Karen

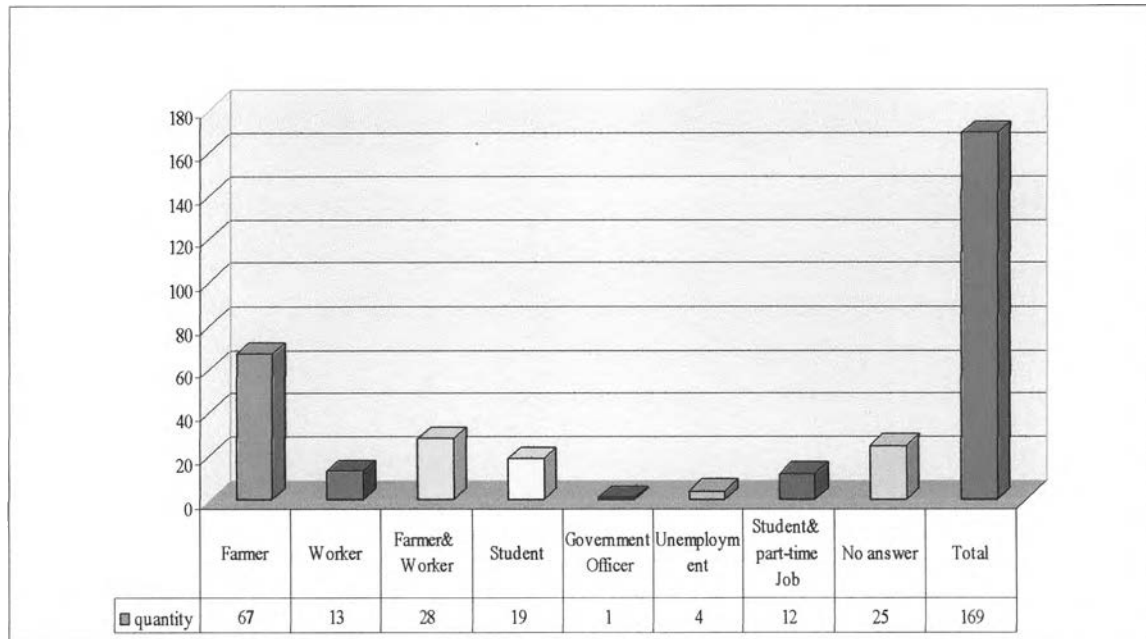
²¹ Peter Kunstadter, 1979, op. cit., p.135.

²² His family is relatively affluent because of his father's remarkable activities with NGOs.

²³ See also, Andrew Walker, "Karen Economy and Rural Nostalgia in an Age of Uncertainty: Reflections from Northern Thailand" A paper presented at 7th International Conference on Thai Studies, Amsterdam, 4-8 July, 1999, p. 5.

society.²⁴ My findings have complicated Kunstadter's insofar as economic differentiation has contributed to certain social changes. Income inequality has led to social change by allowing to new religions (Buddhism and Christianity) to enter the community by providing aid to the poor.

Figure 2.4.1: Occupation



Source: Author

Almost all of the families in Nong Tao are engaged in the agricultural sector, since they grow rice and vegetables for family consumption. Further, some have income from wage-labor or trade whenever they are free from farming. Moreover, through my research, occupations in the village can be defined as follows: agriculture; trading; government officer; and wage-labor. The villagers participate in wage-labor (or cash contract labor), mostly in orchards.

Moerman indicates that with the increase of population in the hills, the decrease in productivity of hill agriculture, and the increase in number of addicts, the supply of casual labor has increased radically, and the wages of day labor has declined.²⁵

²⁴ Peter Kunstadter, 1979, op. cit., p.136.

²⁵ Peter Kunstadter, 1979, op. cit., pp.152-153.

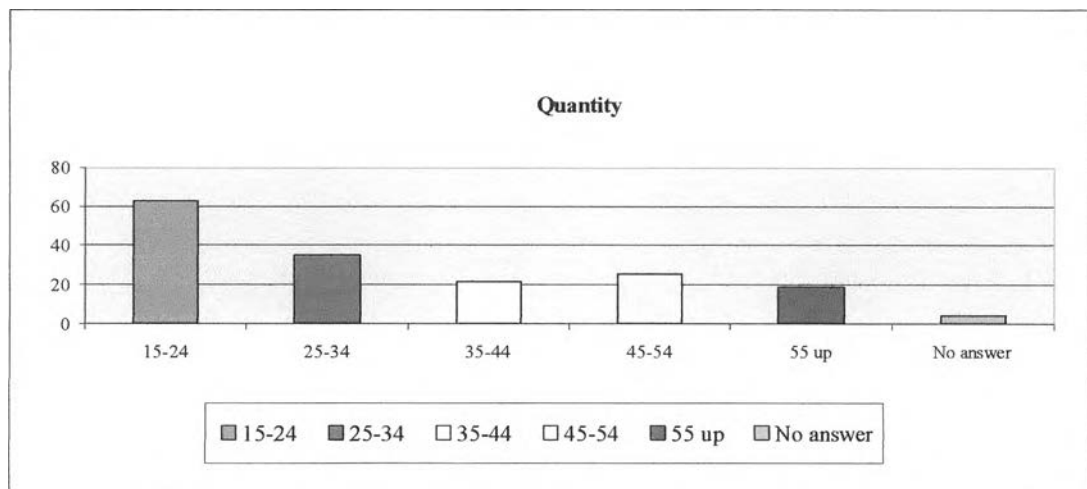
Poverty

Most of the villagers are in financial difficulties caused by several factors. Firstly, the soil in the village is of poor quality as compared to neighboring villages, so the price and quality of their products are relatively low. Secondly, Nong Tao depends on only one river source. Water supply has to be divided into two objectives, farming and consuming, but some villagers use drinking water for their farm. Besides, in summer the amount of water in the river decreases and the villagers suffer from a shortage of water. Thirdly, the villagers have no price insurance for agricultural products. The villagers sell their products through middlemen, who offer a very low price to the villagers. Fourthly, most of the villagers farm for consumption in the family, so they lived a self-reliant life until a wave of modernization and consumerism entered the village.

Because of financial problems, most of the villagers cannot afford education, especially if they send their children to the city for higher education. Some villagers move to the lowlands for labor work to earn more money. Nowadays, villagers absorb modernized life, and have debts from the organization in the village.

Economic Status

Figure 2.4.2: Number of Respondents Classified by Age



Source: Author

Not all of the people who responded to the questionnaire answered the questions about finances. Out of 169 respondents, 123 answered the finance questions. See Table 2.4.1 for the breakdown of respondent.

Table 2.4.1: Number of Respondents of the Financial Queries and Average Revenue and Expense

AGE	Questionnaire	Financial Part	Revenue	Expense	Electricity	Gasoline	Food	Tax *	Gas **	Mobile Phone	Allowance	Other ***
15-24	63	45	38	38	38	29	29	8	4	12	13	7
25-34	35	27	18	16	25	14	17	0	3	8	15	2
35-44	22	18	13	12	15	10	13	0	1	2	8	3
45-54	26	22	14	14	22	11	14	2	0	2	8	3
55 up	19	9	6	5	7	1	5	0	0	0	2	0
unknown	4	2	1	2	2	2	2	0	1	1	2	0
No. of respondent	169	123	90	87	109	67	80	10	9	25	48	15
	Average (Baht/month)		4,079	3,063	83	655	1,424	-	-	396	231	504

Source: Author

* Most of the villagers' revenue is not high enough to pay tax

** Most of the villagers use charcoal for cooking

*** 15 respondents of *other* are categorized as following:

Number of respondents

- 3 motorcycle leasing (average expense is 1239 baht/Month)
- 4 personal expenditure
- 2 soaps
- 3 for domestic use
- 1 clothes
- 2 unidentified

Of 169 respondents, 123 informed about their personal revenue and expense as given in the table above. As the figures show, the average revenue is higher than average expense, consequently it reveals that the villagers' financial status are for the most part have a cash surplus.

