

‘On Sovereign Ground’

The Politics of Everyday Life:

Kachin at the Thai-Burma Border

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Statement of Candidate

I certify that the work in this thesis entitled “On Sovereign Ground: The Politics of Everyday Life, Kachin at the Thai-Burma Border” has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree to any other university or institution other than Macquarie University.

I also certify that the thesis is an original piece of research and it has been written by me. Any help and assistance that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been appropriately acknowledged.

In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis. The research presented in this thesis was approved by Macquarie University Ethics Review Committee, reference number HE31JUL2009-D00067.

Joseph R. Rickson

Date: December 11, 2017

For

Eve Sali Seng

You changed my world, and for that I am forever grateful.

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Needless to say, this work is by no means a purely individual accomplishment, any mistakes and inaccuracies that one may find are my own.

Abstract

The movement of people and their social organisation across nation-state and cultural borders is a primary research focus of contemporary anthropology. My thesis which centres on this general concern focuses on how state control over territory and people is exercised in local settlement areas wherein specific ethnic groups are moving across real or imagined borders, and on how local and state relations are articulated and negotiated. With particular focus on the Kachin at the Thai-Burma border, the thesis entails an ethnography of mobility and settlement analysing cross-border movement from specific points of rupture. It aims to challenge the preconceived image of fixed landscapes of independent nations and autonomous local or peripheral cultures and settlements. This thesis offers a critical analysis of questions surrounding the production and reproduction of “sovereignty”, “exceptionalism” and “belonging”.

This thesis shifts focus from a study of the effects of state policy on marginal people, which is basically a view from the state centre, to an ethnography concentrating on people at the margins, or periphery. The purpose of the thesis is to highlight and explore such ambiguity in the context of the historical movement and settlement of Kachin in northern Thailand. This thesis focusses on the certain aspects and process of the lives of individuals and regulatory institutions that constitute and refashion, so to speak, instances of exceptionalism.

Border politics are thus the primary focus of my research that investigates institutions and practices defining and controlling social space, sovereignty and the historical trajectories of negotiation across different power regimes. In effect, the thesis explores the degree to which the sum of the above is crystallised in the history of – and everyday life within – the Kachin village of Jinghpaw Kahtawng at the Thai-Burma border. What this shows us is the complexity and ambiguities of belonging and non-belonging for cross-border populations as they attempt to integrate into larger state institutions as well as simultaneously reproduce a connection to a perceived homeland.

Contents

Statement of Candidate	iii
Acknowledgements	v
Abstract	viii
Contents.....	ix
List of Maps	xi
List of Illustrations	xi
List of Tables.....	xi
Abbreviations	xii
Glossary of Kachin, Thai and Burmese Terms	xiv
Chapter One Introduction: Contours of Belonging.....	1
Mobility and Movement: The Question of Borders.....	1
Mobile Ethnicity	5
Framing Kachin Identity	8
Methods, Otherness and the Hierarchy of Origin	14
Living in the Village	18
Chapter Outline	22
Chapter Two Movement and Belonging: The Village as Centre.....	25
Borders are Everywhere and Nowhere	26
The Beginnings of a Village: Local History	30
Official History	36
Ethnic and Community Simplifications.....	38
Classification, Ordering and Administration	40
Construction of Non-Fit.....	43
Conclusion	44
Chapter Three Continuities and Divergences within Cross-Border Kachin	
Cultural and Social Practices	47
Political and Geographical Dimensions of Place.....	49
Kachin Social and Political Systems: Points of Oscillation.....	52
Colonial Ethno-Politics	56
Moves Toward Independence in Burma	59
Boundaries and Power Struggles	61
Conclusion	63
Chapter Four The Camp.....	65
Local Power Flows	67
Questioning Sovereignty and Territory: KIA Base in Northern Thailand.....	70
From Burma to Thailand.....	72

My Travels with Uncle Zau Hkam	76
KMT and KIA: Northern Burma to Northern Thailand	80
Life in the Camp	87
Contested Belonging	89
“I had a coin but threw it away”	94
Provisional Acceptance	97
(50) <i>Ning Hpring Rawt Malan Ninghtoi Masat Poi</i> : 50th Anniversary of the KIA	100
Conclusion	101
Chapter Five Border Camp to Border Village	105
Embodied Sovereignty: Expel and Contain	107
Checkpoints and Crossings	110
On Being “Civilised”: Religion as a Hierarchy	114
Borders, Mobility and Movement: “being part of the Christian community”	121
Connections and Re-Connections	127
Conclusion	131
Chapter Six The Non-Assimilable Subject	133
The Question of Home: or “A short story of how I have come from China to this place”	134
Jinghpaw-Thai Citizenship as Exception	137
Assistance as Control: Micro Zones of Development	142
“Law and Practice” Mapping and Being Mapped	148
Highland to Lowland or Simply Moving Closer to the Centre	153
Kachin–Thai Reconnections	158
Extra-Territoriality: The <i>Manau</i>	161
Conclusion	165
Chapter Seven Exceptions, Decisions and Borders	169
Epilogue	175
Bibliography	177
Appendix 1 Ethnic Group and Provincial Location in Northern Thailand	190
Appendix 2 Chiang Dao Historical Setting	192
Appendix 3 Historical Background of Wieng Jiang Dao (Chiang Dao city) and Wat Jai (Dong Thewi) Temple	195
Appendix 4 Chronology of Implementation of Identification Cards and Coins for Non-Thai Citizens in Thailand	198
Appendix 5 “a logger, a miner, a merchant, an office worker, a pastor” Movement from Northern Burma to Northern Thailand	202
A Rawang Pastor’s Story	202
Appendix 6 “A short story of how I have come from China to this place” Zau Hkam’s Story	205

Appendix 7 “ <i>a Burmese soldier, a prisoner, a factory worker, a pastor</i> ” Kachin Evangelicalism in a Shan Village	209
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List of Maps

Map 1: Burma, indicating internal state boundaries, and surrounding countries (Prepared by Judith Davis, 2015)	7
Map 2: Location of Jinghpaw Kahtawng and Pha Daeng National Park (field notebook, illustration by author, 2010).....	19
Map 3: Jinghpaw Kahtawng. Indicating the whole village cluster, and the separate Kachin and Akha settlement areas (field note book, illustration by author, 2010).....	42
Map 4: General movement patterns of the KIA into northern Thailand 1965–1975 (Created by Judith Davis, 2015).	75
Map 5: Location of the KIA and KMT camps and the contemporary villages of Jinghpaw Kahtawng and Nong Uk (field note book, illustration by the author).	77
Map 6: Highland areas of North-West Thailand (Prepared by Judith Davis, 2015).	108

List of Illustrations

Illustration 1: Kachin <i>Manau</i> posts with Thai and royal flags, in Jinghpaw Kahtawng, northern Thailand (field notebook, illustration by author, 2010).	1
Illustration 2: Cross-border family connections. Source: Illustration by author.	129

List of Tables

Table 1: Registered households under the jurisdiction of the RDP Nong Kheow	37
Table 2: Hill Tribe populations in 20 provinces of northern Thailand	190
Table 3: Ethnic group populations in 20 provinces of northern Thailand	190
Table 4: Ethnic group populations in Chiang Mai Province 2002	191
Table 5: Chronology of implementation of identification cards and coins for non-Thai citizens in Thailand	198

Abbreviations

BA	Burmese Army
BIA	Burmese Independent Army
BPP	Border Patrol Police
CFA	Community Forest Act
CPB	Communist Party of Burma
CPT	Communist Party of Thailand
CSOC	Communist Suppression Operations Command
FLCM	Frontier Labour for Christ Mission
IMPECT	Inter Mountain Peoples Education and Culture Association of Thailand
INGO	International Non-Government Organisation
KIA	Kachin Independence Army
KIO	Kachin Independence Organisation
KKY	<i>Ka Kwe Ye</i> – border guard force, Burma. Also referred to as the border guard militia.
KMT	Kuomintang
KNDO	Karen National Defence Organisation
KNU	Karen National Union
KPNT	Kachin People’s Network of Thailand
MNDO	Mon National Defence Organisation
MOI	Ministry of Interior (Thailand)
MTA	Muang Tai Army (under the umbrella of Shan United Army)
NDF	National Democratic Front
NFRA	National Forests Reserve Act

NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NMSP	New Mon State Party
NPA	National Park Act
NPN	Nationality Peoples Network
OKFA	Office of Kachin Foreign Affairs (also referred to as the Representative Office of Kachin Foreign Affairs ROKFA)
PKDS	Pan Kachin Development Society
PNDF	Pawng Yawng National Defence Force
RDP	Royal Development Project
RFD	Royal Forestry Department
SSA	Shan State Army
SSAE	Shan State Army East
SRI	Social Research Institute (Chiang Mai University)
SUA	Shan United Army
SAO	Sub-district Administrative Organisation
UHDP	Upland Holistic Development Project
UWSA	United Wa State Army
WCC	Wunpawng Christian Church, Chiang Mai, Thailand
WSA	Wildlife Sanctuary Act

Glossary of Kachin, Thai and Burmese Terms

Kachin Language Terms

<i>dama</i>	Kachin marriage system, ‘bride-takers’
<i>gumlao</i>	rebellious aristocracy chieftainship system
<i>gumsa</i>	feudal/hereditary aristocracy chieftainship system
<i>Jinghpaw Kahtawng</i>	Kachin village
<i>Jinghpaw mung</i>	Kachin domain
<i>Jinghpaw wunpawng</i>	Kachin collective association
<i>Karai Kasang</i>	name of superior spirit used when Kachin were animists, now used to refer to Christian God
<i>Madai</i>	Grand sky spirit
<i>Majoi Singra Bum</i>	Majoi Singra mountain from where it is believed the Kachin originate
<i>Manau</i>	traditional cultural dance previously associated with spirit offerings
<i>manau shading</i>	Manau posts
<i>mayu</i>	Kachin marriage system, ‘bride givers’
<i>mayu-dama</i>	Kachin marriage system of ‘bride givers’ and ‘bride takers’
<i>sara</i>	teacher
<i>shang lawt</i>	Kachin Revolution
<i>tsa pyi</i>	alcohol made from sticky rice

Thai Language Terms

<i>amphoe</i>	administrative district
<i>chao khao</i>	Hill Tribe
<i>chat</i>	nation
<i>changwat</i>	province
<i>chumchon</i>	community

<i>kanpathana</i>	development
<i>khet raksa phan sat pa</i>	wildlife sanctuary
<i>khon muang</i>	lowland Tai in northern Thailand
<i>khronkarn luang</i>	Royal Development Project (RDP)
<i>khwampenthai</i>	Thai-ness
<i>khwamruammue</i>	cooperation
<i>khru</i>	teacher
<i>mu ban</i>	community administrative unit
<i>mu ban saart</i>	clean village
<i>mo phi</i>	spirit healer or shaman
<i>mom chao</i>	member of the Thai Royal family
<i>nai amphoe</i>	district governor
<i>ngan</i>	a unit of area measurement equal to 400 square metres
<i>phama</i>	Burma
<i>rai</i>	a unit of area measurement equal to 1600 square metres or 0.16 hectare or 0.395 acre
<i>tambon</i>	administrative sub-district

Burmese Language Terms

<i>ka kwe ye</i>	border guard force/militia (Burma)
<i>lu yo can</i>	race
<i>myanma naing ngan</i>	Burmese Royal Realm, Central Burma
<i>nat</i>	spirit
<i>taingytha lu myo</i>	national race
<i>tatmadaw</i>	Burmese military
<i>tuin ran sa</i>	son of the country

The person who doesn't tremble while crossing a border doesn't know there is a border and doesn't cast doubt on their own definition. The person who trembles while crossing a border casts doubt on their own definition, not only on their passport, not only on their driver's license but also on every aspect and from their definition.

(Cixous 1993: 131).

In an extensive plain there stood a fairly high mound of earth, about equidistant from the camps of Caesar and Ariovistus. Here they came, as agreed, to hold their conference ... On reaching the place Caesar began by recalling the favours that he himself and the Senate had conferred on Ariovistus – how he had been honoured with the titles 'King' and '*Friend*' ... pointing out that very few princes had been granted such distinctions, which were usually reserved for those who had rendered important services to Rome ... [Caesar to Ariovistus, King of the Aedui] Unless you take yourself off from this country, and your army with you, it won't be as a '*Friend*' that I shall treat you.

(Caesar 1951: 51, 53; emphasis added).

Chapter One

Introduction: Contours of Belonging



Illustration 1: Kachin *Manau*¹ posts with Thai and royal flags, in Jinghpaw Kahtawng, northern Thailand (field notebook, illustration by author, 2010).

Mobility and Movement: The Question of Borders

All societies have a central narrative, be it historical, political, and cultural or a complex synthesis based upon their histories and dominant culture, as to who is inside and outside of the boundary (Butler 2007: 4-5).

When Hka Pan, the village leader invited me to attend a meeting at his house, soon after I arrived at Jinghpaw Kahtawng, the village where I would spend the next 20 months, I did not know what to expect. I assumed those attending would be Kachin and the meeting would be

¹ A *manau* is a traditional cultural dance previously associated with spirit offerings.

conducted in *Jinghpaw*². I was surprised that those attending were not only Kachin but also Akha and Lahu. They chatted quietly in Thai³ waiting for the village headman to arrive. I first met Zau Hkam a 65-year-old Kachin man, at this meeting. He sat quietly while I introduced myself to the others who had gathered early in the morning around a small table in front of the headman's house. It was early winter. The sun blazed, and the soil was dry. Wind picked up the fine red dirt and blew it in our direction, something I became used to during the dry season. The rain had stopped early that year. Conversations soon shifted towards the long dry months ahead. One woman commented with some concern in her voice, "It's only December and the reservoir is already low." Zau Hkam, spoke to me in Thai as he sipped green tea:

"I heard you would be coming here,⁴ I am from the same clan as your wife. We are related."

Joe: "Really, how should we call each other?"

"Call me Uncle. I think following Kachin lineage you are my brother-in-law, but I am much older than you, so just call me Uncle."

He continued: "What are you doing here?"

Joe: "I have come to learn about Kachin cultural practices."

"I can't help you with any of that. I don't know very much about Kachin culture and tradition. I am not much help. My life is not very interesting. I have spent most my life in the forest fighting with the Kachin Army. I was born in China and walked to northern Kachin State with my family when I was a young boy. I helped the Kachin Army, travelled to the India then came to Thailand. You should ask someone else about Kachin culture."

This initial conversation with Zau Hkam, even though he might have considered his life uninteresting, became a constant touchstone for me as my understanding of the interactions between perceived cultural knowledge and transborder movement took shape. Over the following 20 months I spent many hours with Zau Hkam and other community elders speaking specifically about these topics. As it turned out, Zau Hkam knew much more about Kachin social systems and cultural practices than this first meeting indicated.

This study examines the historical and political processes by which transborder residents of a Kachin village, Jinghpaw Kahtawng, in Chiang Dao district, northern Thailand are rendered both assimilable and non-assimilable in the eyes of the Thai state as they simultaneously attempt to reproduce a sense of belonging in Thailand and to their Kachin homeland. Focusing on the establishment of the only officially recognised Kachin settlement

² Jinghpaw are one of the six ethnic groups under the classification Kachin. Jinghpaw is the most commonly used language amongst all of the groups (Leach 1954; Maran 1967; Sadan 2007a; Tegenfeldt 1974).

³ In this village Thai is used as the common language between the different ethnic groups and government officials.

⁴ Before I travelled to the village, I spent two weeks familiarising with and introducing myself to the Kachin community in Chiang Mai city.

in Thailand I analyse their historical movement from northern Burma to northern Thailand, highlighting the shift from being first considered a ‘friend’ to the Thai State and then ‘non-friend’ to reach a more ambiguous contemporary (and evolving) status on both sides of the border. What this thesis also demonstrates is a Kachin narrative of shifting relationships providing political and cultural space for a marginalised group that emphasises what an internalised sense of belonging means in their everyday life. Approached this way the importance of a non-statist view is highlighted through a move away from sovereignty as a product of the nation-state, in this case Thailand and Burma, to a position of Kachin as active agents framing “friend” or “enemy” narrative. Within this trajectory, the Kachin demonstrate an ongoing negotiation with complex politicised forms of belonging and non-belonging. The arrival of the first battalion of Kachin Independence Army (KIA) soldiers into Thailand and the subsequent shifts in relationships between the KIA and Thai Army are representative of such a fluid and dynamic representation of individualised understandings of sovereignty, friend and enemy.

The interaction of power, sovereignty, mobility and identity is the primary focus of my thesis. Narratives of movement demonstrate personalised linkages between an imagined past and contemporary inclusion within wider Kachin (or pan-Kachin) cultural structures and as such deliver identifiable traces of ethno-political consciousness. Examining the contemporary experiences and historical resonances of the Kachin in their village in Thailand reveals not only the ruptures in geo-political notions of a unified state replete with secure borders, but also an oscillation between competing forms of social legitimacy.

What follows is therefore an ethnography of movement and belonging embedded within an examination of state and local formations of sovereignty and its impacts. I will demonstrate that human mobility directly affects the conceptualisation of place, territory and sovereignty. My interest is on a group of people, Kachin, originally from northern Burma who established first a military base within Thai territory that, in turn, laid the groundwork for the only officially recognised Kachin settlement in Thailand. Linking historical narratives with contemporary experiences of this small group of Kachin sheds light on how power at the state’s margins is produced and reproduced between the Kachin, state agencies, military and other ethnic groups. As I will demonstrate, mobility and its contingent embrace within evolving extensions of sovereignty in the border zone where the Kachin village is located also challenges the primacy of territory within nationalist narratives and its unquestioned linear connection between people, polity and place (Malkki 1995, 1992; Ardent 1973; Anderson 2006; Herzfeld 2005).

Three primary questions frame my research: (1) how do Kachin understand the significance of boundaries, addressing their role and position vis-à-vis mobile ethnic populations and the state in exposing contradiction's in power and control? (2) how is ethnicity and power embodied and articulated in border regions within specific political and discursive fields of knowledge and practice? And, (3) what is historically specific about the politics of *Kachin-ness* in the context of cross-border movement?

To answer these questions my analysis of the Kachin cross-border movement builds upon a historical investigation of Kachin geographical and political mobility. It looks at how they established communities and settlement away from the cultural and governing centre, extended their spatial influence to defend themselves from their enemies, and secured their rights as an ethnic group to reinforce and sustain their personal and cultural identity as Kachin. In this light, life in the Kachin village offers an entry point to uncovering a history of forces structuring internal and external relationships as the Kachin moved across political and institutional borders.

How the Kachin grapple with complex pressures encountered under evolving national regimes unveils the workings of local and state narratives of power and in so doing illuminates broader aspects of life in border zones populated by a diversity of ethnic and mobile peoples. Anthropologists have long researched the movement of people, their knowledge and beliefs, traditions, social organisations, kinship relations as well as the processes through which the essential nature of these elements are transmitted across space and time; across communities, settlements, national borders and generations (Wang 1997, 1991; Sadan 2007a and 2009; Leach 1954). Importantly for what follows, the establishment of Jinghpaw Kahtawng, near the border with Burma, and the continued movement of peoples across this and other regional borders⁵, demonstrate interlocking rubrics of sovereignty and exceptionalism (Agamben 1998, 2005; Bigo and Tsoukala 2008). In turn, it directs investigation into how such movement challenges national sovereignty and security connected to governing politically sensitive borders. Hence, answering the above questions requires we acknowledge that the physical presence of a border does more than offer a geographic demarcation – it allows the generation of a complex set of overlapping social fields through which both people and concepts of ethnicity move. In this sense it uncovers the politicised

⁵ The Greater Mekong Sub-Region (GMS) is marked by movement. For data regarding the number of documented migrations within the region see World Bank (2012) *Gaining from migration: Trends and policy lessons in the Greater Mekong Sub-region*. However, the movement of undocumented peoples is significant and is often under reported. For further analysis regarding the numbers of undocumented peoples crossing borders in the GMS please refer to Lyttleton (2014) *Intimate economies of development: Mobility, sexuality and health in Asia* and Pierre-Arnaud Chouvy (2013) *Atlas of trafficking in Southeast Asia: The illegal trade in arms, drugs, people and counterfeit goods*.

machinations of sovereignty and how this impacts identity in complex ways. I also look at discursive impacts on a changing sense of identity and how meanings established by key structuring elements of life such as religion, concepts of kinship and belonging, symbolic demonstrations of power and otherness also play a key role in determining Kachin social fields and experiences.

Mobile Ethnicity

[Kachin] hardy dwellers of the rugged hills, a people responding to God's upward call
(Tegenfeldt 1974: i).

The Kachin people(s) are commonly categorised through both unity and divergence (Sadan 2007a). The latter is evident in terms of variations in location, lineage, political association and recognition of the term Kachin itself. At the same time, degrees of unity are asserted in shared cultural attributes that span the above divisions. The category Kachin is comprised of six principal lineages, which are deemed to have descended from a common ancestor; Jinghpaw, Lawngwaw (Maru, Lhaovo, Lhaovar), Zaiwa (Atsi, Atzi), Nung-Rawang, Lisu and Lachik (Lacid, Lashi) (Sadan 2007b: 34; Maran 1967; Lahpai 2007; Carrapiett 1929; Pungga 2005).

Lehman provides an overall description of the term Kachin and how it is used:

[The term] "Kachin" comes from the Jinghpaw word "Gakhyen", meaning "Red earth", a region in the valley of the two branches of the upper Irrawaddy with the greatest concentration of powerful traditional chiefs. It refers to a congeries of Tibeto-Burman-speaking peoples who come under the Jinghpaw political system and associated religious ideology (1963: 114).

The Kachin are widely dispersed throughout northern Burma, the Assam region of India, Yunnan Province of China, and northern Thailand. It is estimated that there are approximately one and a half million Kachin in Burma, predominantly found in Kachin State and Shan State. This figure is only an estimate as no comprehensive census has been conducted since the British colonial period. It is also estimated that there are 120,000 Kachin in China and 80,000 in India (Smith 1991; Lintner 1996, 1997; and Sadan 2007a). As well, there are significant migrant and refugee populations of Kachin in Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom, India and Malaysia. As a direct result of this dispersal, particular use of Kachin ethnic classifications, constructed vernacularly and officially, is central to understanding how Kachin represent themselves and are represented within local and state ethno-political discourse.

From an historical perspective both Hanson (1913) and Gilhodes (1922) seek to minimise internal distinctions and variations within the larger categorisation of the Kachin ethnic group and argue for a more homogeneous uniform grouping of Kachin (assuming that this categorisation is based on religious conversion/affiliation more than on ethnic/cultural characteristics). Leach, for his part, did not debate the extent to which these generalisations are justifiable (Hanson 1913 and Gilhodes 1922), but rather sought to ascertain how far a single and thereby unifying social structure prevails throughout the Kachin area (1954: 3) by asking, “is it legitimate to think of Kachin society as being organized throughout according to one particular set of principles or does this rather vague category Kachin include a number of different forms of social organisations?”



Map 1: Burma, indicating internal state boundaries, and surrounding countries
(Prepared by Judith Davis, 2015)

Among the different Kachin groupings, there are important cultural commonalities. Despite their linguistic differences, all of the Kachin sub-groups share notions of common ancestry, practice the same form of marriage system, have an almost homogenous customary law and social control system, and use Jinghpaw language for ritual purposes (Maran 1967: 133). It is important to recognise that all clan lineages and corresponding communities are

complex entities in their own right. Their dispersal across international boundaries has resulted in a type of spatial heterogeneity attributed to their historical experience of movement. So too, their affiliations to the category Kachin have been historically contested, reconfigured and renegotiated at both the local and national levels (Sadan 2007a). In China, the Jinghpaw are known as Jingpo under the classification of *minzu* (minority), as Singpho under the classification of Scheduled Tribes in India, and in Thailand they are classified as Kachin and *khon oppayop* (migrated peoples) (Lahpai 2007).⁶

There has been no accurate census taken on the numbers of Kachin in Thailand. The one formally recognised Kachin village in Thailand, which forms the ethnographic focus of subsequent chapters, consists of 76 households and 474 members (RDP Annual Report 2010: 1).⁷ Today, there are growing numbers of people who recognise themselves as Kachin living in Thailand, including Chiang Mai and Bangkok, the exact numbers of which are difficult to approximate. The movement of Kachin from northern Burma into northern Thailand illustrates particular relationships with modern-day borders and boundaries and represents a connection between the Kachin and the individual nation-states of China, India, Burma and Thailand. The subsequent spatial heterogeneity of movement, emerging over time, interacts with political contingencies at the local, regional and national levels.

Framing Kachin Identity

The colonial projects of boundary-making in Burma, and the subsequent practices in Thailand and China, have seen the Kachin divided and officially separated by the formalisation of state borders. Historical narratives of Kachin migration suggest that they originally migrated from a place called *Majoi Shingra Bum* (Naturally Flat Mountain) (Lintner 1997: 11; Lahpai 2007). However, anthropologists and ethno-historians offer different hypotheses vis-a-vis the Kachin's origins and patterns of migration. Their actual origins, some speculate, were in Mongolia around 200 BC, and then they migrated to Tibet in approximately 600 AD eventually arriving in the present-day Kachin State, Burma, around 700 AD (Wang 1997).

Chinese ethno-historians tend to speculate that the ancestors of the Kachin originated in the Qinghai-Xizang (Tibetan) Plateau around the source of the Irawaddy, Nu, Lancan, and

⁶ This term is not used solely to classify the Kachin. It is, in fact, a wider unofficial classification of people generally from Burma, who are residing legally or illegally in Thailand. The classification "*khon dang dao*", which literally means 'alien person', is an official categorisation with a corresponding identification card (see Appendix 3).

⁷ These were the most updated village statistics that the RDP possessed. They differ slightly from the figures quoted later in Chapter One from the signboard in front of the RDP office in the village.

Yangtze rivers (Wang 1997: 48). Wang (1997: 48) argued that numbers of Kachin had already migrated from the Tibetan Plateau to the headwaters of the Irrawaddy River (present-day Kachin State, Burma) during the fifth century. However, ambiguity persists regarding their precise origins and migration paths (Leach 1954; Wang 1997; Lintner 1997). Leach, who offered another explanation for the Kachin presence in northern Burma, focused on the ethno-history of the region rather than on linguistic similarities. He observed:

According to their own traditions, the Shan who established Hkamti Long found a state ruled over by a Tibetan Prince who had subjugated Kha-p'ok ... tribesmen. The Shan defeated the Tibetan Prince and ruled in his stead ... I assume that the local Kha-p'ok, etc., were my 'proto-Kachins' and that they were the same ethnic stock as modern Kachin (1954: 250).

Disputes over origins aside, the contemporary project of boundary making has interspersed the Kachin population in the region into three separate nation-states, that is, Burma, India and China. Smith (1991: 27) argued that Kachinland (current Kachin State) appears as a loosely independent domain ruled by traditional chiefs in pre-modern times. However, in 1885, the British annexation of the Burmese Kingdom not only ended the Konbaung Dynasty of Mandalay, but also incorporated the Kachin, along with other ethnic minorities domiciled in the frontier areas, under British rule (Smith 1991). Political unrest in Burma following independence in January 1948 has been a catalyst for the creation of ethnic armies and the dispersal of large numbers of Kachin and other regional ethnic groups (Sadan 2007a and 2013; Lahpai 2007).

One of the central issues that this thesis tackles is the construction and maintenance of ethnic and religious identities of border-crossing peoples, and, importantly the ways in which these practices influence how power at the border is shaped, negotiated and manifested. In this context, the interrelationship between religion and ethnic identity, and the ensuing encounters of power that have occurred between Christianity and the Thai state religion of Buddhism is of particular importance. The Kachin in Burma are commonly categorised as primarily Christian, an assumption that has its roots in their strong historical associations with the British colonial regime, and their subsequent conversion by foreign missionaries (Hanson 1913; Sadan 2007a; Linter 1997; Tegenfeldt 1974; Gilhodes 1922). In 1833, while stationed in Ava the capital of the Burman Kingdom, American missionaries Eugenio Kincaid and Oliver Cutter heard stories from Chinese and Shan traders of a "wild north, a virgin territory where local people had not yet embraced Buddhism or any other established religion" (Lintner 1997: 52). Unlike the Burman and Shan Buddhist populations the Kachin were traditionally animists. While they performed rituals and practiced animal sacrifice to different

spirits, their main belief was in a supreme spirit known as *Karai Kasang* and *Madai* a grand sky spirit that created the land, animals and humans.

Lintner suggested, this system of rituals and practices “basically combined a fear of the *nats* [spirits] with sacrifices to ward off evil” (1997: 60-61, original emphasis). The Kachin also have a version of the Great Flood and a myth that makes reference to a lost book that is shared by other ethnic groups in the region, for example, the Lahu, Wa, Karen and Lisu in China and Thailand. Missionary movement⁸ into the Kachin Hills in 1836 represented not only an encounter of power (Tegenfeldt 1974: 308) and an external ‘civilising project’, but also a fundamental catalyst of social, geographic and political transformation that is present today throughout the hills of northern Burma and in the Kachin village in Thailand today.