Their main expenditure is for food (1,424 Baht/month, 47 Baht/day, or around 46 percent of all monthly expenses). From observing the village, it seems that most villagers do not need to buy rice and vegetables, since they have a self-reliant life. They normally purchase fish and seasoning, which are available in the local grocery store. Some vegetable such as potatoes or mushrooms are also sold in the village.

This consumption can reflect that their lifestyle has changed slightly, since they hardly spent money for foodstuffs in the past.

Figure 2.4.3: Grocery Store in Nong Tao



Source: Author's photograph

Electricity expenditure shows that villagers are undergoing a process of technical modernization: 109 respondents spend around 83 baht per month for electricity, while some households have not yet been equipped with electricity. Only 5 respondents pay for their water supply, because Nong Tao has its own natural reservoir, which was constructed by the villagers and government.

For gasoline, half of the respondents spend 655 Baht each month, for most of the villagers own motorcycles. A rented tractor and pick up trucks are found in the village, too.

Expenditure for mobile phones is a significant, yet predictable symbol of modernization absorbed by the villagers. Although only 25 of the total refer to mobile phone expenditure, they spend 396 baht per month, which is a significant amount, but it can be explained by the fact that there is only one public phone available in the village. The villagers have found it necessary to possess mobile phones, as their society has become open to the world outsiders.

In conclusion, the figures prove that the Karen life style has been modernized dramatically. The evidence can be recognized through their expenditures, obviously, such as those for electricity, gasoline, and even mobile phones. It can be assumed that

the introduction of the market economy propels the villagers into debt, however, some have been able to improve the quality of life in the village. The important thing is that the villagers learn how to control their expenditure and how to have a balance between the self-reliant life and consumerism. What Moerman observed in a Thai-Lue village can be applied to the Thai-Karens in Nong Tao village.

There has been a change in economic “mentality.” Thirty years ago, all villagers seemed to make the same sort of economic calculations. There are now differences between those who still equate prosperity with acquiring land and the labor of children, and those alert to the possibility of replacing land with machinery, investment capital, and education for non-village or non-peasant careers.²⁶

Productivity strongly relates to the weather each year. Their income, therefore, is not stable. As a result, in some years villagers’ consumption exceeds their income. During those years, they may borrow money to buy TVs or motorcycles. For income, although most of the products are for consumption, some are for trading such as vegetables (cabbage, zucchini, and baby carrot); fruit (plum); flowers (lilly and gladiolus). Besides, villagers can choose to work in Chiang Mai city, where they can earn around 60-100 baht per day.²⁷ The villagers must pay for electricity, loans, education fees, and agriculture expenses such as fertilizer and seeds.

2.5 Village Structure

Infrastructure

Electricity

In 1983, the electricity system was established in the village. Today, most of the houses have been equipped with a power line. There are electrical poles along the street but they are broken sometimes, leaving the villagers without electricity.

²⁶ Michael Moerman and Patricia L. Miller, “A Quarter Century of Change in a Thai-Lue Village” A Final Report to the National Research Council of Thailand, September 9, 1989, p.13.

²⁷ It is below legal minimum wage.

Water Pipeline

The water system was established in 1982. Water used in Nong Tao is from the mountain. It is held by the dam above the village, and is sent through the pipeline to the every household. Although water is free to use, its poor quality often leads the villagers to sickness. Leaves and dirt are always in the water, so that the villagers are recommended to boil water before drinking. In fact, though, most of the villagers do not follow this advice. They prepare water for drinking by letting the dirt settle and drinking water on the top. Every year villagers, especially the youth group, will clean the dam, but the pipes are always broken and dirty. The cleanliness of natural water and the pipeline system is an urgent issue.

Road

Roads in the village are mainly red dirt. The main road connects to the main street from Huay Kiang. There is a road that connects the east side and the west side of Nong Tao. The road from Huay Tong connects with the village in northern part. Since most of roads are dirt, the surfaces are rough and not in good condition, a situation made worse by rain and water leaking out of the pipe lines.

Telecommunication

There is only one public phone in the village and another house phone in the house of a teacher at the Nong Tao primary school, Somchai Noloji. Whenever the villagers need to use phone, they usually go to use the public phone in Huay Tong, 3 kilometers from Nong Tao, instead. Around 70 percent of the villagers can receive news through televisions or radios. In addition, there is a room with newspapers for the villagers in the temple. Since most of the old villagers cannot read Thai, only young villagers use it.

Health

There is no serious or epidemic sickness in Nong Tao, however, some have problems with their digestion, because they always eat spicy and hot meals.²⁸ Some

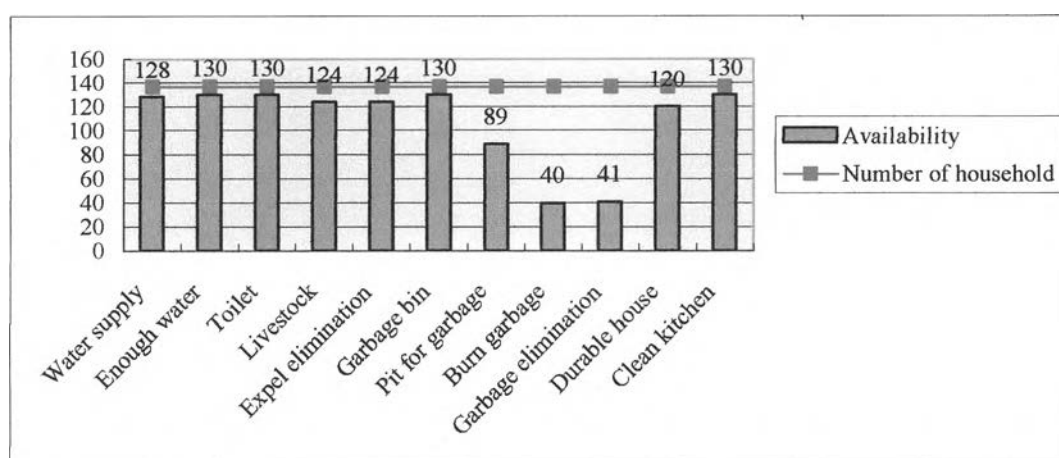
²⁸ For related discussion, see Usaneya Perngporn, et al. "Impact of Health Development on Child Rearing of the Hilltribes: Karen and H'Mong" A report presented to Chulalongkorn University,

villagers use herbs to cure slight illness.

Most of the villages consume enough nutrition, however, infants sometimes cannot get enough nutrition, when their mothers work in the field, the infants cannot breast-feed.

A health center in Nong Tao plans a vaccine schedule for the villagers. When preparing to give birth, most of villagers will go to Nakorn Ping or Mae Wang hospital. Giving birth at home is rarely seen, except in emergencies.

Figure 2.5.1: Hygiene



Source: Nong Tao Health Care Center

School

There is only one school, established in 1973, in Nong Tao. The school provided education from grade 1 to grade 4 at first and now has extended to grade 6. In school, students communicate in standard Thai. The land for the school was donated by Pati Joni and the forth village leader, Pala. The location is in the middle of the village next to the public health care center.

The role of school is not only to provide education for young people but it is also the social center of the village where the parents gather for many activities including the preservation of Karen culture. The local people such as Pati Joni are invited to teach young people their own culture and how to preserve both culture and natural resources.