The spread of Christianity in Kachin State in the early 1900s followed a pattern of moving new converts out of the hills. It was in essence a strategy that was employed “to remove new believers from the pressures and temptations to revert to Animism ... Such a shift to the plains not only removed the new believers from an Animist environment, but also brought them together to form a larger Christian community, with its advantages of mutual encouragement and assistance.” (Tegenfeldt 1974: 320; see also Hanson 1913). Historically, kinship linkages were not destroyed in the encounter of Christianity and Kachin Animists, but became “bridges” for effective diffusion of the Gospel. In essence “the strength of Kachin kinship ties was such that there were a number of ‘bridges of God’ still intact through these villages, over which the Gospel continued to move” (Tegenfeldt 1974: 323).

The arrival of the Gospel in the Kachin Hills saw the Kachin involved in a direct encounter with American and Karen missionaries. More fundamentally, it prompted an encounter between the Christian faith and Kachin animist belief systems (Tegenfeldt 1974; Dingrin 2013; Lating 1996). Tegenfeldt (1974: 308) succinctly suggested that “this encounter was not a friendly one”. Missionaries employed strategies including: “the power of the school, the printed page, of preaching, of prayer, and the attractiveness of Christian helpfulness and love” to win the people over to the Christian faith (Tegenfeldt 1974: 308). The significance of the Kachin conversion was profound: “in the early years, becoming a Christian was looked upon as not only embracing a foreign religion, but as actually becoming a foreigner, a member of an alien tribe, associated with the white man” (Tegenfeldt 1974: 315).

⁸ The majority of the early missionaries were Baptist they included Eugenio Kincaid, Josiah Cushing, and Ola Hanson, for example. By the early 1870s French Catholic priests arrived in Bhamo, lower Kachin State. They were followed later by missionaries from the Church of Christ and Pentecostals from Yunnan Province in China to northern Kachin State in the mid-1900s.

In 1890 Baptist missionary Dr Ola Hanson began transcribing the Jinghpaw language using the Romanised script, in the process creating new internal categorisations between the primitive “traditional” Kachin (animists) and the civilised “modern” Kachin (Christian). Conversion to Christianity involved not only a significant religious and social shift but also geographic readjustment. This point represents a transformation of the highland/lowland socio-political dichotomy of civilisation and power. Christian families were encouraged to move from their highland villages to establish communities in lowland areas near established churches and schools and, most importantly, to be close to other Kachin Christians. This highland/lowland division is an important element in both Burma and Thailand. Such a move not only removed recent converts from animist villages but helped to establish a larger Christian community in the lowlands. These new communities also had an economic advantage given their proximity to markets and towns (see Leach 1954; Tegenfeldt 1974).

Relatively little research has been undertaken into pre-colonial relations between the Burman polity and the Kachin peoples (Sadan 2007a). Prior to the arrival of the missionaries in the Kachin Hills (1880s) the Kachin and other highland communities lacked a literary tradition. Sadan argues that without historical documentation of relations with the Burman centre in their own language in which a localised version of history can be presented: “Locating the identity Kachin historically, and determining its relation with the Burmese centre has, therefore, traditionally been to a great extent dependent upon the documentation of the ‘other’ ” (Sadan 2007a 36). Sadan further observed “we can ‘find’ Kachin only by its illumination through Burmese (or Chinese or Shan) texts” (2007a: 39). Shifting a focus to Thailand, in her more recent book Sadan (2013) noted how the small Kachin village of Jinghpaw Kahtawng had developed networks and relationships with Thai military and civil authorities. She argued that the village constitutes a cultural space, “as a precursor to possible future political opportunities” (2013: 10) within the context of a Thai Buddhist monarchy, their own Christian faith and ethnic identity, and allowing the Royal Development Project to direct their experiment with ‘development’ under wider categorisations under Thai Hill Tribe Policy (see Appendices 1 and 4).

Importantly for our purposes, Sadan (2007) highlighted shortcomings in deriving an understanding of Kachin from narrow accounts. First, the nature of Kachin–Burmese relations (from a centre–periphery viewpoint), as historically recorded by the dominant centre, creates a situation where the legitimacy and validation of a Kachin history is based on Burmese sources and accounts. Second, due to the lack of local data, the category Kachin has reduced legitimacy and can be interpreted as a colonial construct; that is, as a mere invention of the British colonial period (Hpauwung and Chyauchyi n.d.; Sadan 2013).

A lack of writing and local data should not be taken to mean there are no other mechanisms for recording and reproducing cultural identity in both historical and contemporary contexts. In what follows I consider how ‘travelling’ representations continue to discursively produce modes of categorisation. The complexities of terminology and the political discourses in which Kachin ‘ethnicification’ is embedded are significant. The Kachin (in Burma) themselves have contested the notion that Kachin is not an indigenous term of self-reference (Sadan 2007a: 42). The more commonly used term “*Jinghpaw*” designates not only a specific lineage but a language as well. Together they form affinal kinship relations. The term *wunpawng* has been increasingly used as an indigenous classifier of self-reference, that is, *Jinghpaw Wunpawng*. However, its meaning is open to multiple interpretations and subject to various translations. Sadan (2007: 54) further argued that usage of the term as an ethnonym is relatively recent. It is important also to note that many non-Jinghpaw groups under the Kachin *Wunpawng* umbrella feel threatened by the dominance of Jinghpaw language, and social and historical discourses (Sadan 2007a: 61).

In part, because of such social, linguistic and geographic complexities, the Kachin have held an important place in the studies of modern social anthropology since the publication of Leach’s *Political Systems of Highland Burma* in 1954. However, their use and meaning of the name Kachin remains ambiguous. Tegenfeldt (1974: 11) noted that even the spelling of the term Kachin varied greatly (*Ke-Cheen*, *Ka-Khyen*, *Ka-Khyen*) until the 1880s when the current spelling came into general usage. Josiah Cushing wrote in 1880 that: “The name Ka-Khyen is an appellation of purely Burman origin” (Cushing, cited in Tegenfeldt 1974: 11). Ola Hanson, an early missionary in Upper Burma, supported the notion that the term Kachin most likely originated from a combination of Shan and Chinese terms for “wild men” (Hanson 1913: 18). Leach (1954: 41) shared Cushing’s view, that is, that the term was essentially a Romanisation of the Burmese term. This term, Leach argued, was used loosely to apply to groups living in the north-east frontiers of Upper Burma (Leach 1954). It was later used as a general term (except for the Palaung) for the upland populations living in the northern Shan State and in today’s Kachin State, a polyglot population incorporating speakers of languages and dialects now known as Jinghpaw, Gauri, Maru, Atsi, Lashi and Lisu. This implies that Kachin were a cultural not a linguistic category (Leach 1954: 41-43). By the end of the nineteenth century, usage of the geographic classification Kachin Hills became commonplace in British administrative language. This artificial categorisation of the Kachin came to refer to someone “who lived in a particular kind of terrain rather than a person of

particular cultural characteristics” (Leach 1954: 42-43).⁹ Wang (1997: 5) observed that with the end of British rule in 1948, the term “Kachin” received additional political meaning with the creation of the Kachin State within the Union of Burma.

The first major movement of the Kachin into Thailand consisted of three hundred soldiers from the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) who walked across the Thai-Burma border checkpoint in April 1965. They established their headquarters in Thailand at a camp fifteen kilometres away on a hilltop. Over the next 10 years, Kachin soldiers established close ties with the nearby Kuomintang (KMT) battalion and the Thai military stationed in the area. The KIA had complete autonomy over their camp, collected taxes and traded freely with the Thai Army and lowland market towns (Interview, former KIA soldier, Chiang Mai 2010). In 1975, the camp disbanded and relations with the Thai military deteriorated. The remaining KIA soldiers received orders to return to Burma; however, many stayed and lived scattered in local villages on the Thai side for the next seven years. With the assistance of a Kachin (Rawang) pastor, the first Kachin village in Thailand was founded on 5 February 1982 very close to the original site of the camp and officially recognised by the state administration in 1984.

Jinghpaw Kahtawng found its place at the centre of competing forces where from the 1960s a mosaic of state and non-state agents have controlled the border region north of Chiang Dao District, Chiang Mai Province. Violence and control over people, resources and bureaucratic elements such as opium tax, were monopolised neither by the state nor by one specific actor. Control was maintained by a fragmented system of authority over pockets of land and trading routes that went from northern Shan and Kachin states in Burma to the local market towns of Chiang Dao and Fang, and further to Chiang Mai and Bangkok. The border areas of northern Thailand and southern Shan State, Burma, have a long and complex history of trade, conflict and the movement of people. The area on both sides of the border is ethnically diverse and home to various groups such as the Lisu, Lahu, Akha, Shan, Haw Chinese, Wa, Thai Yuan (northern Thai), Shan, Palaung and Kachin, Thai and Burmese. From the mid-1950s to the present, pockets of territory were simultaneously occupied and controlled by the KIA, KMT 3rd and 5th battalions, Kokang Army (*ka kway yae*: border guard force), Shan State Army (SSA), Shan State Army East (SSAE), Shan United Army

⁹ Leach (1954: 43) clearly outlined two separate occasions from British government directives issued in 1892 and 1893. “Kachin tribes and clans within our line of outposts and settled villages ... must be placed in every way on the same footing as the Burmese Shan and others among whom they have settled.” Here Kachin is a cultural category (1893). “The Kachin Hills were to be administered in so far as they were included within the provisional area of our administration on distinct lines from the lowland tracts, where alone ordinary law and ordinary taxes were to be enforced. Here Kachin is a geographical category.”

(SUA), United Wa State Army (UWA) and the Thai Army. The size and area of authority of these competing armies waxed and waned depending upon the movement patterns of soldiers and civilians. These locations, and the complex histories of inclusion-exclusion they encompass, are the sites and subjects of my research.

Methods, Otherness and the Hierarchy of Origin

Let us not seek to solidify, to turn the otherness of the foreigner into a thing. Let us merely touch it, brush by it, without giving it a permanent structure (Kristeva 1991: 3).

While from some points of view, borders and the experiences fostered in these zones can be seen as both exceptional and non-exceptional depending on how one looks at them (Lyttleton 2014) my intention is to address the establishment and life in Jinghpaw Kahtawng as a very particular phenomenon through a critical analysis of the production and reproduction of sovereignty, exceptionalism and belonging. From this vantage point, I argue that the interaction of the centre and the periphery, that is, the nation-state and the local cultural group, requires analysis of how state policy associated with surveillance, power and control, is in turn embodied and resisted. To achieve this, I will explore the lives of individuals and regulatory institutions that constitute and refashion, so to speak, instances of exceptionalism and thereby ambiguity in the context of the historical movement and settlement of Kachin in northern Thailand. This shows the complexity and multi-faceted nature of belonging and non-belonging for cross-border populations as they attempt to integrate into larger state institutions while maintaining a connection to a perceived homeland. I propose that we need to think of border populations as active agents within the specific social fields that constitute the generative and volatile nature of border landscapes. To uncover these processes, I document the ways in which Jinghpaw Kahtawng residents navigate classifications of legal and illegal, belonging and non-belonging at the local and regional level.

My key position is that while the dynamics of border life are inevitably embedded within a larger framework of ethnic politics, state policy and strategies of control and surveillance at the macro-level, they operate and are experienced at the local level. Hence, in order to uncover these phenomena, my research incorporates life stories in the form of narratives of rupture and reunification at the personal and community levels. In order to gain these localised insights and address larger questions raised by the presence of this village about the significance of boundaries, the embodiment of 'sovereign' power and the cultural politics of mobile ethnicity, I spent nearly two years in Jinghpaw Kahtawng.

I began my field research in Jinghpaw Kahtawng in December 2009. This particular village is situated approximately two kilometres from the Thai-Burma border crossing locally known as *kiewphawok* in Chiang Dao District, Chiang Mai Province. According to official statistics posted on large colourful boards at the office of the Royal Development Project (RDP) that encompasses the village, it has 64 households consisting of 550 residents. Akha, Lahu and Lawa villages also lie within the geographical boundaries of the RDP site (RDP Office, Jinghpaw Kahtawng, 2010). Immediate surrounding areas are distinguished by military checkpoints, development projects, and land categorised as protected areas. Jinghpaw Kahtawng is located in an ethnically diverse region that includes Lisu, Akha, Lahu, Yunnan Haw Chinese,¹⁰ Kachin, Shan, Lawa, and Palaung alongside northern Thai villages.

Throughout this research, I was presented with the challenge of looking past the conventional picture of the state as “a rationalised administrative form of political organisation that becomes weakened or less fully articulated along its territorial or social margins” (Das and Poole 2004: 3). To correct this image, a re-configuring of social space in border areas is required. I only saw the official border a handful of times (as it was so often closed during my fieldwork). However, it shaped not only the lives of so many people in the area, but also my questions, interviews and understanding of the area.

I had previously been involved with several local organisations working with different ethnic groups in northern Thailand on issues concerning resource management, forestry policy and citizenship. Yet, I had never heard of a Kachin village in Thailand when I joined several of my classmates from Chiang Mai University in 2002 to see a traditional Kachin *Manau*.¹¹ I returned to the village several times over the years; however, it was my initial impression of the community that stayed with me. Here was a village comprised of an ethnic group from northern Burma openly celebrating their cultural practices and connections to their homeland (Kachinland, northern Burma). The local authorities were aware that they were a recently migrated community, yet they were permitted to stay and officially given land. Exploring this seemingly anomalous situation became an abiding interest for me.

In addition to village surveys and contextual archival material, my data collection has focused on compiling life stories through talking to the residents about their lives in Burma and Thailand, how they got here, and what they hoped for in the future. The narrative

¹⁰ In his book titled, *The Haw: Traders of the Golden Triangle*, Andrew Forbes (1997) explained that the ‘Haw’ are essentially Chinese of the periphery residing in the upland areas of Thailand, Burma, Laos and Yunnan. They are predominantly Yunannese Mandarin speakers.

¹¹ A traditional cultural dance previously associated with spirit offerings. It is widely believed that there are ten different types of *Manau*. Five of the most significant include the: (1) *Sut Manau* (2) *Rawt Malan* or *Padang Manau* (3) *Ju Manau* (4) *Kum Ran Manau* and (5) *Sha Dip Hpawt Manau* festivals.

approach illustrates a diverse and complex interconnection between individual and collective experiences highlighted through repression and resistance, mobility and permanence, as well as containment and exclusion. Most importantly for what follows are the cracks in the totalising discourses on borders, sovereignty and nationality that appeared through their telling of stories. Their re-telling introduced encounters, which as Mattingly (2010: 9) described, “have their temporal place within even larger narrative horizons: they are *historical moments*. They belong as episodes not only within personal, familial, and institutional lives, but within national and global ones as well [original emphasis].”

Goodley et al. (2004: ix) suggested that a focus on life histories are important because: “Notions of identity are linked into projects by which people write their own lives in varying conditions of alienation and empowerment.” Localised narratives of Kachin, during different historical periods, tell of heavily armed battalions of KIA soldiers freely crossing the Thai border checkpoint, establishing an army camp and village on Thai territory, protecting the Thai border from Burmese socialist incursion, trading opium, jade and elephant tusks for weapons and military supplies with the Thai Army. They tell of holding hands running in the darkness through the forest to avoid being caught to reach the safety of the village, fighting the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT) to help liberate northern Thailand, being arrested and held in detention for not having a Thai identification card, and, in one case, serving seven years in prison for clearing agricultural land deemed to be in a national park. These details underline the incongruities between national history and the actual lived experiences of the local population.

It was several months before people began to share their stories openly with me, albeit slowly at first. Then, it seemed like my days were spent listening to people’s tales, sipping tea and taking notes when I could. There was a distinct historical complexity and intimacy woven into the telling of the stories of their lives; and, much like the village itself, it was accentuated by its geographic mobility and ethnic diversity. For many people, sharing their experiences with me was the first time that they had spoken about these events in any detail; and, for many, it was the first time that such details were recorded.

As a case in point, one morning when I was sitting outside of a house with a group of men waiting for the Christian prayer meeting to finish, one of the men in the group lent over and whispered to me “I was in the Burmese Army [BA]”. It was as if this was a secret he had not exposed elsewhere, and given the animosity that exists between the current Burmese Army and the KIA his revelation was startling. Storytelling in the village, or more specifically the retelling of personal backgrounds and histories is performed at a personal level. But it

contains pieces that can be linked to wider regional and national political events. While everyone knows little pieces of each other's histories, such as where they came from and their clan lineage, very seldom are stories of the past openly shared except among close family or friends.

One interview that stood out for me started with the statement that: "a lot of bad things have happened here in the village, people don't talk very much about the past". On several occasions when I was asking people about their lives there were tears, thinking of those left behind, there was also anger at having what was once theirs taken away by the Burmese Army. On our first meeting one Kachin man asked me: "Do you speak Burmese?" I replied: "Only a few mispronounced words." "I never want to hear Burmese again; it makes me angry when I hear Burmese, the Burmese Army took my land and business," he replied.

By the end of my fieldwork, I had collected details of over 40 family trees, 20 life stories as well as general information from every household in the community. I also attended the Kachin Baptist Church in Chiang Mai (Wunpawng Christian Church, WCC) and interviewed several people residing in Chiang Mai who had previously lived in the village. I was also able to attend the KIO¹²/KIA's 50th anniversary in Chiang Mai. My interviews extended to local government staff with whom I discussed citizenship registration and budget allocation, to Thai soldiers at the various checkpoints and border crossing, to the commander of the Queen's Community Development army battalion, the RDP staff in the village, and the RDP Chiang Mai headquarters staff.

I also spoke at some length with a member of an American missionary family living in Chiang Mai, who had previously lived in Kachin State, Burma before being expelled by the Ne Win Socialist government, NGO staff working in the village and those based in Chiang Mai, Lahu, Akha, Shan and Palaung villagers from surrounding communities, representatives from the KIO residing in Chiang Mai, district officials regarding citizenship and land registration, and a local Buddhist monk at a monastery in Chiang Dao who had collected a history of the area (see Appendix 2). Further contacts were made with Forestry Department officials, Kachin students studying in Chiang Mai, and Kachin pastors visiting from Burma. I waited with villagers at local and district government offices, and attended an ethnic sports carnival organised by the army, district government and RDP. I also attended the Father's Day celebrations for the king, the Kachin *Manau* festival, as well as village and RDP meetings.

¹² The Kachin Independence Organisation (KIO) is the political wing of the Kachin Independence Army (KIA).

I conducted interviews in Thai with many of the villagers and all of the government officials, RDP staff and military.¹³ At various times throughout my fieldwork, I worked with two assistants who helped me with translation from Jinghpaw, Rawang or Burmese into English. Interviews that required translation were recorded, transcribed and then translated into English. I personally translated all interviews recorded in Thai. Before the start of each interview, my assistant and the interviewee spoke at length about how they are related and how they should refer to each other. Having assistants who were Kachin and from outside of the village proved beneficial. They were seen as part of the wider Kachin community clan network without any connections to local village politics.

Over the course of 20 months I spent time in the nearby Haw Chinese town, going to the market, buying construction supplies and chicken feed. I was made aware early in my stay that migrated families of KMT soldiers established this town. Through the collection of local histories, I became aware of the image of the Chinese community's association with drug trafficking and illicit cross-border trade. On several occasions, I attempted to meet and speak to the town leader and his assistant. Each time we arranged a meeting at a local noodle shop in town: they never agreed to meet at their private homes. In addition, each time, while I waited, I received a phone call to say that they were busy and unable to meet. However, as I sat eating noodles, I spoke with the restaurant owner's daughter, a recent graduate from Ramkamhaeng University in Bangkok. I could tell this from her graduation picture hanging on the wall above the noodle pot. She had returned to the village to help in the family business. She explained that the people here do not like to talk with outsiders. Over many months and many bowls of noodles, she explained to me the history of the Chinese settlement in the area and how the cross-border trade works even when the border is officially closed. However, through informal discussions with local business operators with whom I became familiar, for example, food vendors and shop assistants, I found alternative ways to gather information on cross-border trade in the area. As one shop assistant explained: "When the gate [border crossing] is closed people carry the goods through the forest on foot. They get up to 20 baht a kilogram."

Living in the Village

The turn off from the main road to the village is easy to see from a distance. The large pictures of the King Bhumibol and Queen Sirikit mark the entrance to the village, serve as a symbol of power and of *Thai-ness*. Similar pictures of the king and queen can also be seen at

¹³ Over the course of the previous 10 years during which I lived and worked in Thailand, I became fluent in speaking and reading central Thai and could converse in the northern Thai dialect.

the nearest official border crossing, standing as markers of the boundaries of state power, or the start of their power depending of course upon the direction that one is travelling.



Map 2: Location of Jinghpaw Kahtawng and Pha Daeng National Park (field notebook, illustration by author, 2010)

A woman sitting next to me at the first village meeting I attended, holding her grandchild in her arms, asked laughingly in Thai: “This is a Kachin village in Thailand, I am Akha, my husband is Lahu, and we are from Burma.”¹⁴ What language should we speak?” Although this was a chance encounter, her brief comment sparked my interest in cross-border movement, and in the complexity of ethnicity and belonging in this village. Several other people at the table joined in the laughter; her question went unanswered. Just then, a staff member from the RDP (*khronkarn luang*) arrived. Seemingly unfazed by my presence he sat down and said: “This year we are introducing a ‘Clean Village’ [*mu ban saart*]¹⁵ and every house must place a garbage bin in front of their house and dispose of their garbage once a week. There is too much paper and food wrappings lying around. Streets in the city are clean, so why is there so much garbage here in the village?”

¹⁴ On this occasion the respondent was speaking in Thai using the Thai word *phama* to refer to Burma.

¹⁵ The direct translation of *mu ban sa art* is “clean village”. However, as I will delineate in Chapter Five when used in terms of Thai government projects it has a more complex meaning that relates to village development and the perceived hierarchy of ‘civilization’ between the Thai majority and the ethnic minorities or Hill Tribes.

It was only after his short speech that he turned his attention to me and asked what I was doing in the village. After listening to my explanation, he told me I could call him *khru*¹⁶ Prasit. Then he asked me another question: “Do you know that Kachin have five sub-groups?” He could name them with the help of others sitting at the table. When one of the people sitting at the table mentioned that there were in fact six sub-groups and Lisu was one of them in the classification system commonly used in Burma,¹⁷ he stopped, looked at the villagers and me, and then told all those listening; “Lisu are not a sub-group of Kachin following the Thai government classification system, which is also used by local non-government organisations”, reaffirming official classification differ across borders and political systems.

Another woman at the meeting, a Lisu from Putao in northern Kachin State, had been living in the area for only four years. Zau Hkam explained that she originally lived in Jinghpaw Kahtawng but had recently married a Lisu man and moved to the nearby Lisu village, and had received Thai citizenship. Zau Hkam commented that while some new arrivals in the village received Thai citizenship, the older residents still had not. “The older generations still hold onto their Jinghpaw identity, we are Jinghpaw and have always been Jinghpaw, and because of this Thai authority will not give us citizenship.”

After I settled in Chiang Mai, I familiarised myself with the local Kachin community. I visited Kachin families and the Kachin Church over a period of two weeks before I travelled to the village. Through these connections I was able to arrange the rental of a wooden house in the village from a local Lahu woman, Ame, for 700 baht (\$23AUD) a month. Ame was living with her three-year-old grandson. In the compound, there was one wooden house on stilts and a separate bamboo kitchen and Ame explained that she would move into the latter with her grandson. She spoke Lahu, Chinese, a little Thai and some Jinghpaw (Kachin). Ame used to live and work in a Church of Christ missionary compound in Chiang Mai. She had met her husband there before moving to the village in the mid-1980s.

The house I rented needed some repairs and it was pointed out to me that “you need to raise chickens!” I sought the assistance of the villagers for the house renovations. The repairs included fixing the water tank, plugging holes in the roof, and going to the forest to cut bamboo. I was told “don’t worry; it’s not illegal to cut bamboo. But, if you cut the large trees the forest officials will arrest you.”

¹⁶ In Thai the word *khru* means teacher. It suggests a status associated with knowledge and power.

¹⁷ This classification system, and the political significance it has for the Kachin in Thailand, will be discussed in Chapter Five.

The water supply to the five villages under the control of the RDP is fed by a rainwater reservoir located on a small ridge to the south of the Kachin village. Towards the end of the rainy season in October, the reservoir begins to run dry. The villagers are forced to find alternative water sources because by December the water stops running. However, the RDP has its own self-contained water tanks that provide water to the RDP office and staff accommodation all year round. As well, it has two smaller open reservoirs that they use for their agriculture test plots. Villagers can also use the water from these reservoirs; but the majority chose not to due to the poor water quality.

Several households now have rainwater tanks¹⁸ connected to their homes: they provide additional water supplies during the dry season. However, when the reservoir dries up each year, and there is no longer any running water, the villagers take as many buckets and containers as possible to the one tap that the RDP opens at the entrance of the village. The line forms early in the morning with many people pushing two-wheeled trolleys to and from their homes. This is laborious work taking several hours to complete. I would drive around the village early in the morning asking if people needed to go to the water tank. I helped them to place their containers in the back and drove them to the water pipe. While waiting in line for water, we talked about the weather, the price of avocados, local and regional politics, and life in general. It was from these conversations that I was able to gain a greater understanding of their lives and how they understand, interpret and give meaning to everything going on around them.

With the help of many village members, the initial stages of my time in the village was occupied preparing a chicken coop, a vegetable garden, a kitchen, and repairing the roof of the house in which I stayed for the next two years. While helping they taught me Jinghpaw (Kachin) language. We talked about mundane topics such as the weather, the price of rice and corn, and the lack of water in the village. These initial questions and direction were seemingly far removed from my topic of state power and borders. Nevertheless, I was soon to discover that the way people spoke about life directly alluded to an intimate connection with borders, boundaries and state power that was contradictory to the Thai state's narrative of its borders and the significance of territory in the construction of the nation. For example, the ways in which the Kachin recalled and remembered their history were very different from the ways the state officials talked about history and what was available in written state documents.

¹⁸ Houses that currently have water tanks either were from funding provided by an American Christian NGO working in the area (Upland Holistic Development Project, UHDP) or totally self-funded.

After familiarising myself with the area and the geographical context of the village, I moved freely each day through numerous Thai Army checkpoints. I was rarely stopped and seldom questioned. My wife, a Kachin, accompanied me on early visits to the village. She had previously spent time in the village and knew many of the villagers personally. I was introduced to village members using my adopted Kachin name. Upon learning my Kachin name and my wife's clan name, the villagers were able to piece together how we were related and how we should refer to each other, as my initial conversation with Zau Hkam indicated. During the first few months, I was commonly referred to as the husband of a Jinghpaw. One day, upon returning to my house after a trip to the market, I saw two men fixing broken tiles on the roof. When they saw me, they climbed down and introduced themselves in Thai. One of the men said: "We knew you were coming, so we fixed the roof, I am the same clan as your wife. Call me brother-in-law." We spoke briefly, and then they left.

Most of my research was conducted in Jinghpaw Kahtawng. However, part of it also focused on Kachin living in and around Chiang Mai city. Kachin living in these two different locations were not clearly separated into distinct geographical units. Many frequently moved back and forth between the village and city, primarily for work, education, and to satisfy official administrative procedures, for example, applying for identity cards and household registration. Many recent as well as long-term Kachin residents in Chiang Mai depend on ties with the village for official administrative procedures. A mutual dependence has to some degree developed through social interactions and connections with each other and state institutions regarding, for example, personal legal status and land registration. However, there were also Kachin living in Chiang Mai city with little or no connection to the 'Kachin village' and vice-versa.¹⁹

Chapter Outline

As mentioned, my analysis of a village at the geographical and political margins of a state entails exploration of how different people experience and embody the phenomenon of border crossing and border life. To do this I will examine how the Kachin have created and maintained social, economic, religious and cultural networks at the family, clan, ethnic group and national levels. In turn I highlight how state agencies and institutions view and categorise these people. A national collective identity is constructed through the classification and categorisation of others, in this case, the 'non-Thai' as a structural opposition marker to the definition and ideology of being Thai. In this context, relationships between locations, natural

¹⁹ This group was diverse and included those Kachin who have historically distanced themselves from the village (as explained in Chapters Three and Four) as well as Kachin university students and NGO workers from Burma.

resources and people are highly politicised, particularly so for ethnic minorities, who have an ambiguous relation with state agencies on both sides of the border. The specific historical trajectories of movement, and the genealogies of power in border regions of Thailand and Burma, illustrate how particular historical and contemporary manifestations of power assume different meanings and cultural interpretations. Uncovering historical processes of marginalisation in contemporary state discourses of sovereignty in these border zones form the basis for subsequent chapters in this thesis.

Chapter Two outlines a theoretical framework for understanding movement and belonging of Kachin, focusing on the establishment of a Kachin village in northern Thailand, and the complexity of the movement, networks and relationships, both physical and symbolic through clan and kinship ties.

Chapter Three describes the historical classification of Kachin social and political structures and analyses how this has shifted as a result of interaction with various state institutions as well as cross-border movement. One of the key elements of Kachin life in the village and in the city illuminated through their connection and interaction with various state agencies has been the diversity of narratives of continually engaging themselves and others in the process of legitimising their place, history, and culture on both sides of the border. The Kachin at the Thai-Burma border constitute a microcosm of these broader changes. I show that, political strategies employed by states hold otherwise disparate ethnic and cultural groups together so that there is at least an illusion of control over groups located on the state's periphery.

Chapter Four provides the background to the first movement of Kachin Independence Army (KIA) soldiers into northern Thailand, the establishment of their army camp and the relationships forged and lost with the Thai military. The diversity and multiple trajectories of these narratives speak to wider issues of autonomy, legality, state and local power, and belonging. In an effort to highlight the wider historical and contemporary context of cross-border movement of Kachin from northern Burma to northern Thailand, I first present an account of Kachin encounters in pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial contexts. This is followed by analysis of the geo-political context that caused the movement of the first battalion of KIA to establish a base in northern Thailand. Coupled with this is an analysis of the multi-layered dimensions of the inclusion–exclusion dynamic in a framework that is institutionally embedded in the shifting geo-politics of the border landscape and has proven fundamental to the creation of the multiple social fields and ambiguity of belonging that subsequently emerged.

A central theme in Chapter Five is the cross-border subjectivities that emerge from the fixed locality of the village in ways that are interrelated with the fluidity of movement through this geographical, political and cultural landscape. This approach relies on an analysis of centre–periphery as well as articulations between and within cultural relationships. Here, we see a continuing dialectic between the governing centre and multiple local actors, which ultimately involves the historical creation and subversion of power structures and the existential imagery of the nation.

Chapter Six examines the complex set of relationships that exist between state policy discourse and the ideas and strategies of various social actors, for example, the Kachin, army, church, development workers, forestry staff and central government officials. Borders are dynamic; they neither represent the limit nor end of the state, but instead are a significant force in the construction and reproduction of local and adjoining state narratives of power, marginality and contestation on both sides of this boundary. This was a time of intense movement of people and goods across the border; however, this movement was generally monitored, controlled and taxed by non-state actors. This chapter foregrounds an analysis of the contemporary reproduction of exceptionalism, and the structures and mechanisms required to reproduce it. The physical and cognitive categorisation of space and territory that reinforces notions of *non-fit* are buttressed through state development projects, citizenship, resource management and mapping.

Collectively, the aim of these chapters is to reveal the extent to which the substance and limits of the nation-state are, in fact, grounded in the dialectic between image and practice. The case of the Kachin in northern Thailand encourages analysis that moves beyond a resistance model of local state relations towards a focus on sovereign decision-making implemented by multiple actors and institutions. In essence, the decentralisation of sovereign decision-making does not make central government policies and practices irrelevant, it does however, indicate a situation where local variants of power constitute and form a productive nature of the ‘exception’ that is to say, non-fit as the space or gap between public policy and political reality exemplified in border regions. Addressing the constitutive and evolving political elements of categorising the ‘other’ or the ‘illegal’ highlights the uniqueness of the Kachin in northern Thailand (their military camp and village, in particular), and indicates a situation where the forms and institutions of centralised and local power maintains the contingent conditions of life for certain groups.

Chapter Two

Movement and Belonging: The Village as Centre

This chapter will describe the establishment of the Kachin village and use this event to advance a conceptual framework for the analysis of cross-border movement, mobility, and belonging that is not solely dependent on the state as a fixed unit of analysis. Such an approach incorporates and builds upon literature on the reimagining of transborder subjects (Schiller 1994, 2006; van Schendel 2005), as well as the practice of sovereignty and the production of non-belonging (Butler 2007; Arendt 1969; Sassen 1996) thereby shifting analysis to the practice of sovereignty or the process by which it emerges (Butler and Spivak 2007). It is here where concepts of inclusion and exclusion (Schmitt 1996) and micro-zones, or pockets, of exception (Agamben 1998, 2005; Bigo and Tsoukala 2008) open alternate pathways for an interpretive reading of border and ethnic politics in northern Thailand.

A key component of my argument is to highlight the link between spatial abstractions and the politics of actual experience of those living in and connected to the Kachin village wherein illegality and legality inform and configure social relations. I intend to showcase these links by demonstrating how exceptionalism frames local experience (explored in detail in Chapter Six) as does the movement between categories of being accepted as allies to being unwanted as non-citizens (exemplified in the establishment and functioning of Jinghpaw Kahtawng). A starting point is an examination of social fields and the positioning of Jinghpaw Kahtawng within these. According to Schiller social fields are, “networks or networks that may be locally situated or extend nationally or transnationally” (2006: 614). Cross-border networks and connections not only act as bonds that link people and communities together to wider ethnic and religious communities, but also to the political (Halilovich 2012: 167).

The transient positioning of mobile border populations, and the social fields they create, challenge the ways in which we view the political organisation of the state and the compartmentalisation of territory. As a consequence, cross-border populations problematise the relationship between the political organisation of state and territory as a controlled geographic area and the formation of political subjects under the law. The Thai state sustains its sovereignty over national territory through the categorisation of areas as spaces that are partially and contingently included into the normal bureaucratic functioning of the state. Due primarily to their ‘flexible’ characteristics, borderlands play very particular roles in the geographies of inclusion and exclusion that challenge clear cut notions of territorial sovereignty (Sturgeon 2005; Mukdawan 2009, Tsing 2005). In this context, Sturgeon (2005:

25) suggests borderlands of the upper Mekong are constituted through, "...state definitions of upland peoples and forests..." as processes of control and surveillance are intimately linked with the production of marginal peoples and landscapes.

The history of the Kachin in northern Thailand and their interaction with state agencies, including the Thai military, Border Patrol Police, and state development projects, centres on issues of legitimacy and control. In other words, the ways in which Kachin social fields are regulated and policed. Boundaries and territories are particularly important where social groups aim to define and redefine the relations between social and physical space in relation to wider state and national ideology. Much of the debate surrounding the classification of cross-border populations lies in the concept of sovereignty, "where sovereignty of the state was constituted in mutually exclusive territories" (Sassen 1996: 2). In this context, lack of citizenship poses a serious problem for the residents of the village. As the director of the Royal Development Project (RDP) told me: "Kachin registered to the village can stay, but we can't help with citizenship, it is not our responsibility. It is up to the police and army to arrest and send back those who are illegal."

The dynamics of state power and authority at any site, particularly at the edges of national borders, govern the specific types of control and surveillance that emerge (Abrams 1988). How borderlands are shaped and understood by multiple actors is central to the workings of power and political relationships between the nation-state centre and the periphery. This relationship is complex and multi-dimensional because: (1) the centre is not all encompassing and, (2) power does not invariably radiate uniformly from one distinct economic, political or cultural position (see Walker 1999: 8-9). At the spatial and temporal limits of the state, distinct dimensions of life highlight both continuity and contradictions that frame a divergent understanding of power at border regions. This is exemplified by the various forces that come together in the establishment of the Kachin village including the history of movement, relationships with local authorities, and in particular the Thai military and the KMT.

Borders are Everywhere and Nowhere

When the KIA crossed the border into northern Thailand in 1965, they entered at an important historical juncture in terms of shifting regional power structures and changing local classifications within Thailand's ethno-political landscape. While in and connected to the KIA camp, the Kachin were somewhat exempt from the political perceptions of the ethnic highland populations in Thailand. Since the 1960s, ethnic minorities living in highland areas of northern Thailand have been categorised as *chao khao*. Literally translated, this term means 'people of the hills' but, the more commonly used term is 'Hill Tribe'. *Chao khao* is a term

given to ethnic groups located throughout northern Thailand, namely the Akha, Hmong, Karen, Lisu, Lahu and Mien, Lua, H'Tin, Khamu and Mlabri (Department of Provincial Administration 2002; Department of Social Development and Welfare 2002; Pinkaew 2014; see Appendices 1 and 3). The majority of the Kachin still do not have land title or full Thai citizenship, although they are registered as legal residents in the Kachin village (Department of Provincial Administration 2000; Pinkaew 2014).

The position of Kachin within the wider discourse of problematising 'Hill Tribes' and its 'politics of otherness' is ambiguous. They are not officially recognised as *chao khao*, nor are they considered refugees²⁰. Many authors have outlined difficulties and challenges ethnic minorities face in Thailand, including lack of access to health and education, personal status registration as well as challenges of political and cultural integration and assimilation into the Thai state (Pinkaew 1998, Kammerer 1988; Chayan 2005; Khwanchewan 2006, Jonsson 2006, 2010; Klein Hutheesing 1990). The liminality of these populations differs based on various classification systems used to determine status categories. Considerable research has also been conducted on localised relations between highland and lowland populations in northern Thailand. As one example, Jane and Lucien Hanks (2001) work highlights lowland/highland dynamics through a multi-ethnic ethnography demonstrating linkages between people, land and culture within a rapidly changing political and environmental landscape. As sequential "National Economic and Social Development Plans" attest, the Thai state implements policies aimed at increasing the socio-economic status of its citizens across the country, however, when indigenous, ethnic or 'problematic' sections of the population are concerned these policies become overtly framed in cultural, geographic and political terms (Chayan 2005; Keyes 2002; Kammerer 1988).

For Kachin living in the border regions of Thailand and Burma, changing relationships between individuals, communities, and ethnic groups on both sides of the border illustrate the contingent nature of the state for cross-border mobile populations. The nature of Kachin – state relations is not fixed. Such a relationship is categorised by dynamic fluidity that is both historical and contemporary in terms of belonging and non-belonging as well as other categories that both tie the Kachin to the state (citizenship and land title), and the state to the Kachin (tourism through selective inclusion). This demonstrates how local relations and interactions with both state and non-state actors frames local experience of the shifting

²⁰Once again, a status of exceptionalism emerges. During the time of my fieldwork, the local government administration (SAO and RDP), for example, commonly referred to the Kachin as *khon oppayop* (migrated peoples) or more negatively as *khon dang dao* (alien persons) (Pinkaew 2014; Appendix 4). The latter designation, if formally applied, resulted in restrictions of movement, access to land, and other state services such as health care, education and citizenship.

dynamic of “friend” and “enemy”. In the case of Jinghpaw Kahtawng, historical connections to and separation from the KIA combined with contemporary links to the Thai state through citizenship, are integral dimensions of Kachin internal social organisation in their settlement. Policies and development projects specifically targeting minority groups, including the Kachin, allow the state to advance the contradictory objectives of incorporating them into wider national structures and institutions and at the same time excluding them from full political participation (Somchai and Nattamon 2002). While these are important issues affecting many minority groups, my focus in this thesis is only on the Kachin. The lives of long-term residents of Jinghpaw Kahtawng may not seem as precarious as, for example, undocumented migrant labourers in urban centres of Thailand, or of ethnic minority populations living in refugee camps along the western border of Thailand and Burma. Nevertheless, they face very particular concerns linked to their integration into the Thai state alongside wider cross-border connections and acceptance into a Pan Kachin identity.

As I will show, selective dynamics of citizenship and residency characterise the establishment and subsequent positioning of Jinghpaw Kahtawng within larger socio-political machinations. The work of Schmitt (1996) is significant here because past and present distinctions, either territorial or cultural, are commonly reinforced in border areas, where the inclusion–exclusion narrative is often re-phrased.²¹ They become part of “the political” and are influential in defining and understanding the functioning of sovereignty; that is, how multiple actors practice it across a spatial and temporal domain. Even if not explicitly stated, friend–enemy distinctions arise and are linked to issues of sovereignty, particularly in the context of cross-border movement.

Temporary political decisions, applying Schmitt’s (1996) friend–enemy distinction illustrates its dynamics, which emerge when national perceptions of cross-border movement oscillate between ‘threat’ and ‘integration’. Schmitt (1996) viewed “the political” as implicitly falling within specific strategic distinctions that categorise who is a “friend” or an “enemy”, or a mediation of order that clearly distinguishes the insider from the outsider or “other”, and for this research frames an understanding of ‘inclusion’ and ‘exclusion’. Kachin in Thailand have been viewed positively (‘friend’) as allies, liberators, and even a tourist

²¹ The sovereign, following Schmitt (2005:5), is “he who decides the exception” but the locus of sovereign decisions resides ultimately in the state. One method of delineating the components of sovereignty that make up the nation state is through an examination of the moments and spaces of direct or indirect ruptures, fissures or when it is challenged or subverted. Following such a methodology enlarges the cracks that appear in the essentialist conception of the nation, and its historical legitimacy to hold absolute power (Malkki 1995; Ferguson and Gupta 2005). The practice of sovereignty and the expansion of power are both an internal cognitive response and an outward emotive expression at the state and individual level that is based on nationalistic and cultural ideologies of difference and geo-political considerations. Therefore, it is simultaneously an activity of the centre and periphery.

attraction. At the same time, they have also been categorised as illegal, non-Thai, and deserters from the Kachin Independence Army (KIA). These days their position within the Thai state remains ambiguous, provisional, and not entirely constrained by “other” classifications.

My approach to border-crossing populations and mobility is also related to Aihwa Ong’s (1999) approach to transnationalism, denoting not only crossing of lines or borders but moving through space, as well as changing the nature of relations and interactions. Integral to this approach is connectivities, that are not only networks and connections, but also the discourses that accompany these phenomena, which in turn produce or create groups, categories, nationalism and subjects (Grewal 2005). The concept of transnational, or moving through space, is not an ahistorical experience. On the contrary, both local and national histories are embedded in transnational encounters (Gouda 2008).

Schmitt (1996) explained the capacity to suspend laws and redefine norms signifies political control advanced by a government in the form of increased and intensified extension of power over individuals or groups. In this sense, sovereignty is not only exercised over territories, but also over the life and death of a specific population (Agamben 2005). More specifically for Agamben (1998, 2005), exception appears as a decision regarding the life and death of the population and is found in spaces accommodating displaced people who have become separated from the functioning of the wider state political community. Thus, the camp, in Agamben’s eyes, becomes a key symbol of governance, categorisation, control and surveillance. It assumes “multiple forms [which] function as a necessary but uncomfortable and sometimes disavowed support of the reproduction of ‘normal’ citizenship and community life” (Hansen and Stepputat 2005: 18). Agamben’s conceptualisation of power, and the exceptionalism it employs, has subsequently been used, for example, to analyse power relations along the United States-Mexico border (Doty 2007, 2010), in Karen refugee camps on the Thai-Burma border (Decha 2010), in special economic zones of production (Ong 2006), and in Guantanamo Bay (Hussain 2007). Exceptionalism, as Doty (2009: 10) argued, can be enacted at multiple levels of government: federal, state and local. Members of the population, whether citizens or not, can also engage in the politics of categorisation that facilitate the gap between public policy and political reality. The workings of exceptionalism (explored in more detail in Chapter Six) provide a useful approach to understand ethnic politics in northern Thailand by uncovering the categorisation of Kachin not only as the unfinished project of state governance but a reconfiguration of power and sovereignty in border areas by localised actors.

In Thailand, state and local relationships have often been characterised by a dichotomous correlation of power and control, where state-demarcated territory is viewed as fixed and clearly bounded, while local interpretations of the same location or resource are perceived as fluid and flexible (Kampe 1991; Hirsch 1993; Vandergeest and Peluso 1995; Vandergeest 1996). In this light, Aihwa Ong (2005: 84) contended that arguments about state power are often based on a restricted concept of sovereignty. The conceptualisation of borders and territories I wish to employ in the following chapters goes beyond a state centric view of sovereignty that emphasises the control over populations and geographical spaces through military and government apparatuses. Rather, in order to understand the complexities of border areas I will focus analysis on the interaction of diverse actors, institutions, markets and populations, control and surveillance.

With this theoretical background in mind, my goal is to demonstrate how the Kachin, as an ethnic grouping in Thailand, oscillate between states of inclusion and exclusion between fit and non-fit and how this in turn tells us specific things about belonging and movement at the state, ethnic and individual level. These oscillations, to some degree, mirror state moves between a rational bureaucratic set of institutions and one predicated on the changing political will of the government and the polity. Veena Das suggested that there is an oscillation of the state between a rational mode and a magical mode of being (Das 2004). From this perspective, sovereignty and rule are not an a priori category or a static relic of the past, but rather a shifting amalgamation of localised and national assertions on how sovereignty is performed, claimed and maintained. This approach allows us to discern the ‘life’ of the state (Das 2004), along with the ethnic groups and social systems that occupy specific social spaces within it. A necessary platform is the actual founding of the village.

The Beginnings of a Village: Local History

Like a branch falling to the ground and starting a new tree, we now have a family and life here.²²

Five men considered by some as deserters from the KIA after the 1975 assassination of their commander, his deputy and chief of staff, (a precipitous event I return to in Chapter Three), stood together and prayed on the land where the current village stands on February 5 1982, a day that coincided with the 21st anniversary of the formation of the KIA.²³ The founders of Jinghpaw Kahtawng were former KIA soldiers who either knew each other from

²² Extract from an interview with one of the original Kachin settlers in the village (Jinghpaw Kahtawng, 2010).

²³ I was later told that in fact there were seven men who founded the village. This narrative fits with the symbolic meaning discussed by Lahpai (2007), representing the seven founders of the KIA.

their time in the camp or had met in various villages since 1975. One villager explained to me: “We were all afraid of each other, we thought they could be spies or current KIA and would tell the KIA headquarters about us and take us back. In the beginning, no one trusted each other. But we decided we could start a village together” (Interview with former KIA soldier, Jinghpaw Kahtawng 2011).

A Rawang pastor, who was living in a nearby Lahu village at the time of Kachin settlement in the area in 1982, recounted the following history of the village.

In 1983, groups of Kachin from a Palaung village in Fang district were invited to come and settle here. This second group of settlers only stayed for about one year. After one year they all left to other villages, some returned to their original villages, others went to Chiang Mai. At the time, life in the village was very difficult: crops failed; there was no water; many problems with Kuomintang and nearby villages involved with narcotics. A Chinese-Lahu drug trafficker from Burma attempted to recruit the former KIA soldiers to work for him along the Thai-Burma border in the area collecting drug tax. Former KIA soldiers from the village all agreed because they did not want to be farmers. They wanted to join him and collect tax. The village almost split, but with the help of some local Rawang pastors (Pastor Daniel Cannon), they were convinced to stay and continue to farm. At the time there was open trading at the Nong Uk border. People and goods moved quite freely across the border.

By 1984 there were 20 households; however, by 1985, many had left and the village was reduced to less than 10 households. From that year onwards, the village grew slowly. In the same year Pastor Daniel Cannon brought three Singaporean pastors who donated 5,000 baht to build a new bamboo church. I oversaw the FLCM [Frontier Labour for Christ Mission] at the time. We convinced them to donate more to build a stronger church with hard wood and a zinc roof for 20,000 baht, they agreed and in one month it was finished. At this time, 4-5 Akha families had moved into the village. This area has always been complicated. There are Wa soldiers, Burmese soldiers and Thai soldiers. To travel back and forth you need connections. You need to know where you are going and have a purpose, not just to travel and have a look around. Who controls the border depends on the time and who has power. On the Burmese side, sometimes it is the Wa and sometimes it is the Burmese (Interview, Rawang pastor, Jinghpaw Kahtawng 2010).²⁴

The establishment of the village on 5 February is an auspicious date, the anniversary of the creation of the KIA. Lahpai, emphasising this link, argued that its founding members intentionally established the village on this night to “commemorate their struggle and remember their history” (2007: 60). By the latter, Lahpai refers to the situation where Kachin in Thailand have created a specific history of settlement linked to their memory of struggle, “symbolically linking the village with the history of the struggle of the Kachin people in

²⁴ For a more detailed narrative regarding his life story refer to Appendix 5.

Kachin State [Burma]. They gathered together and prayed for future prosperity and that Kachin will remain on this site for a very long time” (Lahpai 2007: 60).

The symbolism implied here was fostered by comments made by one of the people involved on that night, “As we prayed, we saw the stars come out” (Interview with village member, Jinghpaw Kahtawng 2011). At the basic level, this act invoked historical memory of movement and struggle of creating a ‘place-out-of-place’ for Kachin in northern Thailand to come together and form a village. “This is a place where Kachin from all over Thailand can come and live. We have no water but we have land” (Interview with a villager resident, Jinghpaw Kahtawng 2010). It can also be looked at as the first official instance of Kachin’s life in Thailand being inescapably enmeshed with the formations and calculations of power within the Thai state. On the one level, one could see that by refusing to return to Kachin State after the assassination of their commander, they removed themselves from the political history of the Kachin struggle. But, at the same time, the establishment of the village marking an important day in the history of the KIA illustrates a dynamic and complex link between the past and present. A village resident explained:

We are a small village but we also have activities for RDP, cultural activities, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter, and *Manau*. We are asked to attend local and national cultural shows because we are the only Kachin village in Thailand. We can’t collapse, we are the only village in Thailand, and for the sake of future generations of Kachin in Thailand, we must have a village. In the past we lived in other peoples’ villages, used their resources. Now we have our own village and must keep it. We are proud that we have our own village now. We can help other Kachin that come, this is very important for us (Interview, village resident, Jinghpaw Kahtawng 2010).

A Rawang pastor who took time out from constructing a new house to share the following story of village history with me gave an alternative version. “It has taken me four years to build this new house. I have been waiting for the right time when enough Rawang²⁵ villagers were free to help.” He told me this as we sat in the shade of a nearby tree. Villagers were erecting large posts in the ground for the foundation of his new house. I asked him: “Why are you building a house here in the village when you have a house and church in the city [Chiang Mai]?” He answered, “Because it is important to have a house in the village, it’s the only Kachin village in Thailand.” His answer was not surprising, as I had begun to hear similar explanations from many other families who had connections both in the village and in Chiang Mai. Moving closer to me and speaking in a softer voice so that he would not be overheard,

²⁵ Rawang are considered by many to be especially skilled at construction using bamboo.

he continued: “Let’s speak in English. I know that people here in the village have done many bad things in the past, but I stay because it is my dream to have a Kachin village in Thailand.”

The pastor was born in Putao, northern Burma. In his own words:

While staying at the FLCM Church in Nong Kheow, ten families moved into the area of the current village site and began building houses. One of the founders was, in fact, a Lahu man who had considerable power and influence in the area through a strong relationship with the Thai Army and alleged connections with *Mom Chao* (Thai Royal Family).

Once the houses were established, a small church was built for 5,000 baht consisting of a simple structure with an iron roof. Pastor Cannon brought more pastors from Burma to the village to preach, and helped with supplies of basic food, medicine and other household supplies. These pastors type up hymn books and lead the Sunday services and nightly prayer meetings. However, soon after arriving in the village, many families faced the difficulty of growing crops in the poor soil and with a lack of water. The first group of families lived in the southern part of the village, while the second group moved close by to the north. The village almost collapsed. Some villagers simply left while others considered taking an offer from a Lahu headman from Burma to collect opium taxes for him in villages along the border.

However, the villagers were eventually convinced to stay and Pastor Cannon pledged increased support for the newly established community. The first years of the village were difficult. Crops failed, animals died, and many villagers returned to their previous homes in surrounding villages. During the early 1980s, trade with the local Chinese KMT village was difficult: there was open conflict over the control of opium trade routes though the area. Khun Sa’s Army and the KMT fought in Nong Uk: villagers were afraid to leave their houses after dark. We could hear people talking and the sound of horses as the caravan moved through our village.

While discussing the history of the area with Akha in the nearby village: “We came here first from Chiang Rai” was a common response. Similar stories told to me by the Lahu Sub-district Administration Officer in Nong Kheow “Lahu were the first here, then came Akha, then Kachin. Kachin came last, they are from Burma. That’s why they don’t have much land.” Officials from the RDP offered a different version: “When the RDP first came to survey the land this area was empty. They came back a year later and there were Ahka and Kachin living here.” History of settlement is often linked with ‘originality’, or first settlement. These narratives are told often in official settings; for example, when applying for citizenship, the history and order of settlement is often used as a legitimising factor in determining eligibility.

Prior to the the arrival of Kachin land upon which the village currently stands was originally corn and rice fields, an extension of the nearby Haw Chinese town (Interview, village member, Jinghpaw Kahtawng, 2010). However, when the Kachin arrived the land was

fallow. The construction of houses soon began. Later, there was a confrontation between the Kachin and Haw Chinese over the land. However, the Kachin refused to leave. The dispute was officially settled after the arrival of the RDP and official delegation of land was given to the Kachin and Akha in the area.

In 1983, a convoy of army trucks arrived in the village. RDP staff accompanied the soldiers. It had been determined that this area was to be managed by the RDP; and, a new office was to be established in the village. An interview with a village elder from Nong Kheow Lahu village revealed that the original Lahu settlers moved to the area from another RDP site, and were told that the RDP would establish a new project site in the area. By 1984, village “Ban Mai Samakkhi” was officially registered in the Thai village administrative system and, in the same year, the King Bhumibol and H.R.H Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn visited the village. “This is Akha land, over there is Kachin and over to the west is Lahu.” These were the words spoken by the king during his visit to the area and were the reason given by a former Lahu village administrator for the clear internal boundaries of the villages within the RDP site as well as the limited interaction between the different groups.

Based upon a combination of local histories from Kachin, Lahu and Akha and available government sources, the following timeline seems the most feasible. By the early 1970s, a Lahu village was established approximately one kilometre from the current Kachin village. In 1981, Akha from Mae Suai district in Chiang Rai settled in its current location with the assistance of Pastor Daniel Cannon. This was followed by the arrival of Kachin in 1982. As a result, Jinghpaw Kahtawng grew quickly until 1984 when the RDP arrived and registered the village under its control. When asked about the early history of the village, one man recollected:

After one year I had enough. No water, the soil was bad and we could not grow anything. I am a soldier not a farmer. How do they expect me to grow corn? At the time there were only eight families in the village. We met a local Lahu opium trader from Burma who asked us to join him and collect tax from the opium growers. Why not, that’s what I know how to do. We were persuaded to stay with the help of a Rawang missionary who gave us food and agricultural supplies. We were told that having a village would be good for Kachin in the future. I guess he was right. Now there are over 50 families here (Interview with a Kachin village member, Jinghpaw Kahtawng 2010).

To add further details to their history, Zau Htoi recounts his movement to Thailand and the establishment of the village. Zau Htoi was born in Ban Ko village near Bhamo in Kachin State; but he cannot remember the year. He completed grade four in Bhamo and moved to Myitkyina, the capital of kachin state for grade five. The Burmese Army recruited him when he was 14.

After leaving the Burmese Army I travelled south along the border to Thailand. I lived not very far from here on the Burmese side but there was always fighting, Wa, Shan and Burmese. I married a Lahu. My family and I crossed the border and we lived in Mok Cham village in Chai Prakan. Then we moved to a Palaung village in Chiang Dao. We lived there for three years. The land was not good, we couldn't grow anything. There were other Kachin living there so we travelled in the area looking for a place to live together. We found this place but there was no water and the land was bad. Only some stayed, but many Kachin left to go to other villages. After one year, the Royal Project arrived. Land was divided into blocks. Some of the land was being used by the nearby Chinese village to grow rice and corn but when the government came they gave the land to us.

I was one of the first people to come to this area: only four people remain from the original group. We invited other Kachin scattered around to come and live here. Originally there were 17 households but some left because there was no water and the land was poor. Akha arrived at the same time and Lahu lived further down the road. *Sara* [pastor] Daniel Cannon helped with the construction of some houses and growing crops. He also brought many other pastors too, as well as Kachin and Akha from other areas.

Another version of the events leading to the establishment of the village suggests that by late 1977, Kachin living in a nearby Palaung village had heard that Christian Lahu had moved into an area near Nong Uk, one kilometre north of the village close to the Thai-Burma border. They were familiar with this area as their army camp was close by.

After several visits to the area, Kachin settled on vacated rice and corn fields previously used by Chinese farmers living in Nong Uk. "This was Chinese land, they had staked out land markers. We took them out at night, but the Chinese would put them back the next day. But, eventually they left" (Interview with a founding member of Jinghpaw Kahtawng, 2011). Originally there were five Kachin households; however, more families moved into area when they heard that a Kachin village was being established. By 1982, Jinghpaw Kahtawng was created. Over the following year, the community increased to 10 households; but several of the original founders left because the land was not adequate for farming and there was no nearby water source. Pastor Daniel Cannon provided the Kachin and Akha families with basic supplies including salt, oil, canned goods, basic medicines and some farming equipment.