King's Royal Project

The King's Royal Project aims at instructing the villagers how to grow vegetables and fruits that suit the cold weather in the uplands. The project was expanded from Huay Tong, 2 kilometers away from Nong Tao. At first, the project started in 1987 by using the land contributed by the villagers Khumsai Noloi and Hmor Ker Jorwalu. The project has introduced cash crops such as coffee beans, plums, red cabbage, carrots, gladioli, carnations, and so forth. Nowadays, however, the price of coffee beans has been decreasing, so the villagers replaced them with avocados instead. This project lends money to the villagers to grow the specified crops, and then purchases the products if they meet quality standards. The project can increase revenue for the villagers, especially when the villagers are not working in their rice fields. As a result, villagers' financial status has improved. The project hires some villagers to water and clean the field and pays 85 baht a day to them.

There are, however, several problems. The villagers cannot grow products with the quality necessary for market due to unreliable weather. Secondly, the project failed to plan for product surpluses, which reduces the selling price. Thirdly, in the past the project did not pay cash for the products immediately, leaving the villagers short of money.

Public Health Center

Nong Tao health center was established in 1987 by the King's Mother, since she visited the village and perceived the need to improve hygiene. The present building was constructed in 2000. This center is in charge of nine neighboring villages.

The center instructs the villagers on how to keep sanitary conditions in the home, first aid treatment, preliminary knowledge for expectant women, how to prevent an epidemic, and to give a vaccine to infants.

This center treats patients for free.²⁹ Instead, the Ministry of Interior offers health insurance for impoverished citizens. Each day around 30-40 villagers consult the doctor.

For serious cases such as parturition, patients are sent to Mae Wang or Nakormping hospital, in Mae Wang district, which are fully-equipped for patients.

²⁹ Nong Tao health care center offers free treatment for first-born children below 6 years of age, primary and lower secondary school students, the disabled, and those who are above 60 years of age. From an interview with the doctor.

Until 1987, the villagers gave birth with local doctors who had been trained by the Ministry of Health. In addition, the staff of the health care center educates children on hygiene in the school.

Problems include villagers' unfamiliarity with biomedicine and inadequate staffing for the number of patients at the center. Further, because the health care center does not have a phone installed, contact with outsiders even in urgent cases depends on the radio, but sometimes the signal fails.

Nursing Center

The nursing center, located in Pra Dhammacarik Asom, was established in 1994 through a Pra Dhammacarik project. The aim is to nurse infants aged 2 to 4 years old for parents who are engaged in farming and have little time for nursing. Later, this center was moved to Nong Tao primary school because of a shortage of staff and later become a kindergarten. The fund for constructing the kindergarten was donated by *toong sang ta wan*, a television program on Channel 3.

Village Leaders

Hikho (spiritual leader)

In the past, the *hikho* or a spiritual leader was the village leader.³⁰ But since the government registered the village officially, it required the village to have an officially recognized village leader. But still the *hikho* is respected and plays important roles in the village. A son of the *hikho* inherits his position patrilineally. If he has no son, he needs to adopt a boy related to him and passes this position to the adopted son instead. Now, there are two *hikho* in the village and they are in charge of different households. Since the villagers immigrated to Nong Tao from several areas, the first group has one particular *hikho*, while new groups who immigrated to the village later also have their own *hikho*. The *hikho* performs a wedding, birth, funeral and animist rituals. In the past, the *hikho*'s death caused village fission.³¹

³⁰ "The chief of the early village of Mae Ha Ki . . . had both secular and religious functions. His role was defined entirely in terms of Karen custom, since the administration of the court of Chiang Mai, to say nothing of the administration stemming from Bangkok, had not penetrated into the hill areas into which Mae Ha Ki was located. The extent of the authority of such a chief appears to have depended less on the institutional features of his role than on his personal influence." Shigeru Iijima, *op. cit.*, p.102.

³¹ The Karen make no close association between particular spirits who reside in a particular

Official leader

The term of official leader is 4 years and is an elected position. The villagers vote³² in the leader, who is officially recognized by the Mae Wang district office. Until now, there have been eleven leaders. The present village leader is Jaedee Jorwalu. He is paid a small salary³³ to attend monthly meetings at the district office, to carry announcements back to the villages, to urge villagers to conform to government registration and tax rules, and to act as an official host for touring government officials.³⁴

2.6 Religion

Christianity

Christianity was introduced in the village about 30 years ago by Catholic missionaries. Of 132 households, 24 are Catholic and 5 are Protestant. There was a Catholic church established in 1967, and a Protestant church in 2002 in Nong Tao village. The protestant pastor is a local, and the adherents attend church every Sunday. The Bibles written in Karen are provided in order for the elderly to read. With the aid of the CCF (Christian Children Foundation) a Nong Tao Karen Baptist Hostel was established less than a year ago to provide the economically and geographically underprivileged children with schooling in Nong Tao. There are 28 students living with host parents at present. A hundred children aged 4 to 13 got aid from CCF last year, received pigs and chickens for generating income, and clothes, books and shoes. The students bring about 5 bags of rice for payment of the tuition fee.

place and agricultural success. Thus there is no constraint on moving away from the place where one's ancestors lived and died. Peter Kunstadter, 1968, op. cit., p.8.

³² "Often they have been chosen because they know enough Thai to deal with government officials, rather than because they are the true leaders of their village. This sort of accommodation allows life to proceed in the village without much disturbance from government regulations." Peter Kunstadter, 1979, op. cit., p.149.

³³ 3,000 baht per month

³⁴ For the 2005 general election, the village leader was clothed in an official uniform. "The Pwo Karen who represented their communities in dealings with the Thai agencies were normally village headmen; their role was quite central in village-state relationships." Peter Hinton, "The Karen, Millennialism, and the Politics of Accommodation to Lowland States" in *Ethnic Adaptation and Identity: The Karen on the Thai Frontier with Burma*, (Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1979), p.82.

Figure 2.6.1: Nong Tao Karen Baptist Hostel



Source: Author's photograph

Buddhism

The *asom* was built in 1971 by the Hilltribe Development Center. It has the capacity for 40 people. Pra Dhammacarik was not only a Buddhist mentor, but also a secular educator for the villagers. Now there is only one Karen monk in the *asom*. His roles are to spread Buddhism and develop the village.

On Buddhist holy days, the monk discourses on Buddhism through a microphone in the morning. In addition, he gives secular education for non-educated adult villagers. The *asom* is used as a meeting and welfare center as well.

Moreover, male children who cannot afford an education both learn Buddhism in the *asom* as monks, and receive a modern education. The monk gives lessons in Buddhism to the students in Nong Tao primary school. As difficulties, the *asom* lacks an adequate budget and monks, and since the village is located far from the city, it is hard to get financial and physical support.

Figure 2.6.2: Buddhist String-tying Rite for Road Safety³⁵



Source: Author's photograph

Animism

In the past, Karen respected the spirits of their ancestors, water, fields, and so on. Since other religions have been introduced, some animist beliefs have disappeared.³⁶ However, several rituals related to animism still exist for they believe that these rituals protect their crops and natural resources.

Worshipping rice field and fire spirits

In July, when rice grows to the height of one's hand, the villagers hold the ceremony by building two small spirit houses and preparing a pair of chickens and two bottles of liquor. One is for the spirit of rice field and the other is for the fire spirit.

This ceremony aims at worshipping these spirits, since the villagers believe

³⁵ A Buddhist Karen had string-tying rites for road safety for his new motorcycle, which had been purchased by selling his cows and pigs.

³⁶ Today, the ancestor spirit cult or *au khae* rite is still performed by the sole household, which is one of two spiritual leaders (*hikho*), Jahae Nukei. The other *hikho* Thimei Jorwalu identified himself as a Buddhist in the interview. The Nong Tao villagers still hold *Lue ta*, or the ritual communally organized to propitiate the guardian spirits of watersheds and other great Lords (Kwanchewan Budaeng, 2001, op. cit., p. xii).

that spirits can protect their fields from pests. Moreover, they also prepare chicken bones, chili or salt as symbols of disasters by putting them at the gate of fields to prevent birds, rats and pests that might destroy rice fields.