Pastor Daniel Cannon and several of his assistants, one from Singapore and the other was Kachin, worked closely together in the village during its initial establishment (Interview village resident, Jinghpaw Kahtawng, 2010). They provided rice and other supplies, and they also allowed the villagers to use their truck to collect bamboo to construct houses. Along with Bobby Morse, a Chiang Mai based Church of Christ evangelist whose family worked for decades with the Lisu in southwest China and northern Burma, Pastor Daniel brought Akha

villagers from Chiang Rai to settle in the area. Pastor Daniel left Thailand in mid-1980 after appointing and promoting his assistants to take control of the “spiritual development of the Kachin villagers”. Official records indicate that Kachin were the last group to arrive in the areas shortly before the arrival of the RDP. However, these stories indicate that the Kachin had been in the area for much longer.

Official History²⁶

Following the first official visit in 1983, in early 1984, several heavily armed Thai military trucks drove into the village. The Kachin were told that their village had been selected as a new site for the Royal Development Project (RDP) following a national strategy to halt the production of opium and civilise the ethnic minorities. The commanding officer declared that the Kachin were in need of ‘development’ (extract from interview with village resident, Jinghpaw Kahtawng, 2010). They were permitted to stay but had significant restrictions imposed on land use, movement, citizenship, and access to health and education.

According to records collected by the local government office Muang Na Sub-district Administrative Organisation (SAO), Ban Mai Samakkhi (as Jinghpaw Kahtawng is officially known in Thai) was established in 1980 by four Akha families that were later joined by Akha from Mae Suai, Mae Chan and Mae Fa Luang in Chiang Rai province and Mae Ai in Chiang Mai Province (Sub-District Administrative Office Muang Na. 2009). The report recognises that the village cluster consisted of two separate villages, one Akha and the other Kachin and Shan. Agricultural and residential land in the village is controlled and managed by the RDP and the Land Administration and Registration Office in Chiang Dao.

Subsequently, Chiang Dao District government documents state that, “Kachin people came from Shan State in Burma. They migrated to Thailand together with Lisu and Lahu people ... in B.E. 2517 (1974) a large group of Kachin migrated through Doi Lang, *amphoe* Mae Aye, Chiang Mai Province to Doi Wawee, *amphoe* Mae Suai, Chiang Rai province. Then they moved to Pang Mayao, Ban Mai Mok Jam, *amphoe* Mae Ai and eventually settled in Ban Nong Kheow 20 years ago” (Chiang Dao District Office 2010: 53).

Between May 2010 and January 2011, I conducted a total of 82 household surveys. During this period, the survey did not include three houses that were boarded up and unoccupied. I was told that two families lived in Chiang Mai and rented their fields to local residents; and one family was unavailable. In total there were 85 households, contrary to the information

²⁶ The histories of Chiang Dao district and Muang Na sub-district are presented in Appendices 2 and 3.

collected by the RDP showing 76 households, as stated in Table 1 below (RDP Annual Report 2010). Differences can be explained by their count of 76 registered households: my research included all residents and their household's organisation.

In Jinghpaw Kahtawng the village leader and his assistant have no official power. The official village headman is from the adjoining Akha village as only residents with Thai citizenship can hold official positions and vote. A very small number of Kachin have Thai citizenship as opposed to the vast majority of Akha from the adjoining village; therefore, all official positions are held by Akha including those of village leader and SAO. The village is further divided into administrative committees that have control, although limited, over the activities and events within the village. These include the Water Committee (consisting of five people) and the Culture Committee (consisting of seven people). Their main responsibilities include the organisation of cultural activities such as dancing when invited to perform for government agencies and NGO events in the area (as well as Chiang Mai and Bangkok). The Women's Group consists of five people (RDP Annual Report 2010). There are also numerous other activities that are organised and managed on an individual basis by community members and the various Churches, for example, the children's project, weaving, and teaching Jinghpaw and English.

Table 1: Registered households under the jurisdiction of the RDP Nong Kheow

Village	Village Grouping	Ethnic Group	Households	Population	Male	Female
1. Nong Kheow	Nong Kheow	Lahu	515	2,728	1,291	1,437
2. Nong Kheow	Nong Wuadaeng	Lahu	55	277	133	144
3. Nong Kheow	Luwa	Luwa	26	115	57	58
4. Jinghpaw Kahtawng	Kachin	Kachin	76	474	236	238
5. Mai Samakkhi	Akha	Akha	88	507	252	255
<i>Total</i>			760	4,101	1,969	2,132

Source: RDP Annual Report 2010: 1

I was soon to learn that Kachin were externally classified according to their perceived agricultural ability. Because they live in a rural area of northern Thailand, it was assumed by the staff of the RDP that all the villagers were highland farmers, similar to other ethnic groups found elsewhere in northern Thailand placing them within the hill-tribe discourse (see Chapter Four). In several interviews with local staff from the RDP I was told:

Kachin are so lazy. They don't work as hard as other hill-tribes in the area. When they first came all their crops failed, they are not very good farmers (Interview with the head of the RDP, Jinghpaw Kahtawng 2010).

However, village residents provided a different explanation for the agricultural challenges and difficulties they faced:

We are not farmers. We were soldiers, nurses, secretaries, worked in mines, owned small businesses. Now we are expected to be farmers. Some people say that our crops failed because God was punishing the villagers because they were deserters from the KIA. But, I don't believe that. The soil is bad and there is no water. When we learn how to grow rice we can live here (Interview with village member, Jinghpaw Kahtawng 2010).

Such state and locally generated simplifications of community are based fundamentally on two interrelated concepts: self-sufficient and subsistence-orientated rural communities on the one hand, and homogenous cultural categorisations on the other. Both of these elements situate the community in a fixed position in the eyes of the state while simultaneously binding the community and its residents to specific cultural and environmental practices (Walker 2010).

The narrowly defined cultural and ethnic boundaries of Jinghpaw Kahtawng by both state authorities and community members themselves help to create a one-dimensional image of village life for different strategic purposes (Walker 2010). The RDP promotes the village as a tourist attraction, a unique space, "the only Kachin village in Thailand" according to a signboard at the entrance of the village. Community members reproduce this imagery of a homogeneous Kachin community in their struggle for: official recognition as a community, legalised land rights, citizenship, and Kachin political mobilisation. This simplification of the village extends to state approaches to development and selective integration of Kachin into wider Thai polity.

Ethnic and Community Simplifications

Jinghpaw Kahtawng is made up of members of each of the six sub-groups under the category Kachin; these include Jinghpaw, Maru, Azi, Rawang, Lashi and Lisu.²⁷ Inter-marriage between the sub-groups is extremely common and based upon Kachin affinal *mayu dama* systems and social organisation rather than ethnicity. The ways in which diversity within Jinghpaw Kahtawng affects social organisation are important. For example, although

²⁷ Here, Lisu refers to the Lisu from Kachin State that fall under the classification of Kachin. However, it is important to note and will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Five that Lisu in Thailand do not categorise themselves as a sub-grouping of Kachin. This indicates the political and cultural manifestation of ethnic boundaries and groupings across international borders in the region.

Kachin were the dominant group, in numerical terms, with 64 households with at least one family member of Kachin ethnic origin. The remaining 18 households consisted of village members from non-Kachin origin, including Shan, Pa'O, Lahu, Akha, Wa and Thai. Residents do not see ethnic diversity as problematic in and of itself, for in effect it does not represent clearly defined internal ethnic boundaries. The primary foundation for internal boundaries within the village are manifest in religious and political terms.

For example, Lahu and Akha living in the community who have married into Kachin households and have converted to Christianity are seen by many as embodying important Kachin cultural, social and religious dimensions. The members of the different sub-groups under the category Kachin understand their place within the *mayu dama* affinal system while those from other ethnic groups, including Lahu and Akha as is the case in Jinghpaw Kahtawng, were included into the system. This involved giving them a Kachin name that fit the systems depending upon the clan name of the husband or wife.²⁸ This process was continually expressed in the following terms: “My wife is Kachin ... She is actually Lahu, but she was given a Kachin family name” (Interview with a village member, Jinghpaw Kahtawng 2010). The use of the term ‘Kachin’ is interesting here because it does not denote his wife as a member of a sub-group; rather it links her ethnicity and, in turn, her identity to the wider classification ‘Kachin’. The following example highlights the multi-generational complexity of such a system in the village:

I met Ja Seng at a village meeting in early 2010 regarding an education scholarship program funded by a former Western missionary. On our first meeting she told me in Thai: “I am Kachin but I can’t speak Jinghpaw.” However, I was told later that she is Lahu. This was not uncommon; however, in a later discussion with her mother, it was explained to me that the family was, in fact Lahu. Her husband was given a Kachin name when they moved into the village.

I remember when I was a teenager, a Kachin man moved to our village in Chiang Dao. He married my sister and she became Christian. They decided to move to this village so I followed. We built a house and lived there together for many years. We came from an animist village. It was difficult for me in the beginning because everyone was Christian, but I started to go to Church with my sister and became part of the village. I married a Christian Lahu man who was also living in the village: the villagers here gave him a Kachin name. Not long after I was married, my sister and her husband left the village but we stayed. My children are Christian and speak Lahu and Thai. I can only speak a little Jinghpaw, enough to understand the sermon at the church (Interview with village resident, *Jinghpaw Kahtawng* 2011).

²⁸ There were two cases where a Kachin woman married a man from outside the *mayu dama* system. He was subsequently given a family name that was appropriate to marry into the wife’s clan.

Other village members, including Shan Buddhists, are not involved in the communities' religious and cultural activities. The delineation of ethnic classifications, including mixed ethnic households, clearly showed that it was not a homogeneous Kachin settlement. However, all of the residents I spoke to refer to the village as a 'Kachin' village with ethnic boundaries maintained following most significantly religious affiliation followed by ethnicity. As a case in point, it was towards the end of my research that the Lahu owner of the house I was renting wanted to sell. Little interest was shown within the village; however, a Chinese man from a nearby village made an offer. Kachin community members, after hearing of this, asked her to reconsider, not to sell to outsiders, meaning not only those outside of the community, but people not considered Kachin.

Classification, Ordering and Administration

The Kachin living in the border area and the Kachin living in Chiang Mai refer to the village by its Kachin name Jinghpaw Kahtawng; translated, this simply means Jinghpaw village. Its Thai name is used only in certain circumstances, such as is most commonly used by people and institutions outside of the village, for example all official documentation and registration. Reference to those living within the geographical bounds of the village as Kachin veils ethnic diversity given that other village residents, that is, Lahu, Akha, Shan and Haw Chinese also living in the Kachin village settlement area. As a result of this diversity, the cultural and political organisation of the village cluster is far more complex than solely Kachin, as further administrative division also runs along ethnic and geographic lines.

Ethnically speaking, the village is comprised of six sub-groups of the category Kachin, along with Shan, Lahu Akha and Haw Chinese. The sub-groups include Jinghpaw, Rawang, Zaiwa (Azi), Lashi (Lachid), Lisu and Maru (Lawngwaw). Jinghpaw language and Thai are used interchangeably by most of the villagers; however, many of the older people speak only Jinghpaw and many of the younger generation predominantly use Thai while Shan residents spoke only Shan and Thai. Language use is an important factor in tracing the life stories of individuals. For example, a Rawang woman could only speak Burmese. She was born in northern Kachin State, and then travelled with her family to a large town on the Burma-Thai border where she spent her childhood attending primary and secondary school in the area.

A military checkpoint blocks the road two kilometres before you reach the village. Soldiers check the identification cards of those entering and leaving the area. Those without appropriate documentation or familiarity with particular soldiers are asked to leave the vehicle and are detained. In this area, corn and rice fields line both sides of the road. Soon after negotiating the checkpoint, one comes to the entrance of Jinghpaw Kahtawng. At the entrance

there is a small noodle shop²⁹ and cafe run by the RDP. It is adorned with maps and information about their work and about current projects being implemented in the area. The village roads are straight, and the houses neatly organised. There is a Kachin traditional house, traditional Kachin *Manau* posts with Thai and Royal flags flying at the top, a museum, a children's centre, and three churches of different denominations. Signs indicate that this area comes under the RDP, evident in its offices, a restaurant, agricultural test plots and a guesthouse.

Roads, signs and military checkpoints clearly mark the physical boundaries of the village; but, the conceptual boundaries, that is, division of spaces of the village, are less visible. Formal, administrative symbols and cultural spaces are important to the Kachin. The village which is administratively known as Ban Kachin represents the only officially recognised Kachin village in Thailand³⁰ and recorded as established in 1984. Since then, the village boundaries have been incorporated into the developmental and territorial administration of the RDP. In the same year King Bhumibol (1984) visited the village. Prior to the king's visit, there was little mention either of the ethnic Kachin in northern Thailand or the existence of a Kachin village.

It is not until one takes the time to sit and speak to the Kachin in this area that one begins to fully appreciate the uniqueness of their particular community. This not only prompts further enquiry into the historical movement of the people across international borders, but initiates questions and conversations about issues of sovereignty, state power and ethnicity that directly question any notion of territorial rigidity along the Thai border. Indeed, the identity of the community and individuals from a state-centric position is cast in terms of history of movement, ethnicity and difference. The village is set amongst a multiplicity of territorial divisions or boundaries, which include the political boundaries of the Thai state, the RDP site, a national park, and ethnic divisions.

One of the first things I discovered when I arrived in Jinghpaw Kahtawng was that there are, in fact two separate villages operating under the one administrative unit, Akha and Kachin. This village unit is divided into Ban Akha and Ban Kachin. Reference to the "Kachin village" refers directly to the area of Kachin settlement within the administrative boundaries of the village cluster (see Map 3, two villages under the official administration of one village cluster). Jinghpaw Kahtawng is structured in a rectangle with wide straight roads and

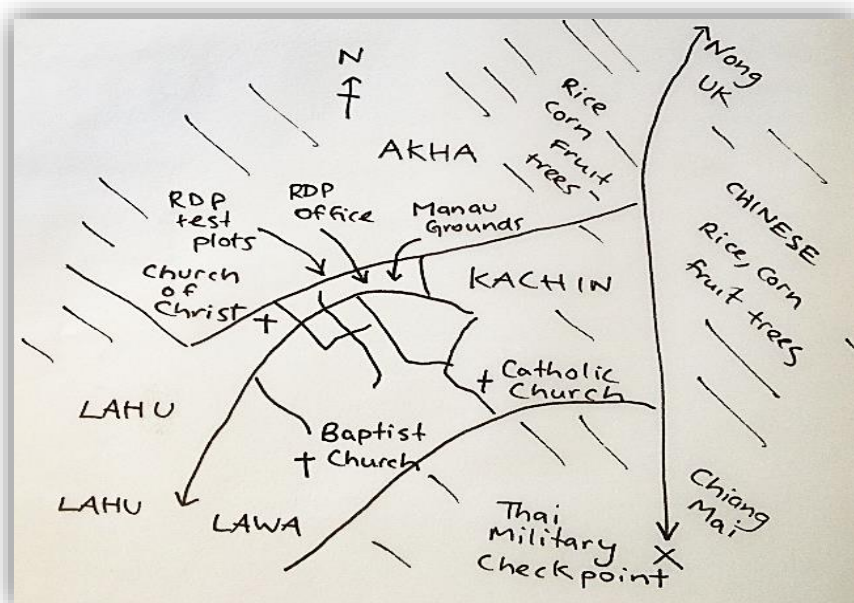
²⁹ This particular noodle shop was a private business unrelated to the RDP. The shop owner was the wife of a RDP staff member in the village.

³⁰ I was to discover that there is in fact another village in Chiang Mai's Phrao district which is home to several Kachin families, namely Rawang. This community is officially registered as Akha.

household registration signboards nailed to the front of each house. The official headman is Akha, and has been every year since the official registration of the village in 1984.

The explanation for this is simple. Only those village residents who have citizenship can vote and run for the position of village leader. Currently, almost all of the Akha residing in Ban Akha have citizenship. But, because only a few Kachin have citizenship they have limited representation in the nomination and voting process. While Kachin have an elected leader at the village (Kachin settlement area) level, this person has no official title or power. Thus, he can also act as a representative of the community in a semi-official capacity. These discrepancies in citizenship also extend to local government budget allocation. When I started my fieldwork there were only two concrete paved roads in Jinghpaw Kahtawng. The rest were dirt roads, unlike in the Akha village where every road and laneway was paved. This situation was the result of sub-district level funding and control over budget allocation. As the village cluster head was an Akha man the majority of the government funding was used in the Akha village.

When government-funded projects are promoted in the village they must initially go to the Akha headman and he decides how the funds are distributed under the administration of the different village committees. “The Akha headman does not contact us or let us get involved, villagers suffer from this” (Interview with village member, Jinghpaw Kahtawng 2010). This has caused considerable tension between the two villages, particularly in terms of citizenship application and road construction.



Map 3: Jinghpaw Kahtawng. Indicating the whole village cluster, and the separate Kachin and Akha settlement areas (field note book, illustration by author, 2010).

Construction of Non-Fit

The concept of exceptionalism used in this thesis refers to that which falls outside of the law or the framework of the law and is neither limited to specific time periods nor to spaces or circumstances that evolve in opposition to state law and authority. Examined from this perspective, exceptionalism is neither static nor confined to spatial or temporal state apparatuses of government. This creates a condition of non-fit – both physically and ideologically – for specific groups of people and spaces. By foregrounding the productive nature of non-form or non-fit of the physical geographical territory and the population who reside therein, one can analyse the construction of the border and the village as continuing process of movement, negotiation, connections and network building, imagined in a way argued by Anderson (1984) but also real in their influences on villagers and village life.

“The area is dangerous. I do not like to travel there,” I was told by the district customs officer: “Why are you working there!” she exclaimed in shock when I introduced myself (Interview with customs officer, District Office, Chiang Dao 2010). However, when I spoke with Kachin living in Chiang Mai many simply replied with a smile: “I hope you can survive without water” (referring to the lack of running water during the dry season). During an interview the director of the RDP in Chiang Mai made the following off-handed comment: “The project site is one of the least productive, no water and not much can grow, but we still focus on the king’s plan to support the villagers and stop them from destroying the forest.” Continuing this line of analysis, there was a large map on the wall at the entrance to the RDP office located in the village clearly indicating the geographical divisions of the official administrative unit (referred to as a village), agricultural land and protected areas. There is also a Lahu village and a Lawa village less than a kilometre away that fall under the administrative and territorial jurisdiction of the RDP.

From a purely geographical vantage point, the border separating Thailand and Burma snakes its way over and around mountains, through valleys and forest. It is almost impossible to take accurate bearings of its exact location, except of course when one is faced with a border checkpoint, a closed boom gate, a Thai flag, portraits of the king and queen, or Thai soldiers with automatic weapons. During my fieldwork from December 2009 to December 2011, the border was officially closed except on Thursdays between 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m., and every fourth Friday of the month for market day. Although there were constant rumours from villagers, border guards and even local government officials alluding to the opening of the gate for local business, the border checkpoint was never permanently opened, for neither trade nor the movement of people.

Within the contemporary order of the nation-state and the extension of centralised power to the geographical limits, cross-border movement and settlement create several critical problems. First, marginalised groups are simultaneously fleeing from the state, avoiding arrest as illegal migrants, and tying themselves to specific mechanisms of government; for example, creating homes and applying for citizenship (Tsing 1993). Secondly, and more hidden, is the dual process of categorisation and differentiation that occurs within the Kachin community to varying levels. The internal dynamics become more complex as marginalised members of the wider Thai polity, the Kachin, must show their allegiance to the Thai nation and symbols of state (land, flag and monarchy). They both negotiate and resist categorisation into pre-existing groups and associated identities of people and land, namely *chao khao* (Hill Tribe) and further their acceptance of the term ‘Kachin’.³¹ What is highlighted from these issues is the significance of an expanded temporal view of inclusion, marginalisation, and the meaning of the border itself, as many of the Kachin in northern Thailand have lived there since the early 1960s.

The relevance of sovereignty in contemporary Thailand stems not only from a geo-political concern of the central government, but also constitutes a conceptual heuristic process that is fundamental to understanding how cross-border movement and the establishment of fixed territorial spaces affect spatial and temporal perceptions of national borders and the people who reside in these areas. Viewed in this light, territory is seen as a spatial representation of power highlighting the need to move beyond the primacy of geography and ethnicity. In effect, there is an ongoing evolution of the forms, mechanisms and narratives of power that incorporate the unique characteristics of belonging and non-belonging that are not removed from the non-assimilable nature of certain groups within the state apparatus.

Conclusion

The history of the Kachin in northern Thailand and their interaction with various state agencies are fundamentally centred on issues of legitimacy and control where such interactions do not neatly coincide with the law of the central administration. The village that

³¹ State discourse concerning the highland peoples is based on three interconnected representations, each of which problematises forest resources and people. First, highland people are identified as ‘destroyers of the forest’ with the shifting agricultural practices of highland farmers viewed as environmentally destructive. Second, highland ethnic minority communities are considered to be involved in the production and distribution of narcotics, in particular opium, an accusation primarily directed toward the Akha, Lisu, Mien and Hmong ethnic groups. Third, and related to the first two, highland people are classified as a threat to national security. This threat is viewed as stemming from agricultural practices deemed harmful to environmental security, a presumed susceptibility to anti-state ideas, and habitation of remote border areas outside of state control. The social, geographical and political space assigned to ethnic minorities finds its origins in the emergence of the modern Thai State (Thongchai 1994; Tambiah 1990).

this research studies, although geographically close to the Thai-Burma border, represents not only physical manifestations of borderlands and zones of exception, but also ideologically and culturally-defined border spaces (see Tsing 2005: 4). As subsequent chapters show, for the Kachin in northern Thailand, the fixed and bounded nature of these areas is in constant flux, “characterised more by hybridity and liminality than by any uncomplicated citizenship” (Mattingly 2010: 9) or sense of belonging. Mattingly (2010: 9) further suggested that these are “spaces of contradiction and disorder, as well as sites of cultural fluidity, identity making, and diverse and marginal forms of citizenship”.

As people move across borders, points of rupture in states’ attempts at uniform control and exertion of power over territory and people become apparent. Such processes are neither constant nor permanent as specific groups of people are in a continual flux of integration and expulsion. This is a particular formation of power, which is designed to produce the condition of the state, and that of the dispossessed and the integrated. In this case, the international border does not necessarily delineate sovereignty, as there are countless points of interaction, divergence and convergence.

The following chapters introduce a closer examination of the history and positioning of Jinghpaw Kahtawng that shows meanings and values of places are constructed and reconstructed by different people with different interests. Fixed notions of territory and boundaries continue to enjoy legitimacy over other forms of imagining space. In lived space and the social fields they generate, the demarcation of the so-called international boundaries does not, however, wipe away practices and movements that existed prior to the imposition of the states and boundaries, particularly where the boundaries were drawn by the colonial powers.

In cultural terms, territorial borders represent a line of difference or, alternatively, similarity, with which a comparison is drawn with a perceived ‘other’. Specific localised historicities of movement and migration are mobilised to alter and transform the political, economic and social-cultural contexts of everyday lives. The spatial construction of ‘the village’ structures the interaction and relationship between local communities of Kachin, Akha, Lawa, Lahu and the Thai authorities. It also exposes specific configurations of social, cultural and ethnic relations. In this sense, for the Kachin, the dual processes of accommodation and dispossession are predicated on the level of acceptance into wider state social, political and cultural mechanisms.

The movement of the Kachin and establishment of a unique and singular ‘village’ not only illustrates their relationships with contemporary ethno-political borders and boundaries, but

also represents a connection between Kachin and individual nation-states in the region including China, India, Burma and Thailand. The movement of Kachin can be interpreted as variously a political, social and geographical phenomenon. A national collective identity is constructed through the classification and categorisation of others, in the case of Thailand 'non-Thai' as a structural opposition marker to the definition and ideology of being Thai.

Relationships between natural resources and people are also highly politicised. This is particularly so given that ethnic minorities have an ambiguous relation with state agencies on both sides of the border. In this regard, long term residents of Jinghpaw Kahtawng can be seen as both 'in' and 'outside' of Thai society due to spatial and political ties. As I demonstrate in subsequent chapters, they are also part of a complex network of border groups encompassing cultural, ethnic and political or military divisions, coalescing, in many cases, across ethnic and territorial lines. The specific historical trajectories of movement and the genealogies of power in border regions of Thailand–Burma illustrate how particular historical and contemporary manifestations of power assume different meanings and cultural interpretations.

Chapter Three

Continuities and Divergences within Cross-Border Kachin Cultural and Social Practices

Zau Hkam, a former KIA soldier now living in Jinghpaw Kahtawng, welcomed me into his home. His wife offered us green tea, then left us alone to talk. “Call me Uncle”, he said when we met. “Tsa Ji³² can you tell me about your clan history?” This was a question I had been reluctant to ask him since our first meeting,³³ as he told me that he knew very little about Kachin culture and social structure. However, on this particular day he offered the following narrative, a story that his father had told him as a young boy:

Long ago, the Lahtaw and Lahpai clans were said to have had a war. When the war between the Lahtaws and Lahpais broke out, the Lahpais were defeated. They lost the war; only one child survived, a boy. He was left in a barn, and the rest of the Lahpai’s were killed. The wife of a Maran Chief discovered him. The Maran Chief and his wife took the child as their own. When the Lahtaws saw the Maran Chief and his wife took the child, they said to them, “Are you not afraid that this child is going to be a threat?” The Maran Chief’s wife was smart, answered, “No, it is only a girl”, and took the boy home. The Maran Chief and his wife raised the boy. He was dressed like a girl until he was old enough to get married as the Marans had said, in fear of the Lahtaws attacking the child, that he was a girl. In order to prevent future wars between Lahpai and Lahtaw clans, the Maran family had the child married to a daughter of a Lahtaw leader.

After the married couple had a child, they thought problems between the two clans had been resolved. So, they went to pay a visit to the girl’s family, the Lahtaw leader. Only then, the Lahtaws noticed that their son-in-law was in fact a Lahpai so they tied him to a wooden post, which is a general feature of a Kachin house. He was tied by a leather rope made of the skin of an animal. I don’t know how many days he was held like that, but according to history, it must have been quite long. He became very angry. At one point he said, “I am not a cow. I don’t want to smell this skin anymore. I am not a bull, and I am sick of the smell of rice husks.” This is because in the past, Kachin people milled rice seeds to remove the husks in front of their houses. He said this in Zi language. Then he tore the leather rope apart with his bare hands, went into the living room, took his child and wife, and went out of the house of his wife’s family, saying, “Follow me if you dare.”

When the Lahtaws followed them, they saw that giant pine trees along the way were all cut down. They were scared and stopped following. They said, “It is not possible to fight

³² Tsa Ji means uncle (from the maternal side). It is a common kinship term and identifies social relationships. For a more detailed discussion on Jinghpaw kinship terminology see Edmund Leach, 1961. *Rethinking Anthropology* (London: Altone Press).

³³ I outlined my first meeting with Zau Hkam in Chapter One.

against him and win, and as he has been married to our daughter, we have to welcome him as part of our family.” From that time onward, there has been no war between the Lahpais and Lahtaws. The Lahtaws we marry are Lahtaw Dashi, Lahtaw Zin Yu, and Lahtaw Hpau Yam. They all are our *Mayu*. Then later on in my father’s generation, they said, “It is not very fertile if you marry a Lahtaw woman. And our people need to reproduce a lot.” So, we started marrying other women that belonged to different clans. But Lahtaws are the ultimate *Mayu* of Lahpai. This is our history. I mentioned that the name of our ancestor is Aura Tang, right? I think this is correct, but I have never been told that he is indeed our ancestor. I don’t know the truth because I have been living in the jungle. This is our history: the history of our clan (Interview, village elder, Jinghpaw Kahtawng 2010).

This story, outlining the social and cultural connectivities between the Jinghpaw Lahtaw and Lahpai clans, shares characteristics of many origin myths that detail conflict and its resolution through recognised structural relations. After leaving the KIA base in the early 1970s Zau Hkam travelled throughout border regions and urban areas of Chiang Mai. Eventually, he returned to a Lahu village in close proximity to the original KIA base and married a Lahu woman. In one of our many discussions he said, “There were no Kachin women in Thailand back then.”

Within the changing political context and categorisation of Kachin in Thailand – from building close, relationships with the Thai military, to illegal residents – village residents (with assistance from high ranking Kachin officials in Chiang Mai) have created a specific cultural space, although tenuous. Falling within the geographic and political boundaries of the RDP one can see social systems that operate at different levels and are guided not only by traditional understandings of social and cultural norms, but also by individual choice and status considerations including village administration and organisation, Thai bureaucracy, lineage relations and political identity (citizenship). An important distinction arises here: power to make individual choices is not equal³⁴ and contemporary structuring factors that delineate the control and channeling of power can only be understood from a historical perspective.

To further our examination of what we can learn from the symbolic and material presence of the Kachin village, this chapter considers historical continuities and divergences within cultural and social practices that occur as a result of cross-border mobility. By linking theoretical and practical experiences of mobility with the historically malleable understanding of Kachin/Jinghpaw social structures provides a more nuanced understanding of the

³⁴ For an analysis on power and political choice see Talal Asad, (1972) “Market model, class structure and consent”, *Man*, 7: 74-94.

contemporary position (political, cultural and geographic) of Kachin in Thailand. I use a historically specific ethnographic approach to locality that incorporates and builds our understanding of both trans-border subjects and cultural and social structures (Sadan 2013; Schiller 1994, 2006). If we are to accept a fluid analysis of the state and other localities, we must also theorise the development of a similarly fluid social system for mobile populations.

I have suggested that the Kachin village and the lives of its residents raise politicised issues of cross-border belongings, alongside cultural classifications and tropes of exceptionalism that inform these. In this chapter, I introduce historical approaches to Kachin social organisation and modern Kachin identity not as a stable equilibrium in which to compare one social structure to another, but by uncovering levels of abstraction where principles of organisation inform and structure society and social relations independently of cultural context (Radcliffe-Brown 1957). This gives us the basis to turn subsequently to their role in the establishment and ongoing dynamics of village life.

Political and Geographical Dimensions of Place

The impression of local authorities that the area along the border separating Chiang Dao District, Thailand from southern Shan State, Burma (see Map 2) as unsafe and dangerous is not only a categorisation of the geographical landscape, but of the people who reside there. When travelling from Chiang Mai city to the research site, the contemporary Thai fixation with territorial and ethnic divisions is clear. Approximately 80 kilometres from Chiang Mai on the road north to Chiang Dao one encounters the first army checkpoint. Vehicles are stopped in both directions and drivers are asked where they are going and where they are coming from. Then, their identification is checked. Those travellers who pass the requirements are free to continue; however, those who do not have the appropriate documents are removed from their vehicles and detained. Although I travelled this road at least once a week, over a period of almost two years, I was only stopped and questioned when travelling with Kachin from the village. And, my documents were never checked.

When I asked people living in the area: “Where is the actual border?” I received a wide range of answers. Kachin living in the village would point off to the north and say: “Over there, not far.” I asked soldiers at a local checkpoint about the specifics of the border. “I have never been there”, one answered. This seemed strange that as a soldier stationed in the area to protect the border only a couple kilometres away, he had never actually been there himself. I too must admit that initially I had some difficulties finding the border in the outset. Equipped with a GPS on my mobile phone, I set out in my car in search of the border. I knew where the

official border crossing was located; however, I was interested in exploring the immediate areas surrounding either side of the checkpoint.

I soon found myself on a dirt road leading into cornfields of the Haw Chinese town. My mobile phone clearly indicated with a flashing dot that I was in fact in Burma. I was surprised in the ease in which I crossed the border, neither questioned nor approached by any state official from either side. An elderly man and a young boy were walking along the side of the dirt road. I pulled over and asked them, “Where is the border?” The elderly man looked rather bemused, so I asked again: “Are these fields in Thailand or Burma?” pointing to the nearby patch of corn. After a short discussion between the man and the young boy in Chinese, the young boy answered in Thai “Thailand” and they continued walking back along the track.

When I visited the offices of the Geographic Information Service Department located at the Faculty of Geography, Chiang Mai University, to discuss the possibility of accessing satellite maps of the area, it took a little over ten minutes to get a satellite map. Geographically, at least, this map dispensed with any geographical ambiguity in a way that only a physical map can provide. A clear red line divided Thailand and Burma, and the immediate fields, forests and villages on either side. The removal of such geographical ambiguity in the eyes of the state overlaps with van Schendel’s (2005: 332) argument that borders must be symbolically marked with the nations’ imprint. This imprint “evokes the nation, locates the border in the mind, physically separates the included from the excluded, and stakes out the arena where neighbouring nations confront each other”. Having studied the border regions of South Asia, in particular India and Bangladesh, van Schendel (2005) argued that one needs more than a purely territorial epistemology to understand what is actually happening in said regions.

Mainland Southeast Asia is politically and geographically characterised by hill and valley landscapes, with the valley imagined in many figurations as the centre of civilisation (Scott 2009). More specifically northern Burma and northern Thailand’s ethnically diverse highland areas are prominent sites of conflict, contestation and resistance over the control of territory and resources. The geo-political highland/lowland division continues to have a significant impact on how forest resources and ethnic groups are categorised. Valleys are viewed as the source of civilisation and integral to statehood, paddy cultivation and Buddhism, while hills

are characterised as uncivilised, wild, stateless and non-Thai domains (Scott 2009; Pinkaew 2001, 2003; Turton 2000; Thongchai 1994, 2000; Prapas 1966; Elawat 1997).³⁵

Classifications of the Kachin are based variously upon early historical encounters with lowland pre-colonial kingdoms in Burma, British colonial contact, missionary influences, contemporary incursions by the current military regime, and current Thai state policy governing ethnic minorities, the socio-cultural, economic and political systems. Divisions are etched in enduring polarities of lowland–highland, centre–periphery, civilised–uncivilised, Animist–Christian and modern–backward, which have collectively led to the establishment of their status as the ‘other’. As has been generally found, the creation of the ‘other’ is a discursive trope that ultimately divides populations along ethnic, racial, cultural and geographic lines to facilitate control and rule, with the goal of creating a controllable, homogenised, unified population within the official borders of the nation-state.

The Kachin have held an important place in the studies of modern social anthropology since the publication of Leach’s *Political Systems of Highland Burma* in 1954. However, the use and meaning of the name Kachin remains ambiguous. Tegenfeldt (1974: 11) noted that even the spelling of the term Kachin varied greatly (*Ke-Cheen, Ka-Khyen, Ka-Khyen*) until the 1880s when the current spelling came into general usage. Josiah Cushing wrote in 1880 that, “The name Ka-Khyen is an appellation of purely Burman origin” (Cushing, in Tegenfeldt 1974: 11). Ola Hanson, an early missionary in Upper Burma, supported the notion that the term Kachin most likely originated from a combination of Shan and Chinese terms for “wild men” (Hanson 1913: 18). Leach (1954: 41) shared Cushing’s view, that is, that the term was essentially a Romanisation of the Burmese term. This term, Leach argued, was used loosely to apply to groups living in the northeast frontiers of Upper Burma (Leach 1954). It was later used as a general term (except for the Palaung) for the upland populations living in the northern Shan State and in today’s Kachin State, a polyglot population incorporating speakers of languages and dialects now known as Jinghpaw, Gauri, Maru, Atsi, Lashi and

³⁵ In Thailand, despite a constant historical movement of people between lowland and hill elevations, a stable and lasting ‘civilisationist’ discourse has remained. The historical pre-modern Thai division of land to represent civilization under the term *muang* (city), and its wild dangerous opposite *pa* (forest), has significantly shaped struggles involving ethnic minority peoples and resource rights in the northern highlands (Pinkaew 2004, 2001; Turton 2000; and Thongchai 1994, 2000). Tanabe (2000:294) notes that the conception of *muang* as a civilized domain under the rule of the king has shaped the self-identification of Thai and non-Thai peoples. The significance of the term *muang* lies principally in what it excludes, while *pa* signifies a landscape that was savage and untamed, peripheral to the centre of human power (Pinkaew 2004). This particular area is perceived by those inside the *muang* as filled with spirits, wild animals and non-Thai peoples outside of the social and economic control of the *muang* and the king. According to Stott (1991:145-147), a crucial contrast is made between Thai civilized space and the areas beyond non-Thai and uncivilized *pa*. The inclusion of these peripheral forest areas has proven significant in the contemporary evolution of the Thai state, given they have become state classified, controlled and managed domains.

Lisu. This implies that Kachin were a cultural not a linguistic category (Leach 1954: 41-43). Such a position is based upon the notion that each group has produced and reproduced unique cultural identities without interconnection, negotiations or incorporation. Subsequently, as noted by Decha (2003: 83), the European discourse of ethnology followed by the administrators of British Burma in the nineteenth century also fits closely with the civilising discourse of Christianity.

Kachin Social and Political Systems: Points of Oscillation

The intricacies of the Kachin social systems have been well documented, in particular social structure and organisation (Leach 1954; Friedman 1979; Levi-Strauss 1969; Sadan 2007a; Nugent 1982). In his landmark study of ethnic identity in Burma, Leach (1954) described the dynamics of ethnic structural opposition in the Kachin Hills. His analysis uncovered and explained the logic of social and political structures shared by each sub-group. From this vantage point, the specifics of these structures demonstrate two distinct systems: the feudal hierarchical aristocratic *gumsa* system and the democratic egalitarian *gumlao* system. Leach (1954) suggested that Kachin communities moved between these internally contradictory polar types of political and cultural administration, in a form of dynamic equilibrium (Wang 1997: 13).³⁶

Leach (1954) emphasised the complex ‘oscillation’ in the political organisation of upland social formations, and the movement of people between the categories of upland (Kachin) and lowland (Shan) social spheres. Interestingly, Leach described the Jinghpaw kinship systems as an “experiment in ethnographic algebra”. This system is embodied in *mayu dama* relationships: wife givers and wife takers.³⁷ The requirement to determine one’s relationship

³⁶ The criticisms of Leach’s (1954) work are many and substantive. In particular Jonathan Friedman (1979) provides a structural Marxist critique focusing on modes of production and economic organisation. The primary divergence of Friedman’s analysis is on the basis rank differentiation and democratic and territorial expansion (see also Victor King and William Wilder 2003, *The Modern Anthropology of Southeast Asia: An Introduction*, London, Routledge Curzon). Friedman’s approach is similar to that of Talal Asad. The example of Kachin social structure was used by as an example of how the “historically specific discourses are typically reduced to the status of determinate parts of an integrated social mechanism” (Friedman 1979: 621) is implicit in the construction of a ‘Tribal’ ideology. The American cultural anthropologist Thomas Kirsch also argued that Leach’s (1954) analysis over-emphasised political motivations at the expense of cultural interconnections (see Kirsch, 1973 *Feasting and Social Oscillations: A Working Paper on Religion and Society in Upland Southeast Asia*, Ithaca, NY, Cornell University, Southeast Asia Program, Data paper No. 92). From an internal Kachin perspective Maran La Raw (1967: 124-146) argued that Leach’s theoretical classification is inconsistent with the social reality of Kachin (an argument supported by Sadan 2013). Maran saw the Kachin social and political systems are not neatly classified into two distinct systems of *gumsa* – *gumlao* as outlined by Leach (1954: 136-140), but actually three systems of *gumchyng gumsa*, *gumsa* and *gumsa gumrawng*. Maran further argued that these systems outlined by Leach do not fit the overall categories of Shan–Kachin and highland–lowland.

³⁷ *Mayu dama* (wife giver/wife taker), the Kachin marriage alliance system based on kinship (see Leach 1954: 73-85).

through the *mayu dama* system underpins Kachin interpretations of how to relate to each other, for example as a brother/sister, uncle/aunt. As Tegenfeldt (1974: 31) stated:

It needs to be emphasised, however, that the *mayu dama* relationship is a very real one ... the division of all Kachin society into three groups – one's own clan, the clan or clans from which one takes wives, and the clan to which one gives wives – determines much of one's social relationships.

Such connections not only span newly marked geographic territory but also, as Dean (2005) suggested are “hugely significant from the aspect of the Kachin border construction and maintenance ... [with] lineage, kinship and family relations extending on both sides of the Sino-Burmese boundary”. She further suggested that: “The Kachin social space extending across the Sino-Burmese boundary is mostly the effect of ... past Kachin territorialities” (2005: 134).

The notion of oscillation has endured, and the Kachin have often been analysed as a society in constant movement between opposed conceptions of legitimate social order (Leach 1954; Friedman 1979; Levi-Strauss 1969). A point of departure from this focus on movement and equilibrium is a consideration of how *gumsa* (powerful or thigh-eating chiefs) in fact exercised more restrictive control, influence and power over specific geographic domains as well as economic resources and the *gumlao* (egalitarian social organisation) phenomenon of social organisation (Tsui-Ping 1997). This may be seen as an example of ‘latent contradictions’ (Friedman 1979; Leach 1954). The exercise of power, and the way in which it is used, is fundamentally at odds with building an egalitarian society. However, it is generally concealed from view; thus, only gradually are the contradictions realised. Using historical data appertaining to the relationship between Kachin chiefs, Leach (1954) wrote that “social reality is caught in contradictions and that an understanding of these contradictions allows us an understanding of the process of social change” (Nugent 1982: 509).

As the systems of *gumsa* and *gumlao* have shifted historically due to internal and external power relations (Leach 1954; Friedman 1972), political status within traditional Kachin village structures has largely been maintained and reproduced through the *mayu dama* marriage system. Due to the nature of the affinal and lineage relationships common to this particular marriage system, the extent to which landlord–tenant relationships could be exploited was limited. It is here, Nugent argued, that latent contradictions manifest themselves based on the political relations between the highland Kachin and the valley-dwelling Shan (1982: 509). Before the power of the Shan began to diminish in the nineteenth

century, the Kachin *gumsa* system was considered stable (Leach 1954; Tambiah 2002).³⁸ As the power and influence of the Kachin chiefs began to expand into the valleys and plains they had increased access to new territory and economic resources. When this occurred, two things happened: first, male members of influential lineages, who were previously unable to become chiefs because each was a youngest son, broke away from the *gumsa* model to become chiefs of their own territorial domains. Second, Kachin chiefs began to model themselves and village organisation on the Shan princes (*sopha*) by focusing on a landlord–tenant organisation of their domains, ignoring the social obligations of the *mayu dama* system (see Leach 1954; Friedman 1979). Leach (1954) argued that the new Kachin chiefs would renounce the system of lineage hierarchy, such that “individuals who had no claim to being chiefs were nonetheless taking the status for themselves” (Nugent 1982: 510). The *gumlao* (egalitarian) revolts against this system that followed saw the overthrow of these new chiefs and the *gumsa* system more generally.

Kachin’s traditional social organisation is primarily based upon a segmentary lineage basis where, in turn, lineage segments are ranked in a hierarchy of aristocrats, commoners and slaves (Friedman 1979). It is within this system that these segments are reproduced through the generalised *mayu dama* marriage system. Following the notion of rank and status, prominent lineages were connected to rights over territorial domains and received offers and tributes from those under their control. All of those who live within the domain owed the chief certain dues.

Of relevance to our exploration of life in the Kachin village is that, in the case of the Kachin in northern Burma, a generalised system of exchange survived and became adapted to the centralisation process administered first by colonial, then missionary, and finally by Burmese state influences (Robinne 2010). This alliance system, Robinne argued, “symbolises the coherence of the Pan-Kachin movement” (2010: 59). He (2010) further claimed that the strength of this system provides a stronger sociological base than the arbitrary classification of the six sub-groups in the historical discourse. In this sense, Kachin is a multi-ethnic term: belonging to the shared Tibeto-Burmese linguistic family is not sufficient to establish a link of continuity (Robinne 2010: 59).

³⁸ As noted by Sadan (2013) the world in which Leach (1954) theorised the political structures of Kachin no longer exists, “the world he had described had disappeared; Kachin society was somehow just ‘different’ ” (Sadan 2013, pp. 15). This difference was never clearly explained by Leach. Sadan (2013) argued that Leach did not recognise the lived history of Kachin as an integral aspect in determining their political structure. In Leach’s revised forward in the 1970 edition of his book he failed to adequately address the changing political systems in Burma including the emergence of the Kachin Independence Army and the role of the Church. For a useful analysis of the role of the Church and the KIA in formation of Kachin identity and social structure see Oliver Byar Bown Si (2011) *Half a Century after Edmund R. Leach: Church Ethnicity and Civil Society in Northern Highlands of Burma*. Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Lulu Publishing.

Sadan (2007), drawing from her work on historical discourses in Burma and the deconstruction of Burma's modern ethnic discourses, recognised that such elaborations may in fact lead to considerable unease among the political elites of the communities concerned. For example, she showed that:

The details of post-independence conflicts often demonstrate that the activities of regional elites themselves, with their prescriptive notions of ethnic affiliation, served to homogenise the cultural and social experience of difference among the peoples that they claim to be representing at a sub-category level (Sadan 2007a: 35).

Conventional thinking on ethnicity, even when used to describe cultural differences in settings where people from different regions live side by side, relies on the unproblematic link between identity and place (Gupta and Ferguson 1999; Norval 1996). While such concepts are suggestive because they endeavour to stretch the naturalised association of culture with place, they fail to address the assumptions upon which they are based. There is, therefore, a need to appreciate, investigate, and analyse cultural differences, and to abandon perceived notions of (localised) culture and fixed places.

Ethnicity in its broadest sense, originally following Weber (1978: 385-395), is understood as a subjective field of belonging of a shared culture, ancestry, social organisation and history. Keyes (2002) credited Weber with contributing to anthropological theory and research in the areas of research methodology, theoretical thinking and the relation between religion and political economy. However, Weber's contribution to studies of ethnicity and ethnic communities is not uniformly accepted (see Horowitz 1985 and Banton 2010). In particular, Banton (2010: 26) referred to the interaction of ethnicity and group or community formation where, by derivation, if groups, in the community sense, are to differentiate themselves, maintain their heritage and promote their advantage economically and politically, they need to act collectively. Their common beliefs associated with their ethnicity (religion, politics, family heritage), according to Banton (2010: 26), are significant because, "though the belief does not create the group it can be important for the maintenance of the group. It [is] primarily the political community that inspired belief in shared ethnicity."

In sum, ethnic identification is political, ideological and cultural and this is as true for the Kachin I worked with as for anyone else. It is, of course, closely connected to the institutional histories of groups and ever-present tensions enforcing consensus and conformity within nationalist imperatives. This includes struggles to sustain ethnic identities and to acquire the material necessities essential to holding their communities and families together. These are, then, bases for both cultural change as well as working to ensure ongoing cultural integrity and identity. Importantly, in this context, the community and the state influence each other.

Political and kinship myths are accentuated in these areas; and the actions of the state, its structure and basic nature affect how and whether cultural mythologies, irrespective of any type, are sustained. “Nowhere, of course, is politics simply reducible to the common denominator of ethnic ties” (Horowitz 1985: 7), but, as we will see in Jinghpaw Kahtawng: “In societies [and regions ‘resembling mini-states’] where ethnicity suffuses organisational life, virtually all political events have ethnic consequences” (Horowitz 1985: 13).

Colonial Ethno-Politics

In pre-modern Burma, various ethnic nationalities established their own kingdoms and surrounding principalities, most notably the Shan kingdom (10th to 16th century). At the time of the British arrival in 1824, the Konbaung Dynasty (1752–1885) in central Burma ruled Burma (from present day Mandalay). The British, who waged three wars against the Konbaung rulers between 1824 and 1885, successfully colonised lower Burma in 1885. Once under British control and administration, Burma was first annexed as a part of British India, and later established as a separate crown colony in 1937. During the British colonial years, the Kachin Hills were never considered part of the same colony as the Burmese; hence, the British administered them separately. Adhering to the twin objectives of security and profit, the British colonial administration soon realised that given the political and social systems that governed Kachin social organisation, the localised system of hereditary chiefs was sufficient to preserve order (see Smith 1991: 40-43).

During the nineteenth century, northern Burma (Upper Burma or the Frontier Areas as it became known after its annexation by the British) played a significant role in the economy and regional politics of Southeast Asia. In particular, the waxing and waning of the local power of the Shan and the Kachin, in terms of their relationships with the British and Burmese, along with the region’s expanding border trade with China, were significant dimensions of this process. Control of economic resources was the foundation of the rule and influence of the Kachin chiefs. Due to the arrival of the British, and to subsequent political upheavals in upper Burma, their economic base was essentially eroded (Friedman 1979; Leach 1954; Sadan 2007a, 2009, 2013).

By the middle of the nineteenth century, Western colonial expansion into Southeast Asia had transformed many traditional institutions. In the case of Burma, society was drastically transformed by the demise of the absolute rule of the monarchy (Smith 1991; Gravers 2007; Leach 1954). Although Thailand was never officially colonised, colonial practices of mapping – and the categorisation of land and people – were used as tools to construct a unified geobody of a homogenised nation-state (Thongchai 1994). Manifestations of territory and

sovereignty demonstrated by official demarcation and the mapping of boundaries not only created a division between the two nation-states (Thailand and Burma), but also proved a basis for constructing specific categories of racial/ethnic and geographic/spatial divisions of populations and territories.

As colonial administration developed, differentiation across ethnic lines, religious affiliations and loyalty to the monarchy were brought into sharper relief in central government and peripheral (regional). ‘Disparities of power’ were increasingly likely to line up with institutionalised ethnic differences. Colonial administrations invariably focused their attention and policies on ethnic differences. From approximately the mid-nineteenth century onwards, ethnic diversity gave way to a political structure whereby ethnicity was intrinsically related to politics. Around this time, British colonial policy increasingly focused on an institutional separation between lower and upper Burma, administrative rigidity, reinforced by a conceptual rigidity (Brown 1994). Furthermore, the colonial administration, in a bid to consolidate its central power over what the colonists regarded as ethnic regions, put in place policies of control that according to Brown (1994) somewhat ironically created stable ethnic divisions. This eventually required some devolution of power down to the ‘ethnic regions’ if stability was to be achieved.

A fundamental characteristic of colonial rule in Burma was the existence of different categories of sovereignty that coexisted and overlapped (Hansen and Stepputat 2006). Many authors have pointed out that mapping, classifying, and categorising local populations were the central elements of colonial expansion of control (Dirks 2001; Anderson 2006; Cesaire 2000; Scott 1998). Anderson evoked the colonial state’s desire to create a visible transparent society (2006: 184-185):

the colonial state did not merely aspire to create, under its control, a human landscape of perfect visibility; the condition of this ‘visibility’ was that everyone, everything, had (as it were) a serial number. This style of imagining did not come out of thin air. It was the product of the technologies of navigation, astronomy, horology, surveying, photography and print, to say nothing of the deep driving power of capitalism.

Ethnic classification during the colonial period implied that diversity was based on natural and primordial differences (Gravers 2007: 14). During the colonial period from 1824 until independence in 1948, culture and ethnicity within the region became reified and bounded, based on absolute differences in race, religion and mentality (Gravers 2007: 14). Such classifications implied that perceived ethnic differentiation was based upon essentialist differences. Further criteria of difference were religious. Gravers noted that “a double exclusion took place as a result of the policy of difference: Christians from the Buddhist and

the ethnic minorities from the majority” (2007: 14). In 1826, these classifications and divisions were formalised through the colonial practice of mapping ethnicities and territories. The territorialisation of ethnic differences was a colonial practice emphasising cultural differences, boundaries and places on a map (Dean 2007). In these early categorisations, primitive or tribal groups were not classified as part of the Burmese kingdom; these areas, including the Kachin Hills, became known in colonial terminology as ‘excluded’ or ‘scheduled’ areas (Sadan 2007a).

Nation building in terms of local capacities for governance was never a British priority: their motives initially advanced by European discourse of ethnology closely related with the civilising discourse of Christianity as well as security and profit (Smith 1991). Under the British two-tier system of administration ‘Ministerial Burma’ (dominated by the Burman majority) and the ‘Frontier Areas’ (inhabited by ethnic minorities) set the stage for divergent paths of economic and political development. By the 1890s, the British had annexed ‘Upper’ Burma including large portions of the Chin and Kachin Hills. Travel was restricted as territories and ethnicities were delineated on maps as excluded frontier areas. In 1935, these excluded areas were further classified into: Part I ‘Backward Areas’ which included the Kachin, Chin, the Kayah and Karen in upper Salaween district; and Part II, the ‘Advanced Areas’, included parts of the Shan States and Karen areas closer to Ministerial Burma (Gravers 2007: 16). The relative location on the periphery determined the degree of control by, and assimilation into, the state apparatus.

Gravers (2007: 17) made the important point that five of the main eight ethnic categories in Burma: Shan, Karen, Kachin, Kayah and Chin could claim territory only by referring to the colonial classification of “excluded frontier areas”. This classification was based solely on ethnic differentiation. Conversely, the Burmese in lower Ministerial Burma saw this as a division of their nation. Classifications of frontier, using such terms as excluded, backward and primitive areas, contained more than a simple geographic spatial meaning. In contemporary Burmese politics, such classifications are deeply ingrained in how the modern Burmese state is imagined (Anderson 2006) and, by extension, affect the political landscape of policy and practice relating to the ethnic groups of northern Burma.

Scott (2009) argued that different lowland states, pre-colonial kingdoms, the colonial state and independent Burma have pursued remarkably similar objectives in the hill regions. The historical power relations of the monarch and subjects in pre-colonial Burma rested on horizontal or spatial inclusion by alliances as well as on vertical or social integration of classes into a social hierarchy (Dean 2003, 2005). There were similarities between pre-

colonial Burma and pre-modern Thailand in terms of power radiating from the royal centre and its main cities and towns, based on a system of tribute and flow of labour, money and goods in exchange for patronage and protection (see Tambiah 1976). Similarly, the royal realm of Burma (*Myanma Naing Ngan*) was constructed around both spatial and social criteria, on a vertical/horizontal schematic, moving past the simple geographical categorising of people and land (Gravers 2007: 10).

Moves Toward Independence in Burma

In 1942, Japanese forces seized control of Burma with the assistance of General Aung San and the Burma Independence Army (BIA). Japanese occupation lasted until 1945. However, the ultimate goal of General Aung San, indeed of many leaders in the BIA, was the creation of an independent Burma (Lintner 1996, 1997; Smith 1991). In 1942, in response to the Japanese invasion of the north of Burma, the Kachin Levies (later known as the Kachin Rifles) were formed in the far north of Kachin State. This newly formed unit slowly pushed the Japanese forces southward. Allied with the British and American forces, the Kachin played a central role in liberating northern Burma from the Japanese (Fellowes-Gordon 1957; Smith 1991; Tegenfeldt 1974). The Anti-Fascist People's Freedom League, aided by the British, officially liberated Burma from the Japanese in 1945. By 1943, the Japanese declared Burma an independent state; however, it soon became clear that this was not their intention.

Following the retreat of the Japanese forces, a growing Burmese nationalist movement, once again led by General Aung San with the support of the country's ethnic nationalities, demanded independence from Britain. The latter eventually agreed and in 1947 the Panglong Agreement was established. Included in this agreement for an independent Burma was a 'principle of equality' reached by the new Burmese Government under General Aung San and the Shan, Kachin and Chin ethnic groups. When the Union Jack finally was lowered, and the flag of the Union of Burma was raised on 4 January 1948, "one of the five smaller stars on that new flag represented the Kachin" (Tegenfeldt 1974: 69).

Burma was now faced with the task of unifying the nation's politically demarcated territory that had never existed previously under a central administration incorporating the multi-ethnic make-up of the country. This process of place-making and claim-staking was, as Maung Zarni and Cowley (2014: 695)³⁹ suggested, "a process that ensured the nation building process, post-British, and cemented a rigid framework for understanding Burma's ethnic

³⁹ Maung Zarni and Cowley's analysis centres on the premise that since 1978, the Rohingya, a Muslim minority group of Western Burma, have been subjected to a state-sponsored process of destruction, a "slow-burning genocide".

diversity”. In theory, the Panglong agreement recognised autonomy for the internal administration of the Frontier Areas, including the creation of the Kachin State. Full independence was finally realised in 1948 with the creation of a parliamentary democracy. Within this new system, ethnic states were initially considered autonomous. However, several months before the creation of the new government, General Aung San and other key members of Burma’s independence movement were assassinated.

Subsequent to this event, the political climate changed as Burma’s democracy faced new and complex challenges. Political tensions between the central government and the ethnic minorities intensified, the Communist Party of Burma (CPB) strengthened its power base, and there was fear of loss of autonomy, particularly in the northern regions. These events gave rise to the formation of ethnic-based armies, for example, the Shan, Kachin and Karen (Race 1974). In the early 1960s, a number of ethnic groups were engaged in armed conflict with the *tatmadaw* (Burmese Army). In 1962, General Ne Win staged a military coup d’état, marking the beginning of the modern era of Burmese military government; that is, strict military control of the civilian population and the suppression of political opposition. General Ne Win introduced the Four Cuts policy, which was directly aimed at severing armed ethnic nationalities access to food, money, intelligence and recruits (Smith 1991).

On 5 February 1961, the KIA was established. It effectively controlled the British demarcated territorial boundaries of Kachin State (excluding the major cities and the railway) until a cease-fire agreement was reached in 1994. Military rule, along with the formation of an armed Kachin movement for self-determination, were catalysts for the dispersal of the Kachin throughout northern Burma and eventually into Thailand.