Worshipping the dam spirit

The villagers who own fields feed dam spirit by sacrificing pigs or chickens as prey to protect the preserved water and asking for rain for their fields.

Ceremony for newly born babies

When a baby is born, a midwife comes home. She cuts *sekita*³⁷ and puts charcoal on her left hand, the umbilical cord on it, and cuts it with the bark of *sekita*. Then, the Karens put the umbilical cord in a bamboo cylinder that is used for keeping water, and close the cylinder with an old cloth and bind it with a bamboo string. The child's father chooses a tree in the wild, then binds the umbilical cord around the tree called *debo* tree (umbilical cord tree) with a bamboo string for seven days. If the umbilical cord doesn't fall down, the father has to hit it to knock it down, for it means that child's spirit can return to the child. Finally, the midwife and father tie a string around the child's wrist.

Cutting a *debo* tree means the child's *kwan* dies. The one who cuts the tree has to offer two chickens (male and female) and tie a string for the child. This birth rite which prohibits cutting down the child's guardian tree results in thick forests surrounding each Karen village.³⁸

If a baby is born, the father cannot hunt for three days. If a villager passes away, men cannot hunt for one month.

The villagers have many kinds of trees as a part of their traditional beliefs: *cler muu* tree; if a baby dies before three years of age, the father digs around the tree and wraps the baby with a bamboo mat before burying it. *bodi* tree; if parents lose a child and want him or her to be reborn, they pray at the tree. New married couples cannot go near the tree for fear that their future baby might die.

Wedding ceremony

At the engagement ceremony, the bride's family prepares a pair of chickens and cooks them for the groom's side, then set the date for wedding day. A pig called *thor*

³⁷ The four bamboo poles at the four corners of a rectangular hearth

³⁸ Supara Janchitfah, op. cit.

tor is slaughtered for showing respect to spirits one night before the groom move to the bride's house. The bride's side sets up the wedding location, in front of the house, for guests to gather and celebrate the wedding.

In the ceremony, two chickens are butchered and boiled without any condiments. The elderly choose one boy and girl, whose parents are alive, to offer rice and chicken to the groom and bride respectively. Then the couple gives a bead necklace and one baht in return.

The groom presents one piece of fabric, another piece for head cover, one shovel, a dress for married women and one pack of salt. Lastly, after the wedding ceremony the wedded couple spends three days and three nights together, then their parents tie strings around their wrists to imply that they are already united as a family.

Figure 2.6.3: Marriage Ceremony



Source: Author's photograph

Funeral

Whenever someone passes away, every villager has to stop working even routine work, such as housekeeping. After covering the body with a cloth, the relatives hang the cloth on the bamboo tree, since they believe that the dead villager will be able to use it in his next life. In the evening, only men sing Karen poems, that relate to the one who just passed away. As well, the relatives put necessities such as pots and the dishes in a bucket and bury next to the corpse. While they hold a funeral, every villager is prohibited to go out to work for a few days.

Celebrating a new house

After constructing the house, the owner celebrates the newly-built house with one bottle of liquor, one pair of chickens or one pig with his revered person in the village as a master of the ceremony. The owner, then, holds a feast for the relatives, and the guests tie threads around the owner's wrist with prayers in return.

Figure 2.6.4: Constructing a house



Source: Author's photograph

New Years Celebration

After finishing harvest around the end of January, the *hikho* (spiritual leader) determines the date to celebrate New Year's Day. One day before, every household prepares liquor and food for the spirits. On New Year's Day, everyone has to attend the wrist-tying ceremony at home with each family. Moreover, a village leader visits the other houses to tie strings with prayers for happiness. "The wrist must be tied clock-wise while giving blessings of good health and long, peaceful life. Each will take a turn tying the wrist of everyone else, and the sounds of competing blessings fill the room. Live a long life, live hundreds of years, until your hair becomes as white as the cotton thread around your wrist."³⁹

³⁹ Surapong Kongchantuk, op. cit.

Figure 2.6.5: Wrist-tying Ritual⁴⁰



Source: Author's photograph

Midyear ceremony

The villagers celebrate a midyear ceremony around August in each year the same way as New Year's Day.

Su Ma

When the villagers engage in sexual misconduct, they go to see *hikho* to hold *su ma* ceremony. Women prepare liquor and men prepare pigs or buffalos as offerings to perform the ceremony. Afterwards, another ceremony is held for restoring their relationship and settling an argument.

Calling the *kwan* ceremony

The Karens believe that people fall sick because their spirits⁴¹ or *kwan* are disordered, probably because the spirit leaves the body in fright or unhappiness about some wrong-doing. Then, he calls the *kwan* spirits to return to their original residence by beating a bamboo stick used for stirring rice. The Karens use the stick in their rites

⁴⁰ This picture is an illustrative example that Animism is incorrigible. A Karen monk allows a spiritual leader's wife to tie strings, although Buddhist monks are forbidden from physical contact with women.

⁴¹ It is translated as souls by Yoshimatsu. Kumiko Yoshimatsu, op. cit., p.12.

to express this gratitude and respect for its function of helping preparing their staple diet, or rice every day. To entice the *kwan* spirits back, the elder recite a mantra, asking *kwan* to wear new clothes placed in a bamboo basket and to eat a chicken dish, water, and rice wine from a wooden food container, and then to stay and never again mischievously leave their home.⁴²

Figure 2.6.6: Animistic Propitiation Ceremony⁴³



Source: Author's photograph

⁴² Surapong Kongchantuk, "A Society that Lives in Peace with the Forest" Bangkok Post. 8 March, 1993; Frank M. Lebar, op. cit., p.62. See also, Yoshimatsu. Kumiko Yoshimatsu, op. cit., pp.12-13.

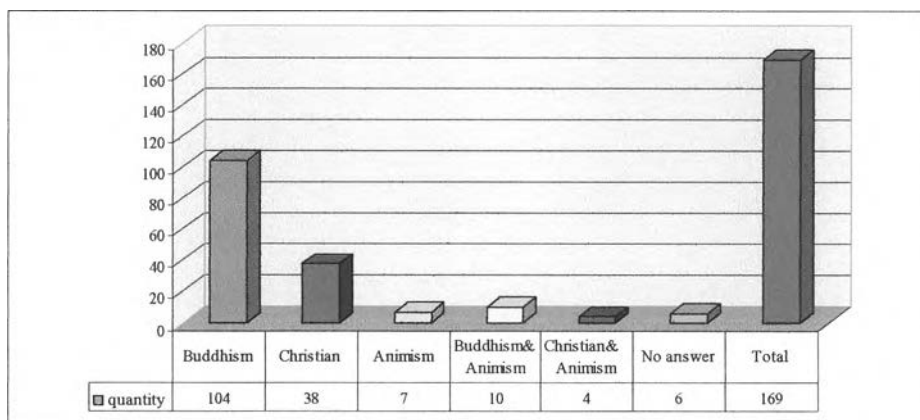
⁴³ A devout Buddhist Karen man (center) fell ill and yet had a propitiation ceremony performed by *hikho* or a spiritual leader (left) with his family.

Figure 2.6.7: Locations of *kwan*⁴⁴



Source: Author's photograph

Figure 2.6.8: Religious Identification⁴⁵



Source: Author

⁴⁴ Karens have belief in 37 souls: 5 reside in a body (forehead, right and left shoulder, heart, and ankles), 32 around. To restrain these *kwan* and maintain good health, the Karens tie cotton thread around each other's wrists. From an interview with a former village leader.

⁴⁵ The questionnaire from which I developed this chart reflects people's perceptions and opinions about their religious identification. It does not indicate that there is such a thing as pure Buddhism, Christianity and Animism.