The KIA was formed in response to two potential crises: (1) fear of loss of territorial and administrative autonomy in the Kachin controlled areas; and (2) the policy of Burmanisation⁴⁰ of the country’s ethnic groups. Although the country saw the beginnings of a revolutionary movement in 1949–50 led by General Naw Seng Lahpai, it was not until the formation of the KIA that the Kachin nationalist movement gained momentum. Following General Ne Win’s military coup in 1962 ethnic nationality groups continued to struggle against the central government and the Burmese Army. Among these groups were the Karen National Union and the New Mon State Party. Along with several other ethnic groups, these groups formed the National Democratic Front (NDF) and proceeded to contest the Burmese Army’s authority over issues of territory, sovereignty and autonomy (Smith 1991).

⁴⁰ One central aspect of this process was the introduction of Buddhism as the state religion by U Nu in 1960.

Lack of centralised political control over the Southern Shan State - Thailand border zones, along with the presence of the KMT, KIA and other localised armies, constituted a central factor in forcing Thailand to solidify its borders from the late 1960s (Taylor 1983). Cross-border movement of goods and people was, at the time, subject to selective passage. Since the 1960s, power over and control of the area immediately opposite the only official border crossing point, 2 kilometres north of the current position of Jinghpaw Kahtawng, have fluctuated between Burmese government troops and Shan and Wa armed ethnic groups. On the Thai side, the central government has engaged in a systematic project of extending its control over its territorial margins by establishing a strong military presence, checkpoints and border gates. However, as I suggest in Chapter Four, the central Thai state's perception of its limited capacity to fully control the area was influenced by the ethnic diversity of the populations at its borders. In this sense, the border maintains a function and perception of a fixed and perpetual division that requires constant maintenance and reproduction.

The text of the Burmese Constitution in 1974 uses the term *tuinran sa* (son of the country) to signify 'ethnic group' (Gravers 2007: 4). However, a more recent classification uses *taingyitha lu myo*, which refers to national race. Under this more recent classification, 135 'national races' make up the nation.⁴¹ This classification has given ethnicity a dimension of power in the formation of nationalism and cultural 'Myanmarisation'⁴² (Gravers 2007: 4). It is believed that this number of 135 national 'races' was originally determined by the British census of 1931, indicating languages and constituting contemporary manifestations of the colonial 'divide and rule' strategy. Steinberg (2001: 227) argued that the underlying motivation behind this classification of national races stems from the centralisation of national unity, essentially undermining the political power of the seven non-Burman ethnic categories of Mon, Shan, Karen, Kayah, Kachin, Chin and Rakhine, and to "maintain centralised control by the army". One way or another post-colonial ethnic struggles for self-determination and autonomy have emphasised the ethnic dimension of ethnic identity and difference (Gravers 2007: 9). They continue to this day.

Boundaries and Power Struggles

The movement of people in border regions during the pre-colonial period was characterised by control over the population rather than control over a specifically fixed territory. Leaders of specific polities regarded their primary institutional objectives in terms of

⁴¹ Following Gravers analysis (2007: 4-9), *Lu yo* can be translated as 'race'. *Taingyitha lu myo*, which translates as 'national races', was used extensively by the previous State Peace and Development Council.

⁴² Referred to earlier as Burmanisation.

centralised politics, placing little importance on daily village/border operations and maintenance. With the rise of the modern nation-state, the standard narrative highlights the formalisation of territorial bodies and fixed borders and advances a standpoint that those who cross borders challenge the functioning and safety of nation building (Thongchai 1994).

A boundary between the British occupying the Shan State and the Siamese was drawn in 1893 after Upper Burma was annexed in 1885 (see Sai Aung Tun 2009: 154; and Yawngnhwe 1987). However,

The British had no grasp of the boundary of the Shan States with Siam – where and on which side of the mountain, valley, or river it was – because there was no recognised fixed border during the rule of the Burma Kings. The Shan chief knew where the frontiers of his state began and where it ended (Sai Aung Tun 2009: 151).

Historically, additions and subtractions to territories in this area fluctuated in tandem with the varying nature of power, influence and tribute between the Shan chiefs, the Siamese rulers and, later, the British.

Up until the late nineteenth century, Burma was essentially divided into a collection of territories ruled by different ethnic groups. Within this ethnic mosaic, the Burman people, the largest of the ethnic groups traditionally occupied the central areas of the modern Burma state. Other major ethnic groups include the Arakanese (western region), Chin (north western region bordering India's Naga Land), Kachin (northern region), Karen (eastern region bordering Thailand), Karenni (lower eastern region), Mon (southern region), and the Shan (north eastern region also bordering Thailand).

By the end of the nineteenth century, usage of the geographic classification Kachin Hills became commonplace in British administrative language. This highly artificial categorisation of the Kachin came to refer to someone “who lived in a particular kind of terrain rather than a person of particular cultural characteristics” (Leach 1954: 42-43).⁴³ Wang (1997: 5) observed that with the end of British rule in 1948, the term “Kachin” received additional political meaning with the creation of the Kachin State within the Union of Burma. In similar vein, the establishment in 1982 and official recognition of a Kachin village in northern Thailand in 1984 has significant discursive and political components that I will explore in following chapters.

⁴³ Leach (1954: 43) clearly outlined two separate occasions from British government directives issued in 1892 and 1893. “Kachin tribes and clans within our line of outposts and settled villages ... must be placed in every way on the same footing as the Burmese Shan and others among whom they have settled.” Here Kachin is a cultural category (1893). “The Kachin Hills were to be administered in so far as they were included within the provisional area of our administration on distinct lines from the lowland tracts, where alone ordinary law and ordinary taxes were to be enforced. Here Kachin is a geographical category.”

A result of territorial definitions was the continual readjustment of the interstate boundaries as the Shan chiefs fought to maintain their traditional domains and the British attempted to combine the territory into a single administrative unit. At the time, the primary motive underpinning Britain's establishment of a clearly defined border with Siam was one of "securing the Mekong River as a natural boundary between the French and themselves" (Sai Aung Tun 2009: 155). Sai Aung Tun also claimed that the external boundaries of the Shan States were classified according to the power and interests of the external powers of Britain, France, China and Siam, rendering the area a "theatre of war" (2009: 310).

Cowell (2005: 3) argued that what the British encountered in upper Burma in the nineteenth century was a remarkably fluid mosaic of small princedoms and chiefdoms, a complex dynamic that was surprisingly similar to the make-up and control over territory exhibited by various armed groups between the 1960s and the 1990s. This kaleidoscope of mini-states lying between the larger state powers of Burma, China, India and Thailand had the ability to preserve a high level of political and cultural independence (Cowell 2005: 3). In the early 1980s the Ne Win government announced that any 'guerrilla' or 'feudal' force that chose to become *ka kwe ye* (KKY, 'border guard force') would be permitted to retain its arms and local authority. "It would receive 'travel permits' to Thailand (a euphemism for the permission to export opium)" (Cowell 2005: 5). In the northern part of Shan State, the KKY was formed to oppose the movement and increasing control of the territory by Shan groups and the CPB. In the northeast region of Wa, Kokand and the northern Shan state alone, there were 23 KKY groups comprising 4,211 soldiers (Sai Kham Mong 2005: 11). Cross-border movement was central to the militarised jostling.

As early as the late 1940s, the KMT realised the strategic significance of the border areas of the Shan State. Accordingly, it planned to use the area as a long-term location for military bases and activities (Maung Aung Myoe 2011: 33). It was estimated that by 1949 there were approximately 2,000 KMT troops in Shan State; and, by 1952 this number had increased sixfold as large areas east of the Salween River came under KMT control (Maung Aung Myoe 2011: 33). The KMT initially began building relationships and alliances with local ethnic groups such as the Karen National Defense Organisation and the Mon National Defense Organisation. However, it was not until the late 1950s that the Kachin began to build economic and political relationships with the KMT in southern Shan State.

Conclusion

Theories and concepts of international borders and geopolitical formulations of the nation-state require reconsideration under the impact of evolving political events. When one

examines the ethno-political history of the Kachin and their migration across time and space, it becomes apparent that past contingencies are reflected in their present-day circumstances as a group, notably in their structuring of leadership and kinship obligations. They are historical threads in the warp and weave of contemporary life as the Kachin at the Thai-Burma border nowadays constitute a microcosm of these broader changes. That is to say, political strategies employed by states through their political institutions hold otherwise disparate ethnic and cultural groups together so that in their governing, there is at least an illusion of internal control over groups domiciled on the state's periphery. In line with these strategies, those on the cultural edge fall into a specific category, are treated differently or 'exceptionally', and are encompassed by political determinations of local space. In border regions, these same processes provide bases for resistance, disputation and negotiation, not only among groups, but also among institutionalised state authorities. These interactions are, of course, affected by socio-cultural, political and economic differences; but at the same time, they are institutionally grounded in the experiences of different groups' 'historical trajectories' that strongly reflect how local, perhaps marginal groups respond to state power.

The latter include the socio-structural changes earlier alluded to, which occurred in response to and were reinforced by the long-lasting effects of British colonialism and the subsequent rise of a Burmese (Burman) dominated state which saw the Kachin and other groups – including the Karen and Wa – cast into minority status. Unquestionably, the majority/minority relations in Burma, and the conflicts that have emerged and continue to emerge, significantly influence the people's present-day experiences. To chart these ongoing contours, I turn to an analysis of the formation of a Kachin army camp in northern Thailand.

This chapter has examined cross-border mobility of the Kachin and other groups on the Thai-Burma border and how the movement of these groups influences and is influenced by historical continuities and the interaction of cultural and social practices. In particular, fluidity of state control locally is demonstrated by the fact that control over the border and movement of people and goods was never monopolised by one particular group as the KMT, KIA and Thai military all actively sought to assert their power over the border in the area. Against this backdrop, the following chapter brings out attention to the ambiguous processes of state control at the local level, the Kachin military camp and eventual settlements. In turn, I look at how these factors affect and are affected by the initial movement of KIA soldiers across the border, their establishment of a military camp, and its importance to Kachin settlement, which exemplify how the interaction of social, cultural, political and economic processes effect state sovereignty and control at the local level.

Chapter Four

The Camp

We arrived in Thailand in 1965. The general said: “Today, we have to have our own country. We have to work together and go all places in order to build ties with foreign nations.” Those who came down to Thailand were about 400. We brought opium with us to trade for other goods. Burmese soldiers did not dare to follow us. The area was all covered in forests around here. We came all the way through dense jungle. We crossed here and built a camp on a hill. We lived there for about 10 years. After we built the camp, there was a lot of meetings going on. The numbers of people who went back and forth to Kachin State was high: there were over 200 in the camp. Every three months, there would be a group going back and one coming down, bringing guns and weapons with them.

At the time, houses were made of bamboo. It was like house building ceremonies back in my hometown; we worked every day, we had to work hard to build the camp. The barrack houses needed to sleep 20 to 30 soldiers each. After building everywhere, we built big houses for our generals. We built houses with bamboo, lived in there, and managed to find food to survive. There was a connection between Thai Army officers and our generals, and they visited us every now and then sometimes with helicopter, some other times on foot and with cars, and we welcomed them with our horses. That’s how we built friendship with them. When they visited our camp, our generals and Thai officers with high ranks sat down together and let them know the traditions and customs of Kachin, how we got here. The first priority was the military connection with our Kachin Army and Thai Army. A Chinese group also lived in the area. Other than that, there wasn’t anyone else. It was like all those who were against the government staying together.

My rank wasn’t high, just normal. My status was Cobra, and here in Thailand I was the helper of the generals [laughing]. It was for our country, our leaders told us that it was important to have freedom and our own country to live in, and we worked together for that. Sometimes over the 10 years, I moved to other places but didn’t go too far, though it was still within the camp. Every day it was either follow that general or this general or go to Lashio [northern Shan State Burma] where we got our food supplies. We lived in the forest like that, buying rice between Lashio and Chiang Mai, about 100 bags each time (Interview with former KIA soldier, Chiang Mai, 2010).

This chapter examines the events encapsulated in the above description that underpin shifting national level politics and the movement of KIA soldiers across the Thai-Burma border. This movement was necessitated by the changing political climate in Burma while

networks and relationships formed with the KMT facilitated the movement itself. By the mid-1960s, the number of KMT military camps and connected villages was expanding in northern Thailand. KMT villages remained in border regions easily accessible to cross-border trading routes (Krisana 1999; Chang 1999, 2009). From the 1960s onwards, two battalions of KMT troops, that is, the 3rd and 5th commanded by General Li and General Tuan⁴⁴ respectively, entered northern Thailand where they established army bases and satellite village settlements. Nong Uk (officially known as Ban Arunothai) the closest market town to Jinghpaw Kahtawng and the first KMT settlement village established in northern Thailand was located approximately one kilometre from the Thai-Burma border checkpoint.

Historically, the area covering northern Thailand, eastern Shan State, Burma and Yunnan Province China has been a confluence of trade and the mass movement of peoples. Burmese and Thai governments, underpinned by their militaries and armed groups, namely the Shan,⁴⁵ Wa, KMT, Kokang and Kachin, have fought for territorial as much as political control over the area. Within a complex array of relationships, networks and negotiations, the KMT, KIA and Kokang have occupied and controlled large sections of the border region in the area over the past 60 years (Taylor 1983; Hearn 1974). Added to this dynamic were increasing attempts by the Thai administration to re-inforce its power and control over its borders. As a result, there was never monopolisation of power by a permanent and visible military, police force or other state apparatus. Rather, the area was controlled and managed by multiple actors exerting fluctuating control over trade routes north into Shan State and south into Chiang Mai and Bangkok.

When the KIA entered northern Thailand in 1965 they were granted permission to stay, build an army camp and trade freely across the border (Development Centre of Civil Servants in Chiang Mai Province 1994). They were first introduced to the Thai military Northern Command through their connection with KMT leaders. Subsequently Kachin as an ethnic category were incorporated into wider more encompassing Thai central government policies regarding the acceptance of KMT that accommodated their presence on the Thai-Burma border. These decisions were initially considered a temporary necessity for the KMT and KIA troops to act as a buffer zone between Thailand and Burma and as allies in the subsequent suppression of the Communist insurrection in northern Thailand (Tannenbaum 2001: xviii; McCoy 2003).

⁴⁴ Also spelled Lee and Duan or Xuan respectively.

⁴⁵ This included the Shan State Army, the Shan State Army East, Shan United Army and Muang Tai Army (under the umbrella of the Shan United Army).

During this time (1965–1975), both political and economic imperatives were paramount as armed groups operating in the area coveted trading routes from Kachin State through Shan State into northern Thailand and further to surrounding market towns. The solidification of these trading routes meant the increased easing of passage for caravans of supplies to reach bases in northern Thailand, facilitating subsequent trade and movement further south to centres including Chiang Mai and Bangkok. Consolidation of territory (temporarily or permanently) and control over trading routes were primary goals of armed groups on the border. As such, the creation of military camps in northern Thailand represents specific historical moments whereby a nation-state voluntarily relinquishes territory to a foreign army to promote its strategic objectives.

Local Power Flows

The high points of politics are simultaneously the moments in which the enemy is, in concrete clarity, recognised as the enemy (Schmitt, 1996: 67).

Much of our knowledge and understandings of people movement and migration, and subsequent categorisation of groups as illegal are, according to Malkki (1995), grounded in deeply held assumptions on how place, nation, and culture coincide. Bhabha argued to the effect that: “The people are neither the beginning nor the end of the national narrative; they represent the cutting edge between the totalising powers of the social and the forces that signify the more specific address to contentious, unequal interests and identities within the population” (Bhabha 1990: 297).

States are not simply functional bureaucratic apparatuses. Rather, they are sites in which symbolic and cultural power are institutionally embedded, produced and reproduced in particular ways (Ferguson and Gupta 2005: 114). In effect they constitute a multi-layered process from the macro to the micro and vice versa. In what follows I will explore how the spatial formation of the state is practiced, in particular how historical interrelations between ethnic groups and state institutions have made specific claims of sovereignty and power in the border regions of northern Thailand. In this area, which is currently controlled by Thai military on one side, control fluctuates between the Burmese military and the Wa Army on the other.

The sovereign, following Schmitt (2005: 5), is “he who decides the exception”: the locus of sovereign decisions resides ultimately in the state. However, exceptionalism can be authorised by multiple agents and institutions (see Doty 2007), as both state and non-state. It can also be seen as a state in flux, fixed neither in terms of policy and legislation nor in its impact on the individual or group Schmitt’s (1996) friend–enemy distinction is useful here as

it lends to a deeper understanding of local and national power relations. In turn this illustrates the dynamics that emerge when national perceptions shift from friend to enemy and the political exception becomes permanent and entrenched in the larger legal framework of central government. In this respect, the enemy need not be inherently evil, aesthetically displeasing or an economic competitor. The enemy does, however, need to be seen as the “other”, the “stranger”, the “competitor” who is threatening and illegal. This is primarily “because every distinction, most of all the political, as the strongest and most intense of the distinctions and categorisations, draws upon other distinctions for support” (Schmitt 1996: 27).

Throughout different periods from the 1960s onwards, the KMT, the Kokang and the KIA have variously controlled this area of the border. During these years, the KMT, and Kachin armies functioned as a buffer ‘non-state’ space between Thailand and Burma. Within this space the events leading up to the establishment and disbandment of a KIA camp on Thai territory demonstrate its cultural and national significance for the Kachin, and its contribution to border stability, including resistance to a developing Thai communist insurgency. Subsequent attempts by the Kachin to reproduce their culture and settlement, their access to land and resources, and their visibility among other ethnic communities in northern Thailand were enabled by the KIA and the presence of this camp. The construction of Jinghpaw Kahtawng – as we will see in subsequent chapters – and its establishment as a legitimate ethnic community in the area, meant that the local Kachin had to confront, deflect and eventually overcome, at least to some degree, the imposed labels of ‘other’ and ‘illegal residents’.

The establishment of a military camp by the KIA in northern Thailand in 1965 was crucial to the creation of Jinghpaw Kahtawng. Due to the creation of the camp, a Kachin presence was established in northern Thailand; and, the KIA became an important regional power broker and force. The KIA entered into formal and informal collaborations with other army groups including the Thai, KMT, Shan and Kokang. Involvement in these complex networks and alliances was important to Kachin in order to achieve legitimacy in the eyes of the Thai state.

The northern Thai-Burma border in Chiang Mai Province has witnessed the historical movement of people back and forth for centuries; however, it was not until the arrival of the KMT and later the KIA that external armies were officially permitted to establish camps (and later villages) in northern Thailand. From the perspective of the central Thai government, creating a political buffer zone from Ne Win’s socialist government and the consolidation of

the lucrative opium trading routes were central concerns. With the Shan, Wa, Kokang (KKY and regulars⁴⁶), KMT and CPB on the Burma side, and the KMT, KIA, CPT and Thai military on the Thai side, haphazard stability in the region was ensured by the interaction and relationships created and maintained by the smaller ethnic-based armies rather than by the central militaries of either Burma or Thailand. During this period, neither the Burmese Army (supported and boosted by the KKY border guard force) nor the Thai military held the monopoly of power in the region.

Working from their hilltop base in Tham Ngop, the KMT collected opium tax from the local farmers and armed groups, including the Kokang, and patrolled the trading routes in the immediate area on both sides of the border. The Thai military, northern command, received the proceeds from the KMT in exchange for weapons and other supplies, primarily food, clothes and medicine.⁴⁷ The relative freedom of cross-border movement and trade was partly the result of a lack of a centralised state security presence. The inability of the Thai state to monitor and regulate the movement of people and goods was an additional factor, as was the existence of largely autonomous, armed groups. This freedom was, however, also based on the Thai state's prioritising of its political and economic interests over the territorial integrity of its borders. The Thai state was not monolithic; key military, police and politicians competed to profit from the drug trade in the region through their links with the above armed groups, their relationships exemplified by Thai General Phao Siyanon's alliance with the KMT in the 1950s (McCoy 2003; Chao Tzang Yawngghwe 1993).

The act of suspending the law, or of implementing the decision to allow the establishment of KMT and KIA bases in northern Thailand (permitting them to operate independently from the Thai state in terms of collecting taxes, for example) was in essence a localised decision based on regional political security objectives. Alongside Burma's adoption of what became termed the 'Burmese Way to Socialism' under the leadership of Ne Win, the KMT and KIA jointly functioned as a buffer between Burma and Thailand (Callahan 2003). From an internal perspective, the KMT was viewed as having the ability to control the ethnic minorities in the region, and to help suppress communist expansion in Thailand. While this situation exemplifies a decision to create an exceptional space that lay outside of the normal operation of national laws and the constitution, it must be noted it did not result in the overarching and

⁴⁶ EBO (Euro-Burma Office of ADDDB, Inc.). 2010, 'The Kachins' Dilemma—Become a Border Guard Force or Return to Warfare', *EBO Analysis Paper* No. 2/2010.

⁴⁷ During interviews, I was told that the KMT and the Thai military never collected opium and trading taxes from the KIA. However, some KIA soldiers were involved in the collection of opium tax from the local farmers and the Kokang (KKY) along the trading routes into northern Thailand. The KIA was also involved in trade with local Thai military for weapons and supplies.

depredatory consequences of exceptionalism described in many academic circles, that is, the 'bare life' as theorised by Agamben.⁴⁸

Questioning Sovereignty and Territory: KIA Base in Northern Thailand

Informal and formal state practices rely on the categorisation of subjects on both sides of the border. In other words, the creation of ethnic and state boundaries within the both theoretical and practical paradigms of transborder movement is essentially a means to create order. Basic rights guaranteed by law or the constitution can be reduced, superseded and rejected. Agamben (2005) argued that sovereignty produces a state of non-belonging by abandoning territories and bodies deemed outside of sovereign protection to a lawless, almost animal existence. Sovereignty creates a domain of rule; but it also defines a space that is outside of the domain of rule, an area that by virtue of being outside is not subject to the protection of or punishment by the law. From this perspective, the founding act of law is not the imposition or affirmation of law, but the abandonment of that which is outside of the law. When exceptional cases occur in state responses to groups at cultural margins (the 'others' at the border areas, for example), the social is inextricably mixed with the political in policy decisions, with the former often preceding the latter. Doty (2007: 116) suggested, that in these circumstances, "social forces ... are implicated in the process of deciding". Furthermore, she added, the social usually comes before the political and the policy decision because regarding 'the exception' – that is, whom should be excluded – the decision has already been made.

The arrival of the KIA in northern Thailand in 1965 was predicated on a desire for self-determination of Kachin areas in Burma. However, it also constituted a temporary political and territorial exception introduced first by local military commanders and later incorporated into wider more encompassing central government policies vis-a-vis the acceptance of the KMT and their families in northern Thailand. These decisions were initially considered a temporary political necessity. However, it appears that the evolving political decisions closely follow Schmitt's (1996) friend–enemy dichotomy, and that once the national perception has shifted from friend to enemy, the political exception becomes further entrenched in the central government's larger legal framework. Hussain (2007: 735) considered the existence of emergency laws as neither temporary nor specific; rather, they become permanent and part of the larger set of state and non-state practices. For Schmitt (1996), the decision comes from a

⁴⁸ Giorgio Agamben (2005, 1997) considered the creation of Nazi concentration camps a prime example of the exception.

unified entity, the entity in this case being the state: “In its entirety the state as an organised political entity decides for itself the friend-enemy distinction” (1996: 30).

Similarly, the decision to create a state recognised territorial boundary around a pre-existing Kachin village in northern Thailand in 1984 was predicated on numerous other decisions in preceding decades.⁴⁹ The KMT first crossed the border from Burma to Thailand in the 1950s. Subsequently, the CPT began to take root in the eastern and northern parts of the country. From the late 1960s concern over political security meant the ethnic minorities (or Hill Tribes) living in northern Thailand were categorised as problematic to the functioning of the Thai state. Historical political decisions and categorisations of ethnic minorities living in the highland areas as illegal and ‘uncontrolled’ continue in contemporary state ideology. Customs staff told me that my research site “is dangerous”. RDP staff openly said that the “Kachin are lazy and illegal.” A Thai Army Lieutenant explained to me that “many people around here have Thai citizenship but they are not Thai”. Taken together, the above comments showcased the creation of boundaries in national identity narratives.

The enduring positioning of the Kachin and *Kachin-ness* as both welcome but nonetheless ‘other’ demonstrates the specific mechanisms of power that existed throughout these historical periods; mechanisms that helped to form and reproduce unique zones of exception within the larger social, cultural, political and economic framework of the state. According to Agamben: “There is no rule that is applicable to chaos. Order must be established for juridical order to make sense. A regular situation must be created, and the sovereign is he who definitely decides if this situation is actually effective. All law is ‘situational law’ ” (1998: 16). Institutional law characterised the historical geo-political context of the northern Thai border region from the 1960s and continues today within government policy directives, national development and security goals for border regions, and how these are being implemented by various state bodies.

Importantly this space remains situated in an “ambiguous, uncertain, borderline fringe, at the intersection of the legal and the political” (Fontana 1999: 16, cited in Agamben 2005: 1). It is this ambiguous space (Ong 2006), and those who traverse in and out of it, that constitute the everyday lived reality of Jinghpaw Kahtawng. The existence of such spaces in the context of the modern nation-state is foregrounded when one confronts questions of border and ethnic politics. The establishment of the KIA camp in northern Thailand, together with the creation of the contemporary village represents a meshing of the lives and politics of the Kachin in

⁴⁹ In 1984 the military and state movement representatives of the Royal Development Project formally drew the boundaries of the Kachin village.

Thailand within markedly uncertain parameters. A consequence of this meshing has been ongoing recalibrations from benign (friend) to hostile (enemy) and generally exploitative attention.

The practical manifestation of a situational law, such as the permitted construction of military camps by ethnic armies including the KMT, Kachin and Kokang on Thai soil, not only confirm the general rules and norms of the central government, but also the norms and rules that live off exception alone (Agamben 1998: 16). Deleuze and Guattari observed that: “Sovereignty only rules over what it is capable of interiorising” (1987: 445). From this vantage point, in order for the Thai state to exert control over its territory in the border areas, it was necessary to selectively include multiple ethnic armies from Burma (the KMT, KIA and Kokang) within the broader state institutions.

From Burma to Thailand

Investigation of mobility, and the power structures that frame our understanding of place, distance, movement and assimilation, raise questions of how one might understand and theorise social change and cultural transformation, without taking fixed geographical places as a necessary element for mobility (McKay 2006). Sack (1983) suggested human territoriality works to affect, influence, or control actions and interactions by asserting and attempting to enforce control over a geographic area. This form of control applies to both individuals and groups that can be either state or non-state actors. Approaching territory from these perspectives not only emphasises the physical characteristics of political sovereignty, land and power as a strategy for access and control (Sack 1983): it also underscores its intimate connections and performances (Butler 2007; Das 2004).

Several village residents, as well as Kachin living in Chiang Mai, told me that the first Kachin to cross into Thailand were former soldiers who had travelled to the area with General Naw Seng Lahpai as part of the Pawng Yawng National Defence Force (PNDF) at the end of the 1940s. According to these informants, when Naw Seng moved to China, many of these soldiers opted to remain in the area, eventually moving south along the border into northern Thailand:⁵⁰

⁵⁰ As a result of changing regional and national political contexts, the Kachin in northern Thailand have been categorised as illegal, non-Thai, and deserters from the KIA. Their position and categorisation have been challenged at both the national and international levels. This, in turn, calls attention to a situation whereby the states of exception and ‘bare life’ (Agamben 1997, 2005) are multi-dimensional rather than absolute, and are complicated through movement. Doty’s research along the Mexico-US border, prompts her observation that: “We should not limit our understanding of decisions that result in contemporary manifestations of exceptionalism to those controlled by states or elites” (2007: 113). It is often the case that decisions regarding who falls in or out of the law and when, may be made by multiple agents and institutions.

[M]any Kachin soldiers were stationed in conflict areas at the time of independence from the British and under the U Nu government. At the time there was a large Kachin Rifles Battalion, I think the 5th, stationed near the Thai-Burma border in Takhilek. When Kachin soldiers retired from the Kachin Rifles, they lived scattered along the border area. This became a threshold for Kachin movement into Thailand (Interview, Kachin resident, Chiang Mai, 2010).

Between the late 1940s and early 1950s, KMT divisions, along with their families and relatives, crossed the border into Shan State and moved down to the Thai border.

As they moved, they did not come down directly, but slowly moved, slash and burn [agricultural practices] growing poppy [opium poppy] they were moving like this slowly for many years before coming to Thailand. That is why Kachin also were mobilised in KMT units, taking young Kachin men on their way to the Thai border. This way some Kachin became KMT (Interview, Kachin resident, Chiang Mai, 2010).

From the 1950s onwards, border crossings (particularly along the shared border with China) were seen as increasingly problematic by the Shan State government. Large groups of Wa, Lahu, Azi and Lisu freely crossed the border from China into northern Shan State (see Sai Aung Tun 2009: 352). The 1950s and 1960s saw the Shan State as a centre of regional power struggles played out by groups including the KMT, the White Flag Communists of Burma (BCP), Shan State Armies, the Burmese Army, a Kachin resistance led by General Naw Seng Lahpai, and border guard forces (Lintner 1996 and 1997). This movement and organisation of power supports Thongchai's (1994: 79) argument that: "The political sphere could be mapped only by power relations, not by territorial integrity."⁵¹

Thailand's strategic geo-political interest in Shan State diminished in the late 1940s when Burma gained its independence, and a formally drawn border was established following the delineation of the British/Siam treaties (Sai Aung Tun 2009). In 1960, the KMT 3rd and 5th battalions crossed from the Shan State in Burma into northern Thailand, Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai provinces. During this period, Thailand actively supported the KMT's settlement in northern Thailand: "[T]he frequent movements of Kuomintang soldiers and smugglers in and out of Thailand were reported many times, but the Thai authority never acknowledged the truth of these reports. The Thai government also remarked that its police force was patrolling the frontier to prevent violations by the Kuomintang" (Sai Aung Tun 2009: 310).

⁵¹ Although Thongchai Winichakul's (1994) analysis was based on earlier power relationships between Siam and the British, his portrayal of fluctuating power and the complexities associated with territorial control are relevant to this analysis and to any understanding of cross-border movement and regional control over the territory on the Thai/Burma frontier.

The failure of the Burmese Government to fully recognise the Panglong Agreement in 1947 (which established an independent and unified Burma), between the ethnic leaders of the 'Frontier Areas', that is, the Karen, Shan, Kachin, Chin, Mon and Arakan representatives and the Burmese Government, proved a catalyst for ethnic resistance movements. In response to this uncertain political context, General Naw Seng Lahpai formed the first Kachin revolutionary movement in 1949 (as previously noted). While this revolution was short lived (1949–1950), it notwithstanding gained the support of between 2,000 and 3,000 soldiers (Lintner 1997: 114-121). The PNDF travelled as far south as Pegu in central Burma, then retreated from Mong Ko in Shan State across the border into Yunnan with 400 soldiers. Some of the remaining soldiers returned to their homes in Kachin State: others continued their journey south into northern Thailand. The Kachin had lived in Shan State for generations prior to this time; however, it was only after the arrival of the PNDF troops that the movement of Kachin to the border areas of Thailand intensified.

Subsequent to the establishment of the KIA on 5 February 1961, in response to reduced political legitimacy at the national level, the introduction of Buddhism as the national religion, and the failure of the U Nu government to guarantee the stipulations for Kachin self-determination, General Zau Seng soon realised the importance of creating foreign contacts and lines of support with neighbouring countries (Lintner 1997: 131). General Zau Seng, along with several officers, first travelled overland from Kachin State to India in 1964. Although unsuccessful in securing the support of India, General Zau Seng continued with his plan to build relationships with nearby countries. Later that year, together with a battalion of KIA soldiers, mules, and supplies (including jade and elephant tusks), he left Kachin State and travelled to the Thai border. After joining a KMT convoy from northern Shan State, the KIA battalion travelled south and crossed the Thai border in early 1965.

A former Kachin soldier who was part of this convoy described the journey:

When coming to Thailand, the Shan Army and the Chinese [KMT] helped us. Wa area was not unified as an army at that time but there was a Palaung Army that was in the area, and Kokang too. Our camps were close. KMT had come to the area first. In Keng Tung [northern Shan State] Burmese soldiers had blocked the road: we had to travel through the forest and back to Taung Gyi. We had to travel to the west towards the Salween River where we met with the KMT, General Li's troops, and we came to Tham Ngop [KMT and KIA base in northern Thailand] together that way. We arrived at Nong Uk border crossing with 300 soldiers and 70 mules. We brought jade, elephant tusks and opium, to trade for supplies (Interview with a 70 year-old former KIA soldier, Jinghpaw Kahtawng 2010).



Map 4: General movement patterns of the KIA into northern Thailand 1965–1975 (Created by Judith Davis, 2015).

My Travels with Uncle Zau Hkam

Kachin were here, *chin haw*⁵² were over there, and Kokang were on the other side⁵³
(Interview with former KIA soldier, former KIA base Tham Ngop 2011).

When that first battalion of KIA soldiers crossed into Thailand in 1965, they wore olive-green uniforms with the red KIA symbol of two crossed Kachin swords on their shoulders and hats. Somewhat surprisingly, they were relatively inconspicuous: they simply walked across the official border crossing linking Thailand with Burma. At the time they were given free passage as they were travelling with a battalion of KMT soldiers who had already established a hilltop base 15 kilometres away. There were three hundred in total, along with horses, mules, food supplies, weapons, jade and opium for trade. They crossed unquestioned and were permitted to proceed on to Thai territory without incident. They marched 15 kilometres along a well-used mountain road to a village locally known as Tham Ngop where they established their headquarters in Thailand.

Several years later in 1972, a teenage boy crossed the Thai-Burma border near Nong Uk village, Chiang Dao. He was a KIA soldier. He had a backpack stuffed with a change of clothes, food rations, tobacco and a Bible. With a rifle slung over one shoulder, he walked in a line across the border and on to the KIA military camp 15 kilometres away. During the rainy season in 2011, this same man, who is now in his mid-sixties and living in Jinghpaw Kahtawng, agreed to take me to the former KIA camp.

I met Zau Hkam outside his house early in the morning. It had rained heavily the night before: the morning mist still lay thick over the village. Red mud stuck to my shoes like cement as I walked from the car to his bamboo gate, checking carefully for any movement from his large dog, which he usually kept chained up behind the kitchen. Smoke billowed from the large cracks in the bamboo walls of the kitchen. As I came nearer to the door, I could see his children huddled over bowls of rice. They were dressed in school uniforms. The dog was occupied with scraps of food under a nearby tree. Zau Hkam was already dressed and waiting for me. I could see that he was wearing his KIA Anniversary T-shirt that had been distributed to former KIA soldiers at a KIA celebration in Chiang Mai in February 2011.⁵⁴ We greeted each other, I declined a cup of green tea, and we walked back to my car. There was no use trying to get the red clay from my shoes. I took them off, threw them in the back, and

⁵² *chin haw* is a Thai term referring to Yunnanese Chinese. However, in this, case the informant was referring to the KMT (Toyota 2003).

⁵³ Zau Hkam told me this as we reached a clearing overlooking Tham Ngop village and the surrounding hillsides on our way to the former KIA camp.

⁵⁴ In February 2011, the 50th anniversary of the KIA was held in Chiang Mai. Details of this event are discussed in Chapter Six.

drove barefooted. The previous day we had decided to travel together to the former KIA camp where he had been stationed as a teenager almost 40 years earlier. Throughout my time in the village, I had heard of this camp from Kachin friends in Chiang Mai, villagers, and from former soldiers who had travelled from Kachin and Shan State in Burma in different battalions of the KIA to Thailand since the early 1960s.⁵⁵



Map 5: Location of the KIA and KMT camps and the contemporary villages of Jinghpaw Kahtawng and Nong Uk (field note book, illustration by the author).

Zau Hkam and I drove out of the village, then headed east through Nong Uk, the Haw Chinese town. We did not speak much on the way, just simple conversation about the rain, the poor condition of the road, and the increasing price of rice and corn. Then, quietly at first, he said:

Going back to the camp is like a dream to me. I was only 18 maybe 19 when I first came to Thailand. My battalion entered at the border crossing [the official border crossing]. We crossed the border with a *chin haw* [Haw Chinese, KMT] battalion so the Thai military did not ask us any questions. We walked along this same road [the road we were driving on]. We were the third KIA battalion to arrive in Thailand.

⁵⁵ Before I left on my fieldwork in late 2009, some Kachin I met in Australia were also aware that a camp had existed in Thailand many years ago. They shared with me the stories that they had heard. On my return to Australia after the completion of my field work, several Kachin were very interested to learn about and share their insights vis-a-vis the rise and fall of the KIA camp in northern Thailand.

After following the winding mountain road for 30 minutes, passing rice and corn fields along the way, we arrived at Tham Ngop officially known as Ban Sinchai, a small Haw Chinese village surrounded by steep hills. Entering the village, we passed through a Thai military checkpoint. The soldiers sitting by the side of the road did not seem too enthusiastic about checking our details that particular morning.

“Stop here”, Zau Hkam said in a soft voice that could hardly be heard over the sound of the motor, “Our camp was just over that ridge.” He pointed in an easterly direction, to a small hilltop. “The KMT had their camp over on the opposite ridge [to the west] where the current Border Patrol Police constructed a communication tower. The Kokang were a little further away behind our camp, you cannot see their camp from here.” The village seemed empty except for a few elderly men sitting smoking and playing checkers outside of their houses. As it was nearing midday, I assumed that everyone else must have been in their fields. We drove through the village, and Zau Hkam pointed out the trading routes that the KIA and KMT used to transport goods up and down the hill from the town to the camp.

He explained that:

We brought horses and mules down to the town through the forest and loaded them with supplies of rice, corn, medicines, clothes, ammunition and weapons. Some of our soldiers travelled further away to Fang, Chiang Dao, Chiang Mai and Bangkok to organise supplies and attend meetings. We [KIA] were free to travel throughout the area. We were given travel documents by the Thai military and Chiang Dao District Office. We could even carry our pistols and wear our uniforms in the local area but not when we travelled to Chiang Mai.

We stopped on the outskirts of the village as it started to rain. Leading up a small ridge on our right was a well-worn dirt track. It wound through fields of corn and beans, then disappeared into the tree line above. “Follow that track for 30 minutes and you will get to the camp,” Zau Hkam said, tapping on the closed window of the car. I asked if he would be willing to take me. He looked back at me and replied: “Only if you think you can walk that far.”

We got out of the car and changed into rubber boots before heading up the ridge. Zau Hkam walked ahead while I tried to keep up: I took photographs as an excuse to catch my breath on the steep and slippery path. We followed the track through corn fields into the tree line. Before entering the forest, Zau Hkam pointed out the location of the former KMT base high on the opposite ridge overlooking the town. “That’s where the KMT front guard had their base. They are no longer there, it is now a post for the Thai Border Patrol Police.” He then turned and disappeared further along the track. When I caught up with him, he was

standing at a small clearing. Cutting across the path in front of us was another smaller, yet clearly visible, path overgrown with small bushes. “This was our [KIA] main supply route with the KMT and Fang [the nearest market town]”, he said.

As we walked, he explained why the path had remained in such good condition and why most of the tree cover remained. The good condition of the path was because “the area was very steep and no good for farming. Over the past decade because all of this area had been registered as a national park, farming and cutting trees became illegal. The local Haw Chinese believe that the area has many spirits after what happened with the KIA in this place.”

After approximately 45 minutes, we reached the top of a narrow ridge with steep slopes on either side. The path opened slightly. Zau Hkam cautioned about wandering off amongst the long grass. He pointed out three large overgrown pits that I did not initially see: I would have fallen into one had he not warned me. “These were our front guard posts and machine-gun pits. Watch where you walk!” He was reflective, only speaking to explain the organisation of the camp. “This is only the forward section; the rest of the camp was further away down that track. To the left was our hospital and exercise ground. On the right was the food hall and meeting rooms.”

We kept walking through a clearing in the trees: we had a clear view of the forested valley below to the east. “That is where our leader was killed, down there. He was coming up that path to the camp from town on horseback when they ambushed him.” That was all he said about this incident. He turned and continued along the path. “Our barracks were over there. Further down that ridge is a stream where we got water. I lived there [pointing in the direction of cleared area overgrown with grass].”

I was surprised how clear the layout of the camp remained. There were small trees and tall grass but the general design of the camp, including the reinforced dirt walls, trenches and cleared areas, could be clearly made out with an untrained eye. He led me to the end of the camp, to the general’s quarters. Several Kachin villagers, along with Kachin from Chiang Mai, had constructed a large cement headstone in May 2011 to commemorate the assassination of the general.⁵⁶ He continued, but now emphasised the attachment of the Kachin to their homeland:

We never wanted to stay in Thailand. We are Kachin and we wanted a free Kachin State.
We came to Thailand to trade opium and jade for weapons to fight the Burmese and to let
the world know we wanted freedom in our homeland. If we could do this, we would go

⁵⁶ Although I had made strong connections with Kachin both in the village and in Chiang Mai, I was not informed of this event.

home: our home is Kachin State not Thailand. That was our leaders' plan at least that is what I thought. But, I was only a teenager then. We were not like the KMT who had no home. The KMT offered us land but our leader declined. We were not farmers, we were soldiers.

We stayed in the area for approximately 20 minutes. Then, Zau Hkam stood up and began to walk back down the ridge to the car. On the drive home, Zau Hkam recounted the following story:

When we finished building our barracks, we started building relations with the Thai Army through their connections with General Li [the commander of the nearby KMT nearby base]. General Li had close relations with the Thai Army. Later, once we were finished, Kachin soldiers brought jade and elephant tusks to trade for weapons. In the beginning the Thai Army did not know we were here but later they allowed us to stay and established our base. Thai Army officers would visit our camp by helicopter. I stayed in the Tham Ngop camp for one year, then I moved to Chiang Mai to coordinate the purchase of supplies.

Zau Hkam's reminiscences highlight the distinction between national and subversive spaces, allowing further exploration of the challenges of illicit space and national consensus to the standard view of state control of territory within the bonded geo-political entity of the nation.

From a strategic standpoint, the KIA camp at Tham Ngop exemplified not only the Kachin's trade routes, but provided them with a base for strategic coalitions with the Thai government and others, for example, the KMT. Tactical operations involving various forms of trade provided them with funds to purchase weapons and supplies. This incursion was part of their struggle against the Burmese military government to establish security and autonomy for the Kachin State and areas in northern Burma. Thailand was a desirable option, particularly as initial attempts by the KIA to develop networks and alliances in India had proven unsuccessful. If the world was to see the Kachin and the Kachin State as legitimate entities separate from the Burmese controlled military government, the Kachin needed to develop relations with the international community. Their objective was to achieve this first with Thailand through their presence at the border and eventually with other countries, for example, the United States.

KMT and KIA: Northern Burma to Northern Thailand

Soon after entering Thailand in 1961, KMT General Li's forces began establishing military bases in several strategic locations in the area, including Tham Ngop, (see Map 5). Simultaneously, they maintained military posts in Burma to facilitate trade and the movement

of supplies and soldiers (Chang 1999: 54, 69). Tham Ngop, the strategic headquarters for General Li's 3rd battalion, was situated on a mountain at an elevation of 1,460 metres making it virtually inaccessible to outsiders (Chang 1999: 54). According to Chang (1999: 69), this was a deliberate strategy undertaken by Generals Li and Tuan to cope with an uncertain situation. In the 1960s and 1970s, the Thai government's control of the border in this area was minimal. Within this political context, the KMT, KIA and Kokang provided security along the border. Chang (1999: 71) maintained that the KMT provided the main source of security for the newly-created, resettled Chinese villages in the area; and, it "served both as an ethnic emblem and actual protecting force for the existence of the Yunannese communities". As Chang (1999: 60) observed, the different trade routes that were established in the mountainous areas surrounding Tham Ngop village extended into the lowland areas of northern Thailand, for example, Fang and Chiang Dao Districts. As well, trading routes were connected with KMT outposts in Shan State, Burma, routes that facilitated both trade and the movement of soldiers and civilians.

In August 1972, a 750-mule convoy travelled from the KMT base in Shan State to the Tham Ngop base in northern Thailand (Cowell 2005: 11). News of this exodus and settlement in northern Thailand drew the attention of the media, "Reports reaching General Prapass say that the KMT have driven away Hill Tribes and cleared a six square kilometre forest at Nong Uk in Chiang Mai" (*Bangkok Post*, Tuesday 12 December 1972, Chongkhadikij and Anond Bunnag). Today, to all intents and purposes, Nong Uk remains a Haw Chinese town. Local power lies in the hands of the elected town leader (a Haw Chinese-Thai man), a Sub-district Administrative Office (SAO), and a committee made up of Haw Chinese-Thai. The Thai state does, however, maintain a presence in the area. Nong Uk village has a Thai school staffed by Thai teachers: although Yunnanese Chinese is the predominant language used by the students. The town has a police station with one police officer on duty, a temple (*wat*), and two military checkpoints. The Thai Army base is located on the outskirts of the town.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the KMT (3rd and 5th battalions), KIA, Kokang and mobile units of Khun Sa's Shan United Army (SUA)⁵⁷ lived in close geographical proximity and not surprisingly, minor conflicts were common. These conflicts, which primarily involved the KMT, the Kokang and members of SUA, usually centred on the control of the opium tax revenue and the trading routes into Shan State. Political and economic relationships in this region depended greatly upon negotiation and cooperation. The power struggles between

⁵⁷ Khun Sa, also known as Chang Chi-fu, was the leader of the SUA and the Muang Tai Army. Khun Sa and his army gained control of large areas along Thai-Burma border area from Mae Hong Son to Mae Sai, becoming one of the principal figures in the opium trade in the region (1974–1982). His headquarters in Thailand was located at Ban Hin Taek, Chiang Rai province.

these groups resulted in a complex environment that was continually in flux (Chang 2002: 138). However, as the power of the KMT diminished in the late 1970s, the resettled Haw Chinese community agreed to a greater level of external (Thai) administration in their villages. Generals Li and Tuan agreed to a request to fight the Thai Communist forces in exchange for assistance and legal status for their followers and villages.

This was not the case with the KIA. As one former soldier observed: “Many times General Li offered General Zau Seng land to establish a village and fields for farming, but he rejected the offer saying that Kachin are here not to live but to further our fight against Burmese Government, Thailand is not our home, Kachin State is. I never thought that we would stay: I was still young and wanted to return to Kachin State. Thailand was not our home” (Interview with former KIA soldier, Jinghpaw Kahtawng 2011). This was a second major differentiation between the KMT and the KIA. Chang (2002: 139) noted that the loyalty of the followers of General Li and General Tuan “was intrinsically motivated by gratitude for being led to Thailand and helped to establish their second homes.” This strategy of control and power consolidation in the border area did not extend to the KIA and its soldiers.

A former KIA soldier recounted his experience in the camp:

The primary goal of the camp was strategic, trading for weapons and supplies, our troops came up and down [between KIA camps in Shan and Kachin states and Thailand]. Communication with the outside was secondary.

There were some Thai military camps around us, teaching Thai language. We lived together. We could even bring our pistols with us to Chiang Mai. They didn't ask about identification cards in Chiang Mai. There was an old man at the immigration office at the town near our camp. When we went to see him, he would write us a letter with a KIA logo on it and nobody checked us. Unlike today, they didn't ask anything. Even though we couldn't understand a thing they said, it was fine if we just showed the document. It wasn't a problem in Chiang Mai like today.

He continued:

I have been living here in Thailand from May 1972. Our commander had a name for reducing communism in the area; however, when he was assassinated, KIA power and influence shifted in the area. KMT and Thai soldiers no longer helped us like they did in the past. We were to go back to Kachin State in 1973 after staying for a year. Over the course of one year in Thailand, we had some training again as the training we had in Kachin State was just for fighting in battle. I was included on the list of people to take the continued training, which included paying respect to people in high ranks, handling dead bodies, how to behave in important events and a fighting combat technique using long sticks (Interview with former KIA soldier, Jinghpaw Kahtawng 2011).

After the arrival of the first battalion of Kachin soldiers, hundreds soon followed. They received radio and weapon training from the KMT soldiers. At the time, the Kachin soldiers were part of the larger caravans carrying jade and opium that travelled through Shan State to the Thai border. These caravans commonly consisted of various groups of hundreds of soldiers, hired militia and traders. Essentially, the KMT and Kachin armies combined to function as a buffer non-state space between Thailand and Burma, as well as between Thailand and China with the support of the US Central Intelligence Agency (McCoy 2003).

Gibson and Chen (2011: 242) stated, “Thailand’s Ministry of Interior and its border and immigration police, assisted by Special Branch intelligence officers, controlled the KMT villages. In theory, refugees needed police passes to leave their villages; but haphazard registration and enforcement led to extensive unauthorised comings and goings.” As the numbers of KMT soldiers and their families increased, the Ministry of Interior began to establish schools and other services – including economic and technical assistance – in KMT villages along the border with Burma (see Gibson and Chen 2011). These villages were established near prominent trading routes. By 1965, KMT settlements on or near the border in northern Thailand and southern Shan State, housed more than 6,000 civilians and supported over 4,000 troops (Gibson and Chen 2011).

At the time, the KMT and KIA were allies. KIA General Zau Seng and General Li had established a close relationship when they met in Burma. “We didn’t shoot each other”, one former soldier commented with a smile (Interview with former KIA soldier, Jinghpaw Kahtawng 2011). The KIA’s relationship with the Thai Army was also very good and was improved by the KMT’s close connection with the Thai police general at the time, General Phao Siyanon. This relationship also facilitated the transfer of supplies through the area (McCoy 2003: 361). By 1969, the number of KIA soldiers in Tham Ngop was estimated to be approximately 600. The KMT numbers fluctuated somewhere between 2,000 and 3,000 soldiers (Interview with former KIA soldier, Jinghpaw Kahtawng 2011). According to Chang (2002), the Thai government was aware of the entry and settlement of KMT troops and was sympathetic towards anti-communist forces in the border regions of northern Thailand. However, they had no effective control over its border in the north at that time. The KIA relationship with the Thai Army and police was very strong; the KIA were permitted to wear uniforms, and to carry arms while trading in the nearby towns of Chiang Dao and Chai Prakan. Despite overtly good relations, the KMT has long held an ambiguous position within the history of the Thai State, particularly in northern Thailand’s Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai provinces. This has been mainly due to its military background, and to its links with the opium trade. This perception has been enhanced by the fact that during the height of the 3rd

and 5th KMT battalions' activities in northern Thailand, outside access to these areas was difficult.

General Li and General Tuan "brought some 2,600 soldiers to northern Thailand in 1961 and gradually established their military posts in areas along the northern Thai border" (Chang 2002: 130). It is estimated that throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the KMT forces in northern Thailand helped to escort in excess of 10,000 refugees from Burma into northern Thailand (Chang 2002: 131, 2009). It is commonly assumed that these refugees consisted of the dependents and families of General Li's and General Tuan's armies. During an interview, a former KIA soldier said that:

In 1965, we crossed the border with a caravan of KMT soldiers and walked some 12 kilometres to the KMT headquarters in Tham Ngop. We [KIA soldiers] did not have to be secretive in the camp. We could wear our soldier uniform with KIA symbol and carry pistols when we travelled to Chiang Dao and Fang districts. The Thai Army regularly came to the KIA and KMT camp, traded weapons and supplies. They came by helicopter. Relations between the KIA and Thai Army were the result of close relations with General Li and KMT. To build relations with the Thai Army we gave a Kachin ceremony to their commander along with silver Kachin swords and two elephant tusks (Interview with former KIA soldier, Jinghpaw Kahtawng 2011).

A Kachin elder provided the following account of his movement into Thailand, and of the building of relations with local groups and the Thai military:

I was in the Second Kachin Brigade in Lashio. In my brigade there were about 400 soldiers, I joined with some friends, and other villagers from Namtu [Shan State] came and joined as well. I was in training camp with 60 recruits; 2nd Battalion 4th Column, infantry. After training I became a KIA soldier in Shan State. We would fight the Burmese soldiers in small battles, but they had more soldiers and better weapons. We had shotguns but not enough. For every 10 soldiers we had only 4 guns. I was a soldier for 30 years fighting in Karen and Shan states. We were all fighting together. I was a two-star Lieutenant before I left. We had no salary back then, but we were given two uniforms per year. We would eat with villagers and in the forest. We could not stay in town because of the Burmese soldiers: villagers would bring us food in the forest. But, when fighting would break out and Burmese soldiers would burn down villages, Kachin Army would help villagers with food. We helped each other like that.

Contrary to the assumption that the co-existence of the KMT, KIA, Kokang, and resettled Nationalist Chinese posed a significant threat to the Thai authority in the border areas, Gibson and Chen (2011: 252) contend that the interaction between these multiple groups created relative economic stability in northern Thailand. Furthermore, Gibson and Chen (2011) suggested that the local Thai authorities justified the presence of these groups by emphasising their perceived ability to control the spread of communism, both externally and internally.

Thai authorities were complicit in – or simply turned a blind eye to – the border trade of opium, and the cross-border movement of people. Some benefited by accepting a share of the smuggling profits (Gibson and Chen 2011). By the mid-1960s, the Thai Ministry of Interior had established schools, and introduced a programme to provide the villagers in the area with economic and technical assistance (Gibson and Chen 2011: 251).

The Thai military collected an informal tax from caravans crossing into northern Thailand. For several decades, Thai military factions expropriated a major share of the region's opium profits. McCoy (2003: 414-415) maintains that there was also intensive internal competition between the Thai military and police over control of the opium trading routes and tax. The CIA reported that in 1966–1967 KMT forces patrolled a seventy-five mile stretch of borderland in Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai provinces. But by mid-1971, Shan leaders in the area claimed that KMT revenue collectors covered the entire northern border all the way from Mae Sai to Mae Hong Son (McCoy 2003: 354). In 1973, Lieutenant General Kriangsak Chamanan visited the area; he brought with him supplies of tea from Taiwan, his aim being to assist the economic development of the Chinese migrants by establishing tea plantations (Wijeyewardene 2002: 143). Despite the fact that the Kachin had maintained close ties with Thai local and national military commanders, they were not offered any such support.

McCoy stated that: “For nearly forty years the Thai military provided sanctuaries, arms, and an opium market for the many mini-armies it supported ... Usually located in the mountains north of Chiangmai, these protected guerrilla camps housed the logistics of the Golden Triangle heroin trade-ethnic Shan fighters, warlord soldiers, mule caravans, and heroin refineries” (2003: 414). Communist insurgents in Thailand directed their focus towards a peasant revolution primarily in the northeast, north and south of the country, to a large degree ignoring the urban centres (Marks 1994). In the peripheral areas, the local state authorities and military viewed the threat very seriously. Paramilitary forces were used to strengthen internal security and to assist in reducing the threat of communism in neighbouring countries. Between the mid-1960s and the 1980s, the significance of these groups increased with the rise of the CPT. In 1965, General Saiyud, who was then director of the Army Operations Centre, combined all military, police and paramilitary groups involved in the counter-insurgency under the Communist Suppression Operations Command. Central leaders generally viewed their principal institutional objectives in terms of Bangkok power politics, showing little interest in village or border operations.

By the early 1970s, the Thai military government of Field Marshal Thanom Kittikachon (1963–1973) introduced methods to address Thailand's growing communist insurgency.

These approaches varied between military force (Communist Suppression Operations Command led by Lt Gen Saiyud Kerdphon) and public relations and economic development. It was agreed within the government that local paramilitaries would be best suited to ensuring day-to-day security in the conflict areas. “Through alliances with Burma’s ethnic insurgents, Thai generals fostered a situation of controlled chaos in the mountains between northern Thailand and Burma’s Shan states” (McCoy 2003: 414). Within this context, *chaos* became the norm. Order was established through the existence of an exceptional space. “[S]overeign power, whether exercised by a state, in the name of a nation, or by a local despotic power or community court, is always a tentative and unstable project whose efficiency and legitimacy depend on repeated performances of violence and a ‘will to rule’” (Hansen and Stepputat 2005: 3). In the border regions of northern Thailand, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, Thai territorial sovereignty was fragmented and temporarily abandoned. The central Thai government exerted little effort on encompassing relatively isolated, inaccessible, sparsely populated but strategically, ideologically and politically significant locations in the area.

Despite this hands-off approach, in 1970, Lieutenant General Kriangsak reached an in principle agreement with the commanders of the KMT battalions stationed in Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai provinces. The Thai government would resettle KMT armies on government-owned land in return for their assistance in fighting the CPT insurgents (Gibson and Chen 2011: 282). Gibson and Chen observed that: “On December 4 of that same year (1970), 518 KMT Third Army troops and 26 mules carrying their equipment left Tham Ngop. Four days later they marched into Mae Salong and joined 200 soldiers from Tuan Hsi-Wen’s Fifth Army” (Gibson and Chen 2011: 285). Although several Kachin were involved in this struggle, they were never formally recognised by the Thai government as assisting in the suppression of communism in Thailand.

Very few and scattered official records exist of the KIA establishing a base in Tham Ngop close to the KMT camp. Interviews with former KIA soldiers from Tham Ngop camp revealed a close relationship between the KIA and Thai military agencies operating in the area. The initial contact between them was a result of KIA and KMT contact and close ties. Former soldiers with whom I spoke were unable to remember the exact names of the Thai military commanders who had visited their camp and provided support in terms of arms and supplies in exchange for opium and jade. However, as shown by Wijeyewardene (2002: 143), a signpost erected in a KMT village in Doi Mae Salong in Chiang Rai Province indicates that Lieutenant General Kriangsak visited the village near where the KIA camp was situated prior to becoming Prime Minister of Thailand in 1977. On the sign is written:

In the year B.E 2512 [1969] a group of Thai military led by Air Force General Thawi Chulasap went for discussions with the Ministry of Home Affairs in Taiwan. The result of these talks was that the Government of Taiwan gave into the care of the Government of Thailand those Chinese Nationalist soldiers who were still living on Thai territory, with the Supreme Command Headquarters being responsible ... In 2516 [1973] Lieutenant-General Kriangsak Chamanan visited, bringing with him tea from Taiwan for planting in Mae Salong and Tham Ngop (Wijeyewardene 2002: 143).