Figure 2.6.8 shows that the majority of villagers profess Buddhism. Interestingly, the respondents answered not only Buddhism⁴⁶ but also Christianity can co-exist with Animism, although it is relatively the minor number of respondents. Kwanchewan says that “the interesting thing is that the identification of religion and the practices are not the same thing. There is no exclusive set of practices for a Christian or Buddhist but the mix of practices based on past experiences and new practices learnt from increasingly participating in the practices supported by more powerful religious institutions.”⁴⁷ According to Pati Joni, in the past the villagers experienced disputes between religions. Christian villagers ceased from attending every traditional ritual and separated themselves from the other religious groups. Concerned about it, the villagers resolved to unify and cooperate regardless of religion.

The village modifies the Buddhist ritual of ordination to protect the forests. Tree ordination is not only for monks and nuns but for trees as well. They tie yellow ropes around the trunks, so that everyone regards the trees as sacred. The villagers do not cut the ordained trees, only harvest the fruits and collect the fallen branches. The ordination ceremony discourages the villagers from deforesting and helps to protect the forests from encroachment. The villagers use Buddhism as a means of protecting not only the ecological system, but also their traditional belief, which is deeply rooted in the forest.

2.7 Language

The language of the Karen has now been recognized as a Sinitic language, belonging to the “Siamese-Chinese” sub-family of the Tibeto-Chinese languages,⁴⁸ being grouped with the Tai or Shan. Its position, however, has remained uncertain.

The Sgaw Karen have a writing system invented by a Baptist missionary through modification of Burmese since 1832.⁴⁹ According to an elder, authentic Karen written characters are similar to Chinese.

⁴⁶ Quoting a spiritual leader’s words, “Buddhism is a general religion, and yet Animism is a private religion for ancestor and nature worship.”

⁴⁷ Kwanchewan Buadaeng, 1999, op. cit., pp. 10-11.

⁴⁸ Harry Ignatius Marshall, op. cit., p.31. According to Platz, Karen speaking languages belong to a distinct branch of the Tibeto-Burman family. Roland Platz, op. cit., p.473.

⁴⁹ Harry Ignatius Marshall, op. cit., p.31.

Figure 2.7.1: Karen Textbooks⁵⁰



Source: Author's photograph

Yoshimatsu reports in 1989 that the women in the Karen community in Samuang⁵¹ district, Chiang Mai province, are generally illiterate.⁵² In my research community, the Ministry of Education established a primary school in 1973. In order to see how formal education has enhanced the villagers' literacy, I arranged the questionnaire.

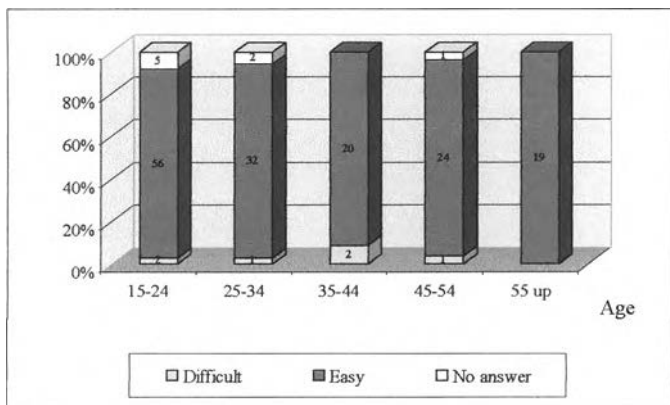
⁵⁰ These were issued by Karen Baptist Convention, Chiang Mai, 1978.

⁵¹ I spell the district, Sa Merng in my thesis.

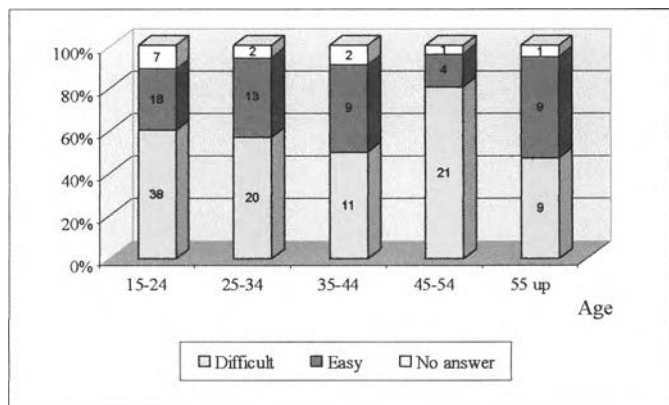
⁵² Kumiko Yoshimatsu, *op. cit.*, p.vii.

Figure 2.7.2: Language Acquisition

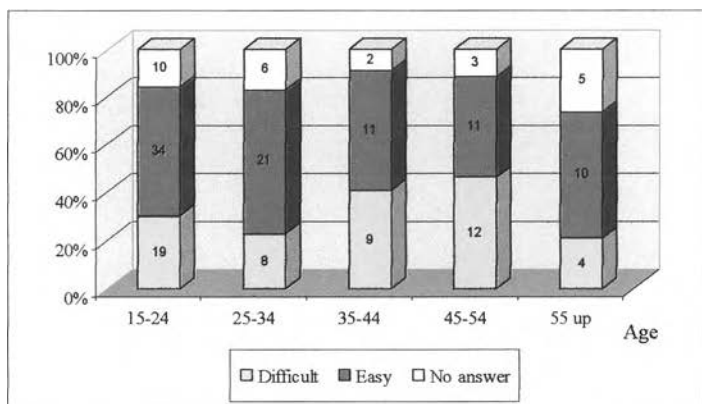
Speaking and Listening to Karen



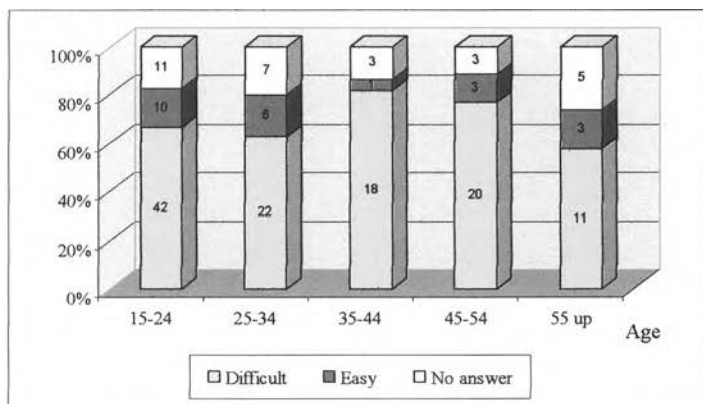
Reading and Writing Karen*1



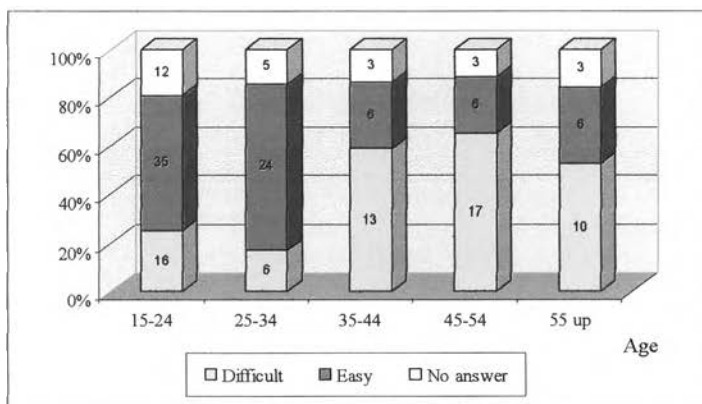
Speaking and Listening to Northern Thai*2



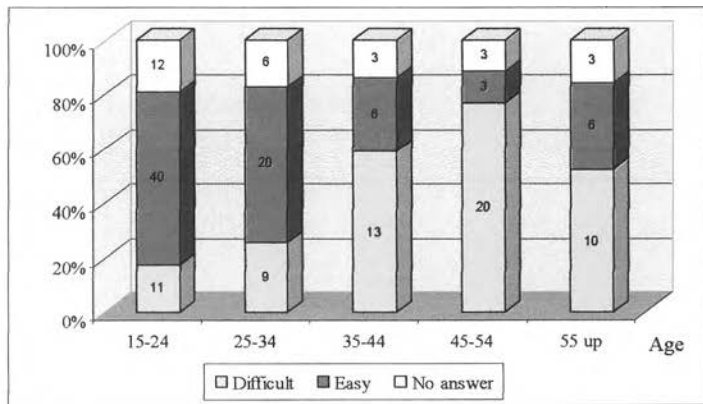
Reading and Writing Northern Thai



Speaking and Listening to standard Thai*3



Reading and Writing standard Thai



Source: Author

*1: The mark of writing Karen is nearly equal to that of reading Karen, and thus the histogram take the data on reading Karen, as well as Northern Thai and standard Thai.

*2: The mark of Listening to Northern Thai is nearly equal to that of Speaking Northern Thai, and thus the histogram take the data on Speaking Northern Thai, as well as standard Thai.

*3: “Certain national-language functions pertain to the highly normative version of Central Thai, which is closely linked to the codified written form of the language. This normative variety has recently been referred to as ‘Standard Thai’ (*phasa thai matrathan*) by academic authorities such as Nidhi Aeosriwongse. Nidhi sees Standard Thai as deeply rooted in an earlier high form of Central Thai associated with class-based social divisions, but as having undergone a degree of egalitarian leveling over the past century due to print technology, mass education and changing political attitudes.”

Anthony Diller, “What Makes Central Thai a National Language?” in *National Identity and Its Defenders: Thailand 1939-1989*, ed. by Craig J. Reynolds, (Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2002), p.76.

Figure 2.7.2 demonstrates that nearly all villagers can speak Karen language easily. Less than half of them, however, can read and write fluently.

Concerning Northern Thai, the figure shows that more villagers aged 15 to 34 years old can speak and listen to Northern Thai more fluently than older generations, however, it does not show any significance in reading and writing Northern Thai.

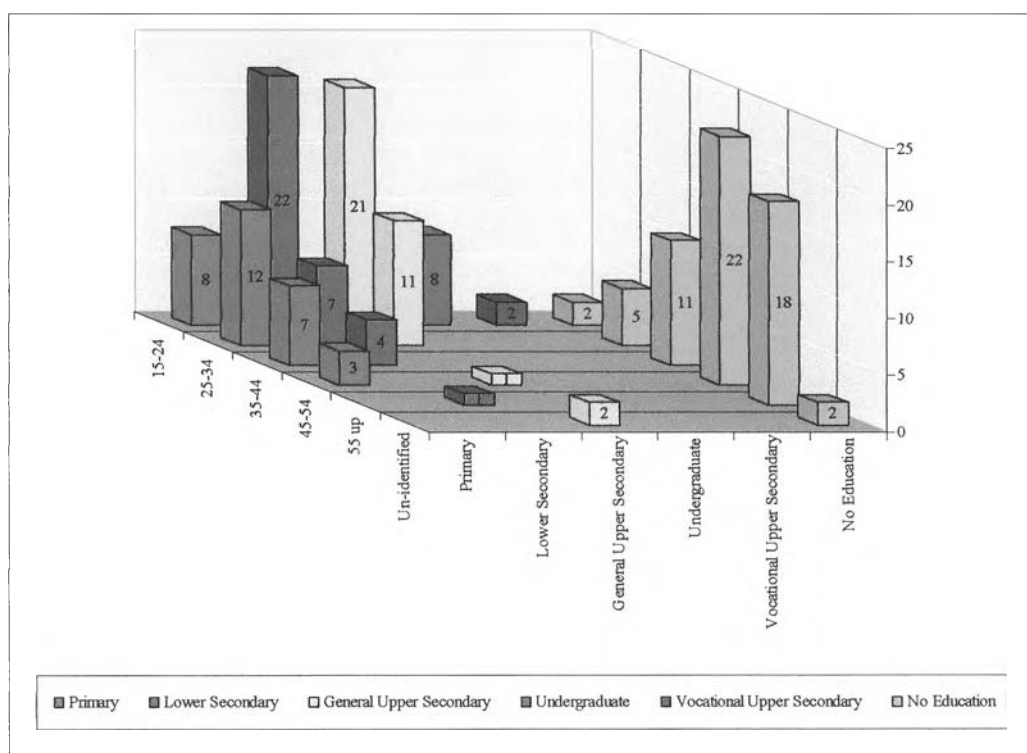
The graph shows that the villagers 15 to 34 years of age are more familiar with standard Thai than the older villagers.⁵³

⁵³ Mastering Standard Thai, which has a multitude of sub-styles—including *rachasap*, special royal-vocabulary substitutions—is one of the main tasks of formal education. At least in theory this codified linguistic variety is the language of bureaucratic administration and also of academia and of upper-strata print media.

2.8 Education

The Lua and Karen hill tribes have Thai citizenship and are obliged to send their children to Thai schools. The curriculum of their schools in the two villages is the standard Primary Education Curriculum BE 2521 of all government schools, and has not been fully adapted to local needs and circumstances of the hill tribes. There is, consequently, a need to modify the curriculum to suit local conditions, and, in particular, to mitigate the difficulties they have in using the Thai language. Scholastic achievement of the Luas is average, whereas that of the Karens is below average. As they have Thai citizenship, they have the same opportunities as Thai children to pursue further education, but there are very few who do pursue it. The main obstacle is poverty. As far as learning outside schools is concerned, Lua and Karen children learn, principally, in their homes. This includes the learning of their spoken language and their spiritism.⁵⁴

Figure 2.8.1: Education Attainment



Source Author

⁵⁴ Chanita Rukspollmuang, "The Education of Shan, Yunnanese, Lua and Karen: A Case Study in Ban Mai Loong Khon, Ban Tham, Ban Kong Loi, and Ban Pa Taek" pp.(chor chang-sor soo) (in Thai).

The young generation receives higher education as compared with the older generation; approximately 20 per cent of the aged 15 to 24 enroll in higher education. For the most part, the villagers above 45 years old have no school education.

Karens have a myth to explain why they have poor sources of wisdom.⁵⁵

Primary School

There is only one school in the village, 'Nong Tao primary school'. This school was established in 1973 by the Ministry of Education. There is only one Karen teacher and the rest are Northern Thai teachers.

Table 2.8.1: Number of Students

Class	Number of students		
	Male	Female	Total
Early Kindergarten ⁵⁶	6	8	14
Late Kindergarten	8	9	17
Grade 1	18	10	28
Grade 2	16	6	22
Grade 3	9	9	18
Grade 4	10	13	23
Grade 5	12	9	21
Grade 6	15	4	19
Total	94	68	162

Source: Nong Tao Primary School, as of January 20, 2005

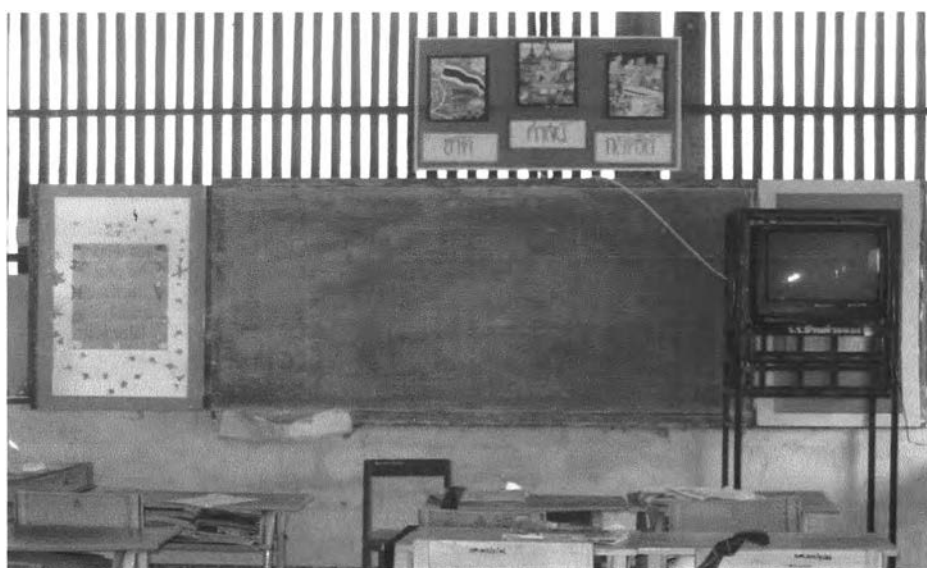
⁵⁵ "In the beginning "Y'wa" had seven sons, the eldest of whom was the Karen and the youngest, the white man. The father, being about to go on a journey, invited the Karen to accompany him; but the latter declined on the score that he had his field to clear. The Burman also refused to go. . . The white brother was induced to accompany his father . . . While there "Y'wa" prepared three books: one of silver and gold for the Karen, because he was the oldest; one of palm-leaf for the Burman, and one of parchment for their white brother. These were given to the white man, and he accepted them, but kept the silver and gold book himself, sending the parchment book to the Karen by the hands of the Burman. The Karen was busy clearing his fields and, paying little attention to the book, forgot to carry it home. When he burned off his clearing, it was lying on a stump and was nearly destroyed. The pigs and chickens ate the charred remains of it. Thus, the wisdom contained in the book, which the ancestors of the race sorely needed after sickness and trouble came upon them, was nowhere to be found except in the pigs, chickens, and charcoal, and it was to these they turned in their distress. According to the account contained in the "Y'wa" legend, the serpent, "Mü kaw li," was directly responsible for leading them to these sources of wisdom." Harry Ignatius Marshall, op. cit., pp.279-280. Refer to Kwanchewan Buadaeng, 1999, op. cit., p. 1-2.

⁵⁶ equivalent to *Anubarn* in Thai

In the primary school, local curriculum used to be arranged, for example, Karen language, gardening, weaving, Thai dance, black smith, and farming. The school used to teach once a week (3 hours on Thursday) with the aim of teaching the young generation about their own culture. The local lessons were set through discussions with the local villagers. Then, the villagers were invited as guest teachers. However, there is not enough money to buy teaching materials and if a principal has no understanding about Karen tradition, the local curriculum cannot be carried on.

Lower Secondary School

Figure 2.8.2: Huay Tong Lower Secondary School



Source: Author's photograph

Huay Tong lower secondary school was established in 1980. As of the 19th of January in 2005, there are 276 students (2 Tai Yai students and the rest are Karen) and 15 Northern Thai teachers. It takes 9 hours on foot from Nong Tao village.

A common problem in the school is that teachers use Thai as a medium of instruction – a language which is not their daily or home language. According to a principal of Huay Tong secondary school, Karen students usually have difficulty in understanding fully in a class. Further, their parents cannot help them do homework for their illiteracy in standard Thai. Another problem concerns the curriculum, which

bears little relevance to local conditions.⁵⁷ Karen students have to absent themselves from the school for a few days during a harvest season for assistance.

Table 2.8.2: Who Pay for Tuition Fee?⁵⁸

General upper secondary		Vocational upper secondary		Undergraduate	
1. Yourself	9	1. Yourself	1	1. Yourself	2
2. Parents	14	2. Parents	1	2. Parents	-
3. Loan	-	3. Loan	-	3. Loan	3
4. Scholarship	-	4. Scholarship	-	4. Scholarship	2
1&2	1	1&2	-	1&2	1
1&3	1	1&3	-	1&3	-
1&4	-	1&4	-	1&4	-
free	5	2&3	1	3&4	1
2&4	2	3&4	1	1&2&3	1
2&3	2				
Un-identified	3				
1&2&3&4	1				
TOTAL	38	TOTAL	4	TOTAL	10

Source: Author

Previously covering only 6-years of primary education, compulsory education has been extended to 9 years covering 6 years of primary education and 3 years of lower secondary education as stipulated in the *1999 National Education Act*.⁵⁹ But for the Karen, who live a life of subsistence, do not have many choices. They can not afford additional fees. And moreover, to send the children to the school means to lose labor, leaving it up to parents, to decide whether their children should be educated or not.

In a high school, the parents give children financial support, however, in higher levels of education such as a vocational school or university, the students tend to pay for

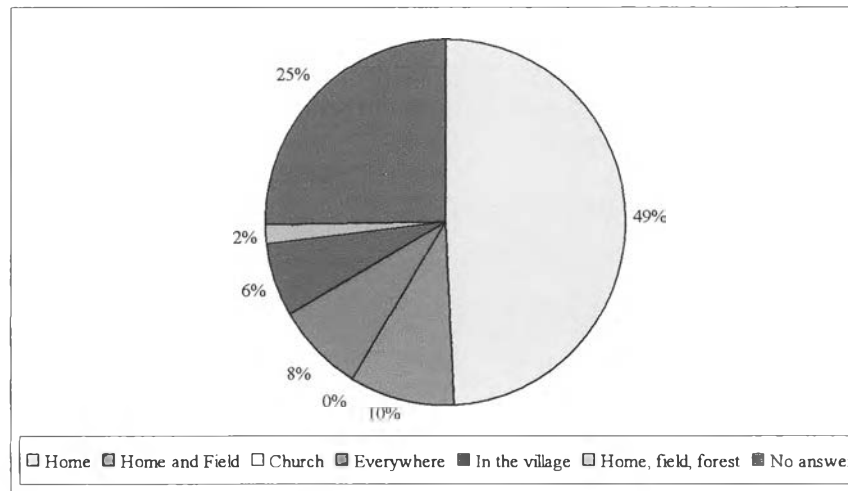
⁵⁷ Chanita Rukspollmuang, op.cit., p.(sor soo).

⁵⁸ The Education Loan Fund was set up in 1996 to provide loans for learners from low-income families. Since 1996, the loans have been allocated to learners provided that "The borrowers must be destitute learners from low-income families who wish to continue their upper secondary education to undergraduate level in both general and vocational education. . . . Each learner has to repay the loan plus interest after completing his/her study." *Education in Thailand 2002/2003.*, (Bangkok: Office of the National Education Commission, 2002), p.54.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p.18.

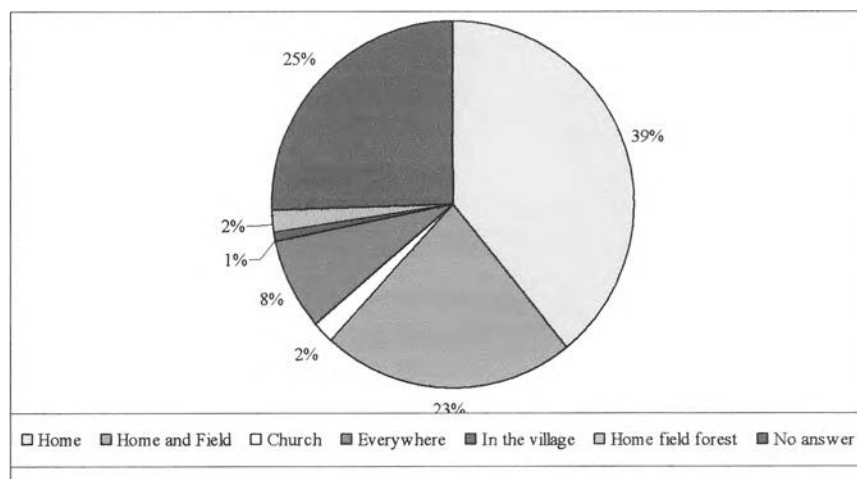
tuition fees on their own through scholarships or loans.⁶⁰ This probably implies that higher education is still limited for the majority, since the villagers can hardly afford education.

Figure 2.8.3: Where Do Your Parents or Grandparents Teach You? [Age 15-24]



Source: Author

Figure 2.8.4: Where Do Your Parents or Grandparents Teach You? [Age 25 Up]



Source: Author

⁶⁰ According to an informant who is a student in Ramkhamhaeng University, tuition fees for a semester costs 2000 baht.

Figure 2.8.3 and 2.8.4 show that half of the 15 to 24 year-old villagers learn local wisdom from their parent at home, though some said that their parents teach them everywhere or both at home (8 per cent) and in the fields (11 per cent) respectively. The older villagers answered that their parents have taught them at home and in the field (25 per cent), which is two times higher than the 15 to 24 year-old villagers. This difference indicates that younger people spend less time in the field as they spend more time outside the village for school.

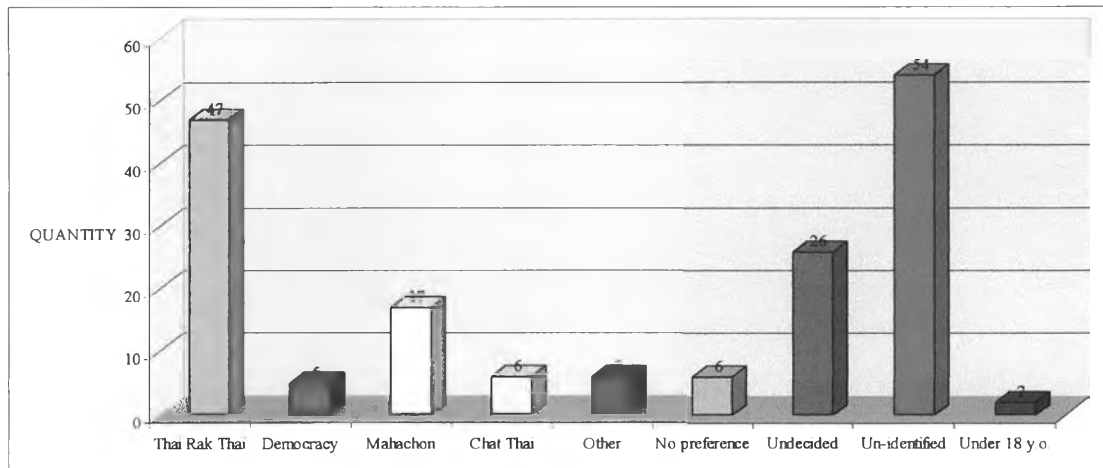
The educated youth with more education attainment and more socio-culturally familiarity with world outside have attained the new roles in the village.

2.9 February 6th General Election of Member of Parliaments⁶¹

In the Nong Tao village, 463 (241 men, 222 women) of the total 745 villagers have voting rights. It was noteworthy that many young people declined to answer the question of their preferred party for the 6th February general election. Figures 2.9.1 and 2.9.2 show that the largest group of youth and of all those surveyed chose not to reveal their voting preferences (roughly one third in each case). We may note, further, that all of the respondents who said they had no party preference were youths and they all explained this response by saying that they did not believe that politicians could solve their problems. Finally, I have speculated that the educated youth would be more interested in politics than their elders. In fact, the level of interest and political preference seem to be the same for youth and their parents.

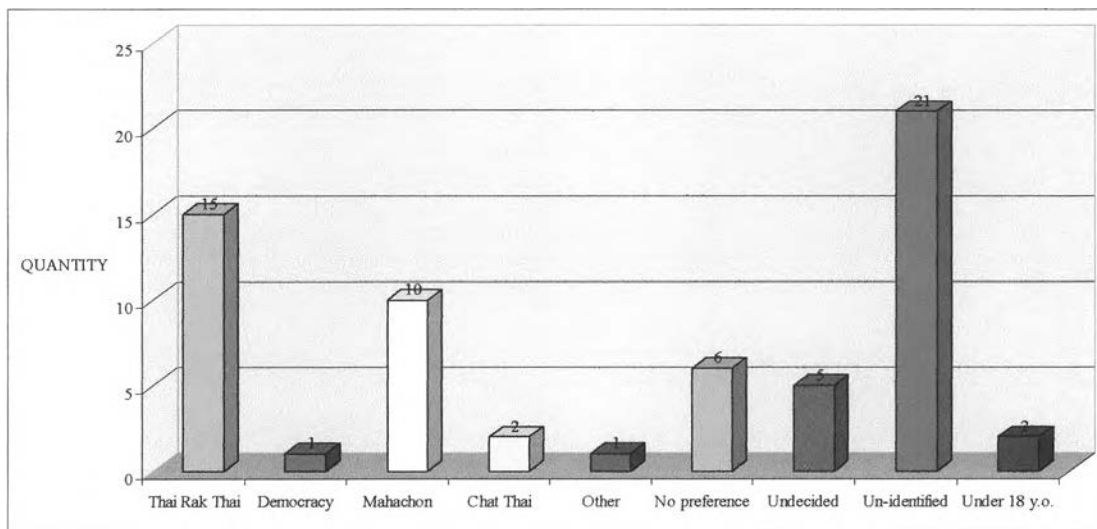
⁶¹ Kunstadter writes about the 1969 elections of province representatives to the national parliament in the upland Sgaw Karen village in Mae Sariang district. Peter Kunstadter, 1979, op. cit., p.150.

Figure 2.9.1: Opinion Poll [Overall]⁶²



Source: Author

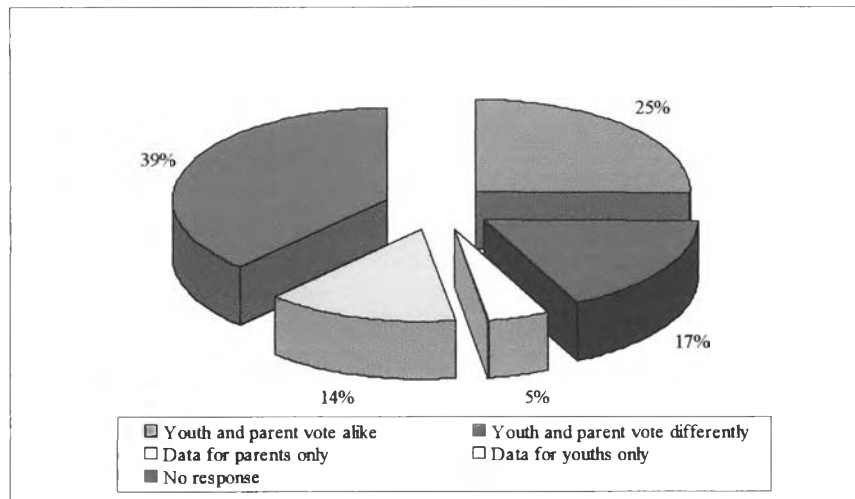
Figure 2.9.2: Opinion Poll [Age 15-24]



Source: Author

⁶² See appendix 2 and 3.

Figure 2.9.3: Which Party Will You and Your Parents Vote for?



Source: Author

In order to determine whether or not children and parents voted the same way, the questionnaire asked for both youths' and their parents' likely party preferences for the February 6th election. As Figure 2.9.3 shows, however, the overall responses were inconclusive in this regard.

Figure 2.9.4: Campaign Car of Mahachon Party



Source: Author's photograph

Figure 2.9.5: Poster on the Wall of the Village Leader's House



Source: Author's photograph

Figure 2.9.6: Campaigners



Source: Author's photograph

This chapter, contemporary ethnography of Nong Tao village shows that Nong Tao village has been in transition from a traditional society to a modernized society through the governmental policies, infrastructure, religious conversion, the educational system and so on. The following chapter, then, surveys the roles of the educated youth in this transitional stage of Karen community.