Life in the Camp

‘Camp life’ is both part of and separate from its institutional setting and histories. Emerging as a consequence of group division and interaction, it exemplifies the relationship between everyday practices, institutional imperatives (security, group autonomy, sovereignty and control), broader institutional histories, and the dynamics through which camp soldiers become both separate and integrated into the everyday life of the area. The problem for the Kachin soldiers, who spent long periods away from home, lay in sustaining their cultural and ethnic identities which, from their officers’ perspectives, was essential to keep them fighting as Kachin.

The day would start early with drills, uniform and weapons inspection. We would raise the Kachin flag, sing the Kachin anthem and pray. Then we would start formation and marching. After the morning drills were completed, we would begin our assigned duties. Fetch water, cut trees, and go to town to buy or trade for supplies. I carried the artillery gun, but it always had problems. I would walk over to the Chinese camp [KMT]: they had several people who were very good at fixing guns. We became friends. I spent a lot of time in the Chinese camp. When we needed extra money, some of us [KIA soldiers] would go to the Kokang Army camp and get opium tax from them. Even at this time soldiers were living more and more in nearby villages, Shan and Lahu mainly. We had families there now (Interview with former KIA soldier, Jinghpaw Kahtawng, 2010).

The KIA camp was the basis of security and autonomy in Thailand. Soldiers had the responsibility to establish diplomatic ties with other nations, a strategy defined as friendships with the outside, in this case with the Thais. But, at the same time, they were expected to remain loyal to the Kachin cause. High ranking Kachin officers assumed the responsibility of formally instructing visiting Thai officers about the history and cultural traditions of the Kachin, linking their institutionalised histories with their present circumstances. Although these conversations were meant to forge relations with the Thai state, they also functioned to reinforce cultural commitments to Kachin traditions and the loyalty of Kachin soldiers.

We arrived in Thailand in 1965. The general said: “We have to have our own country in Kachin State. We have to work together and go all places in order to build ties with foreign nations” (Interview with former KIA soldier, Jinghpaw Kahtawng 2010).

The above quote reorients attention towards the spatial heterogeneity of the Kachin experience, in this case the movement of the KIA across the Thai border, and the establishment of a base camp. It had an integral role, or was seen to have had such a role by the KIA central command, as its establishment and relative sovereignty was part of a larger effort to consolidate resistance to the Burmese Army. As noted above, a KIA officer voiced this objective when they crossed the border: “We have our own country.” This referred to what they saw as a critical extension of the Kachin State in Burma and as an important power base.

The camp legitimised their presence. A basis for securing power and access to essential resources, influence and control over trade routes, it relied on the political support or, at least, the tolerance of other groups along the border that were also resisting the Burmese military. When considering the Kachin, either separately or within their relationships with other groups near the border, a complex multilevel set of processes come into play. Within these processes, power and control are essential to the security of members of any one group in terms of their developing cooperative relations with other groups. At the same time, problems between the locals, the KIA at the border area, and the command KIA centre, plus the inevitable competing with others at the local site for resources, “produces resistance against itself” (Mittleman 2000: 7).

At this stage, KIA soldiers maintained regular ties with the Kachin State authorities mainly because people from Kachin State were constantly arriving, and some of those in the camp, that is, KIA regulars, were returning to KIA controlled areas in Kachin and Shan State. On occasion Thai generals would visit and Kachin officers would discuss the cultural and political history of the Kachin. “We would present them [Thai officials] with silver swords and Kachin bags” (Interview with former KIA soldier, Jinghpaw Kahtawng 2010). This was a factor or strategy employed in the development of ties. One could also conclude that instructing Thai officers about Kachin cultural institutions served to remind a KIA soldier that at one level honouring and identifying was a way of connecting with traditional cultural practices and with their local camp community. Not only did the camp protect them from Burmese soldiers; at the same time, it reinforced Kachin loyalty and the legitimate connections they had forged with the Thai Army. Somewhat ironically, while the camp functioned ostensibly as a base for establishing relations with the Thai authorities, it later became a basis for the Kachin to be classified as unwanted or in Schmitt’s term, ‘the enemy’. In other words, the illegality of their status under Thai law of those soldiers who remained in Thailand gradually became more overt.

In sum, the first stages of camp settlement saw a number of exchanges between the soldiers at the camp and the Kachin State. Not only did they strengthen Kachin networks within the region, but they built a base and set up social and economic relationships with the local populations, by extension integrating soldiers into the local area. KIA generals socialised with visiting Thai officers in a bid to “let them know the traditions and customs of Kachin”, how [the latter] got there, and the behaviour that was expected [of soldiers]. Securing ties with the Thai Army was critical as the relationship between the KIA and the Thai Army was a source of security for the KIA camp. The advantage for the soldiers was their acceptance by Thai authorities and their freedom to visit Chiang Mai, for example, without being either stopped or questioned. Their first priority was to maintain ties with the Thai and the central Kachin armies because these ties of ‘friendship’ were not only critical to their immediate and long-term security, but to the belief that they were fighting for the freedom of the Kachin in Burma.

Contested Belonging

Little is known and even less is said about the events that transpired in late 1975 that led to the demise of the KIA camp in northern Thailand. While in Bangkok, General Zau Seng received an urgent telegram to return to Tham Ngop camp immediately. The general, Pungshwi Zau Seng and several bodyguards, were ambushed and killed while riding horseback along the east ridge of the KIA mountain top camp in Tham Ngop (Lintner 1997: 139).

Leading up to this event the three leaders of the KIA Tham Ngop camp, General Zau Seng, Zau Tu and Pungshwi Zau Seng were accused of neglecting their duties and responsibilities to the KIA cause, focusing instead on jade and opium businesses in Chiang Mai and Bangkok. The KIA headquarters,⁵⁸ received a telegram from the Tham Ngop base. It read: “The old leaders can no longer fulfil their duties” (Lintner 1997: 139). The following day, the KIA headquarters were notified that Zau Seng, Zau Tu and Pungshwi Zau Seng had been executed (Lintner 1997: 139-140).

This event illustrates that the establishment of the Kachin border camp was less an extension of general KIA power across the region than a practical necessity for the KIA units stationed there to secure trading routes, resources, and international networks through territorial control. Once established, their external relations with the central Thai government

⁵⁸ The headquarters of the KIO/KIA were originally situated in the triangle region of the Mali Hka and the N'mai Hka tributaries of the confluence that forms the Irrawaddy River 40 kilometres north of Myitkyina. The headquarters are now situated on the Yunnan-Burma border in Laiza.

– and with other army groups and local traders in legal and illegal goods – provided a basis for securing the various relationships and economic opportunities that were emerging as a result of their territorial control.

A former KIA soldier, who was in the camp at the time, recounted the following story:

Maran Seng Tu [also known as Tu Bung, the man who was accused of leading the assassinations of the KIA leaders] was a Burmese spy. His intentions were no good and he played between KIA camp in Thailand, KIA headquarters in Myitkyina and General Zau Seng. Maran Tu Seng gave false reports about General Zau Seng and the KIA in Tham Ngop to KIA headquarters. He played between the two sides. He came to Tham Ngop with 60 soldiers. He told the soldiers that our general was staying in Thailand and not coming back. Some soldiers believed him, and the general was assassinated. But the general never wanted to stay in Thailand like the KMT. KMT had nowhere else to go, no land, no country. We [Kachin] had a country, a land, and a home. The KMT offered us a lot of land but the general refused. So, we stayed in our camp. We did not move to a village like the KMT. The general planned to go back. Maran Seng Tu's men ambushed our KIA leaders. The first killed was General Zau Seng's brother, coming up to the camp from Chiang Mai on horseback plus four others. After this, Maran Seng Tu sent a fake letter to General Zau Seng, who was in Bangkok at the time, to quickly come back to the camp. He signed it with the general's brother's signature. Ten days later, the general was assassinated returning to the KIA camp with 10 other soldiers and bodyguards. After this happened, there was no official leader in the camp. Soldiers were very confused. Later on, Major Hkun Choi from KIA headquarters came to interrogate Maran Seng Tu. He put him in a pit for many days; but he would not admit being involved in the assassination and would not implicate others involved. After this Maran Seng Tu and his followers were executed.

At the time, there was no direct contact with KIA headquarters. Maran Tu Seng stopped all communication with them after the assassination. In 1980 or 81, we got another order from headquarters to all return to finish the camp, but many did not follow these orders. After General Zau Seng was killed by a Kachin, other groups looked at us as not very good. Other groups looked at us differently and relations changed. It became more difficult for us. Following the disbandment of the camp and subsequent orders by KIA headquarters for all remaining KIA soldiers to return immediately, the majority of soldiers returned to Kachin and Shan State. However, some stayed in Thailand living in surrounding villages and married local women (Interview with a former KIA soldier, Jinghpaw Kahtawng 2011).

Following the disruptions to the camps viability and its links to Burma, access to local resources became more dependent upon local Thai and other ethnic group connections than on the Kachin centre. This saw the belonging–non-belonging dichotomy become more vexed. Former ‘friendships’ and alliances based on shared political ideology and army comradeship risked becoming ‘enemies’ when local contingencies superseded the significance of central

connections. This precipitous act of violence had a significant impact on the changing relations between the local KIA and their political connections and alliances in the surrounding region.

Former KIA soldiers in the village with whom I spoke claimed that there was never any intention to stay permanently in Thailand; and that the KIA was in quite a different situation from the KMT in the eyes of the central Thai government and local Thai military command. The latter had nowhere to go, whereas the Kachin in Thailand “had a country, a land and a home” (Interview, former KIA soldier, Jinghpaw Kahtawng, 2010). The ensuing confusion that surrounded the assassination of the general and the soldiers establishing families in local villages was a prime motivating factor for those KIA who refused to follow the orders of their central command that required them to return to Kachin State. Many among them opted to stay. Disobeying orders to return, they married local women (Shan, Lahu and Palaung) and remained living in local villages.

One consequence, however, was that they were viewed differently by the Thai authorities after the assassination. Various accounts suggest that the terminology used included “not very good”, and “relations changed”, and “it was more difficult for us” to stay in Thailand.

What follows here is an extract from an interview with a former KIA soldier who was in the camp at the time of the general’s assassination and the trial of those accused:

Joe: Uncle, people tried to assassinate the general, right? Can you tell me as much as you know about that incident?

Hkun Lat: There was an officer called Seng Tu.

Joe: Which Seng Tu?

Hkun Lat: I think Maran. He was also a captain. One-star officer. He knew the general [Zau Seng]. They lived together. He was a spy from Burmese side. He had great social skills. He was a smooth talker. When he came from there [Burma], he brought some soldiers with him to our military camp [in Thailand].

Joe: How many?

Hkun Lat: About 50–60 soldiers came down. First, they lived on their own in an area as big as from here to that house [pointing to a neighbour’s house approximately 100 metres away]. Later on, Seng Tu was living inside the general’s camp. He was hired as a clerk. He spoke so well and was very convincing. From then, he became different, separating those Kachin who lived in Thailand for a long time and making those just arrived from Burma his people [allies]. He said: “Hey guys, we have to do something. We are freedom fighters, and the general is going to build a house and live in a foreign country. You have

to understand this and do something about this.” He was trying to get people to join him, to join his side.

Joe: Did they believe him?

Hkun Lat: Those living in Thailand were not able speak out. We could not speak out that they were going to take over power.

Joe: I see. You could not speak out.

Hkun Lat: That’s right. We couldn’t even speak with machine [use the radio transmitter]. At the time Seng Tu was playing the role of general.

Joe: Was the general [Zau Seng] aware that he [Seng Tu] was acting like that?

Hkun Lat: Looks like he could not see that. Zau Seng’s brother Zau Tu was there too, Seng Tu sent a letter [to the general to immediately return to the camp] using his brother’s [the general’s brother] signature. When coming back here [to the camp] they got stopped and trapped.

Joe: Can you tell me more on how they did that?

Hkun Lat: The general and several guards came up [the mountain path] during heavy rain. Seng Tu’s runners [soldiers waiting in ambush] were shooting hard. Nobody else fired, only them. And with the sound “bang” he fell off his horse.

Joe: If they did that to the general, didn’t people guarding him shoot back?

Hkun Lat: No, they didn’t shoot back. They hid all the guns.

Joe: So, people knew of the idea of killing the general.

Hkun Lat: Yes, you can say that we knew, but there was an order [given by Seng Tu] targeting soldiers living in Thailand that prevented two or more people meeting or staying together. The soldiers they brought took all the power. We could not speak anymore: we could not speak a single word. They ruled the place.

Joe: They were only about 60 people, right? But on Uncle’s side, you had about 200 people.

Hkun Lat: At the time we had over 100, but we did not know anything like that would happen. After the killing Seng Tu came to me. He said: “You are the general’s helper, right?” I told I was. He then demanded I give him all of the general’s bank account details in Chiang Mai. I told him I did not have them although I did. I did not want to give them to him. After that, he locked me away for several days.

When the KIA headquarters were notified of the events that had transpired in Thailand, they sent a brigade of soldiers to investigate, punish those involved, and bring the remaining

soldiers back to Kachin State. On arrival, they arrested Maran Seng Tu along with those considered to be his close supporters in the assassination. The explanation continues,

Joe: After the arrest of Seng Tu, what happened to you? And what was the situation in the camp?

Hkun Lat: After that happened, they were all gone [supporters of Seng Tu]. But we stayed at the military base and tried our best for our survival. All of the soldiers left. Seven [Kachin soldiers accused of assisting Seng Tu] were arrested. They were all questioned by the authorities [Kachin officers from Kachin State]. They didn't admit anything. Then, we kept them in the dungeon. All the people who were associated with Seng Tu were kept in the dungeon for two months.⁵⁹ It was a very small hole, just like a basket. In this place, they drop the food from there. Soldiers were questioned. They were tortured a lot. They were accused of killing the general. Some soldiers did not know who Seng Tu was. They were beaten with guns and kept in the dark. No matter how painful it was, they didn't say anything.

Joe: What was it that they refused to say?

Hkun Lat: It was why they executed the general. We said, "You killed him, you were the one who made this happen." When asked if they were with Seng Tu, they said, "Yes." As they answered that way, they were beaten up. After two months, we burned the bodies. They were taken out of the pit and burned.

Joe: Were they killed by guns?

Hkun Lat: No, they weren't, they burned.

Joe: What do you mean?

Hkun Lat: The ones who were burned were the group of Seng Tu. The reason was that they didn't admit killing the general. They wouldn't say why they killed the commander. If they had admitted it, we would have released them and sent them back. But they didn't say anything when we asked, so after two months, there weren't enough people to take care of them. There was no choice left but to burn them all.

We burned them separately. It's like how we stack wood in a pile. There were seven of them. We burned the wood first. After that, we threw them on that burning wood.

Joe: So, they were executed by putting them on the burning wood?

Hkun Lat: Yes, we spread out oil on the wood. He ordered me "Soldier, let's clean up the mess today". I told him, "Yes, according to your order." Then they said, "Tomorrow, we will need a gallon of oil. It's time to burn."

⁵⁹ Several respondents recounted this event in varying degrees of detail. The largest discrepancy that I heard in the stories was the length of time Maran Seng Tu and his supporters were detained by Kachin authorities. The time ranged from several weeks to two months.

They were already questioned following our rules, but they didn't say the truth. No matter what methods we used to investigate them, they wouldn't say anything. After killing them, it was all ended.

Joe: You suspected them of being Burmese spies. Did you find any evidence before or after killing them?

Hkun Lat: No, there was no evidence because nothing remained after that.

(Interview, former KIA soldier, Jinghpaw Kahtawng 2010).

“I had a coin but threw it away”⁶⁰

The continual negotiation of political realities by people spread across borders places such people at risk of becoming simultaneously discredited at both the international and national levels (see Jonsson 2010: 109-110). Pursuing a state-centric approach, the state generates a specific spatial matrix through which national subjects are produced. Within this mold, however, specific populations that fail to fit the state ideology of ideal citizens prove a direct challenge to territorial and social integration. Border areas are critical (although not exclusive) sites for antagonisms between the state and the community or between a minority and the dominant state. But, politics of belonging are considerably more complex, open-ended and indeterminate than would be the case if focus was only on access to material or environmental resources, in these instances they, of necessity, include social power, community resistance and reciprocity. Typically, as relations or antagonisms emerge, they are “more about signifying the national setting and its components (forests, mountains, ethnicity, and gender) in such a way that the contingency of particular configurations of identity, power, and history disappear” (Jonsson 2010: 116-117).

As we see in northern Thailand and the region more generally, the geo-political map of the nation-state replicates structures of approved sovereignties as well as the designation of recognised political subjectivity. The preceding material shows us that a central component of the conceptualisation of power in border areas is how adjoining sovereignties are practiced and manipulated by multiple actors. In diverse ways, multiple actors force a different approach to the geo-political matrix of the one nation-state. It is not based on territory alone; rather, it converges on the intersection between the power to decide on the creation of exceptional spaces and performative acts of sovereignty.

⁶⁰ Extract from an interview with a former KIA soldier, Jinghpaw Kahtawng 2011.

An underlining feature implicit in Bodin's (1992) analysis of sovereignty is that sovereignty needs to be performed and reproduced on a daily basis to be effective (Hansen and Stepputat 2006: 7). Similar to the ways in which power can be conceptualised through its effects, sovereignty can be assessed by its performative function or as "an ontological empty category organised around a mythical act of foundational violence ... a *coup de force*, a self-referential founding of the law as ground" (Derrida 1992, in Hansen and Stepputat 2006: 7).

In 1967, following negotiations between the Thai and Taiwanese governments regarding the future of the KMT 3rd and 5th battalion forces in northern Thailand, the Thai parliament reached an agreement that would allow the KMT soldiers and their families to remain in Thailand only if they agreed to fight the communist insurgents in northeastern and central Thailand (Chang 1999: 63). KMT victories in eastern Thailand were regarded by the Thai state as proof of the formers loyalty and facilitated the acknowledgement of KMT refugee communities in northern Thailand and their integration into the Thai state (Chai-Anan, Kusama and Suchit 1990). Subsequent to this agreement, a separate Thai Army battalion (*Bor Kor* 04) was established to supervise the KMT and 'other' ethnic armies under their control.

A Thai cabinet resolution issued on 6 October 1970 assigned immigration status to former KMT soldiers. Again, this was illustrated in the Thai parliament's announcement in 1978: "On 30 May 1978, the Thai parliament announced the decision to give Thai citizenship (*bat prachachon*) or alien status (*bat khon dang dao*) to the KMT forces and their dependents as a reward for their victories in the battles of the early 1970s" (Chang 1999: 68). Subsequent cabinet resolutions on 30 May 1978 and 12 June 1984 respectively further allowed for the legal naturalisation of former KMT soldiers in return for their contribution to the Thai nation;

that is, for fighting communists. The resolution also allowed the children of former KMT soldiers to acquire Thai citizenship (see Pinkaew 2014: 151; and Appendix 3).⁶¹

It is important to note that the KIA was not offered the same package by the Thai authorities. There were two main reasons for this. First, in the eyes of the northern and central Thai military command, the KIA was seen as essentially an extension of the KMT. Although recognised as separate, their military and political independence was rarely recognised officially. Second, as stated in the above interviews, the KIA refused the allocation of land in Thailand, remaining adamant that they would return to continue the struggle for Kachin autonomy in Kachin State.

A villager recounted the following details about the time he spent fighting the CPT:

I came to Thailand in 1977 as a small battalion of KIA soldiers to bring back those that stayed [after the general's assassination]. It was difficult to get them all together and we could not keep them all in Tham Ngop base. Many soldiers had left and were living in surrounding villages. By 1979 I left the KIA and decided to stay in Thailand. I travelled to Doi Wawee [Chiang Rai Province] with KMT to look for work. When I arrived, the Thai Army were there training KMT. So, I joined the KMT. One night, they held a large meeting with many KMT soldiers and high-ranking officers. I could understand because there were three other Chinese soldiers who had joined the KIA in the Shan State and came with us across the border that spoke some Jinghpaw and could translate for me. There was a lot of shouting, yelling and disagreement at the meeting, but finally everyone decided to join to fight the Thai communists. I was sent to the Thai Laos border. Not all were KMT some were Lahu and Akha. Altogether there were four of us [former KIA soldiers] but three were Chinese not Kachin. I fought with the KMT for one year then left. We fought for a long time and many people died. Finally, we were successful, and

⁶¹ Larsson argued that the communist threat in north and northeastern Thailand was variable rather than constant. From the mid-1960s to the early 1980s the communist threat was viewed as an increasing internal and external military challenge to the Thai state (Larsson 2012: 109). According to Gibson and Chen (2011: 283), "Thailand's government rewarded the KMT for their service against the country's communist insurgents. On October 17, 1975, the government instructed the Defense and Interior Ministries to develop a plan under which KMT-affiliated refugees would receive resident alien status en route to accelerated naturalisation" (Gibson and Chen 2011: 305). Under a plan reached on 28 April 1973 between the government and representatives of the KMT, the latter's troops agreed to relinquish all weapons in return for government provision of land and registration under alien status as long as they would "enter into legitimate agriculture" (Aun Sunsai and Sawang Yingyeod, *Bangkok Post*, 6 May 1973:1). The newspaper headlines read: "KMT to disband: Govt land grant prompts pledge to disarm."

Under the terms of agreement, KMT troops would engage in intelligence work for the Thai authorities and cease all involvement in drug trafficking. In accordance with this, "the Thai Government has allowed them limited sovereignty ... Their sovereignty includes the right to collect tax on cattle movement in the north" (Chula Keomongkol, *Bangkok Post*, 8 June 1973). Thailand's strategic political relations with the KMT based along Thailand's northern border with Burma were variously undermined by their denial of assistance, their intimate connection providing supplies to the KMT, and their facilitating of the opium trade in the region.⁶¹ The Prime Minister's Office Order 66/2532 issued on 23 April 1980 by the Prem Administration, and title the "Policy to Win Over Communism" order, emphasised that in the struggle with the Communists, "political actions must prevail, and military actions must basically be supportive of these political actions" (Chai-Anan, Kusuma and Suchit 1990: 69).

the Thai military commander gave us all coins. The coin had a picture of a monk on it. I threw it away. I'm Christian, not Buddhist.

After I left the KMT I still had all of my guns. I went to live in Mae Ai, but no Kachin were there, only Lahu soldiers. So, I became a hired soldier for Lahu. I married an Akha woman and heard some old Kachin soldiers were living in a Palaung village in Chiang Dao. So we moved there. I was only there one week then people moved here, so we came too.

Coins were distributed among KMT soldiers as well as among other ethnic groups in northern Thailand as proof of residency and eventual legal naturalisation in Thailand (Interview, former KIA and KMT soldier Jinghpaw Kahtawng 2011; and Mukdawan 2009: 98). The coins were inscribed with a picture of King Bhumibol on the front, and a map of Thailand on the back. The Kachin soldier who recounted the above story was given one of these coins that in theory could be presented at a government office to facilitate the process of citizenship registration (Ministry of the Interior 2000: 205). However, as he was not aware of the significance of the coin, he threw it away, believing that the picture of the man on the front of the coin was a Buddhist monk. Being a devout Christian, he did not want to keep it in his possession. He is now a grandfather and no one in his entire family has citizenship. It was sometime after this interview that I realised the significance of the coin. I asked many government representatives about it; but, as no records were ever kept regarding the names of people they were distributed to, there was no way of 'proving' that this man was ever given one of these coins for his service fighting the CPT.

Provisional Acceptance

[B]eing dispossessed refers to processes and ideologies by which persons are disowned and abjected by normative and normalising powers that define cultural intelligibility and that regulate the distribution of vulnerability (Butler and Athanasio 2013: 2).

From the 1960s onwards, the wanted–unwanted distinction regarding ethnic minorities in northern Thailand altered dramatically. These shifts in policy and public perception were significant for the Kachin living in the camp and surrounding villages, particularly after the demise of the camp in 1975. Butler and Athanasiou (2013: 2) described processes through which an ethnic group becomes politically and legally vulnerable. They occur as their relations with the nation-state move from tolerance to rejection, from acceptance, even if unofficial and provisional, to disownment and withdrawal by the state of any political legitimacy formerly granted to them. Such was the experience of the KIA soldiers, many among whom, after establishing strong local ties, were ordered home to Kachin State. Many out of personal choice elected to stay in Thailand.

Those who stayed behind faced a culturally and politically complex scenario. Disowned by the Thai state, the provisions the soldiers had enjoyed as a result of their alliance were negated, rendering them illegal aliens. The pressure on them to leave and return home was in direct opposition to the strong local ties they had formed and their desire to stay. Those who stayed found themselves embedded in Thai-state ethnic relations that now categorised them as ‘other’, ‘non-Thai’, and even ‘illegal’ within the dominant Thai ethnic/minority discourse. They oscillated between provisional acceptance useful to Thai state institutions attempting to assert local control, and the threat of potential, even permanent political and cultural exclusion by both the Thai and KIA authorities.

While living in and connected with the KIA camp, the Kachin did not fall under the new schematic of Hill Tribe classification that prevailed in Thai political discourse at the time. While ostensibly separate from it, they became bound to it once the camp was disbanded. The designation of those who decided to stay fluctuated between the Thai ideology of securing its borders and promoting internal cultural and ethnic homogeneity. Orders from the central KIA authority officially closed the camp and called for all remaining soldiers to return. As I was told in an interview: “Soon after these things happened, we were denied travel documents at the local Thai military office and told to return to the camp” (Interview, former Kachin soldier, Jinghpaw Kahtawng, 2010). Therefore, the closure of the camp in 1975 by KIA central command and the Thai military’s refusal to grant travel permits proved a critical marker in Thai–Kachin relations. It saw the older generation of former KIA soldiers along with the new arrivals striving to navigate the changing ethno-political landscape in Thailand that threatened their legitimacy of belonging and access to resources.

Kachin started to settle in villages scattered throughout Shan state, albeit predominantly in the north. In 1983, a Kachin battalion numbering in excess of 50 soldiers, along with members of the Office of Kachin Foreign Affairs⁶² who were originally stationed in Shan State near the Thai border in Mae Hong Son, crossed the border in Mae Hong Son Province and travelled first to Chiang Mai and then to the Tham Ngop camp. Their aim was twofold: to retrieve former soldiers and rebuild relationships with the Thai government that at the time was under the Prem Tinsulanonda administration. But, relations between the Kachin and the central Thai government remained strained until the Chatichai Choonhavan administration assumed office in 1988 (Interview with Kachin resident, Chiang Mai, 2010). More significant

⁶² Also known as the Representative Office of Kachin Foreign Affairs (ROKFA).

connections were built with the military through Chavalit Yongchaiyudh.⁶³ In 1994, following a ceasefire between the KIA and the Burmese military, the KIA withdrew all of its troops from areas along the Thai-Burma border.

The political climate in northern Thailand shifted dramatically during the latter 20th century. The Thai government embarked upon a concerted effort to secure its borders with Burma following Ne Win's coup and the introduction of socialism. This involved increasing their connections with the United States and the CIA due to concerns over opium production, and the institutionalisation of the 'Hill Tribe problem'. The Hill Tribe Committee was established in 1959 as the first national level organisation delegated to find solutions to the perceived problems of opium cultivation and deforestation. This agency was subsequently transformed into the Committee for the Solution of National Security Problems Involving Hill Tribes and the Cultivation of Narcotic Crops (Elawat 1997: 86). Following the introduction of these measures, the first National Economic Development Plan was initiated in 1961.

The establishment of the KIA camp on Thai soil brings into focus the friend-enemy characteristic elucidated by Schmitt as being central to projects of governance (1996, 2005), in this case the national perceptions of cross-border movement that oscillate between 'threat' and 'integration'. Schmitt (1996) viewed "the political" as implicitly falling within strategic distinctions that categorise who is a "friend" or an "enemy", wherein a mediation of order clearly distinguishes the insider from the outsider or "other", in other words, processes of 'inclusion' and 'exclusion'. At the macro level, the Kachin who remained in Thailand after the camp closed were now classified as illegal, undocumented migrants facing arrest, detainment and deportation if caught. On the other hand, these evolving distinctions also represent micro-level divisions within the KIA camp, which escalated with the assassination of the commander and his lieutenants. Those soldiers who remained in Thailand not only became removed from the categorisation of KIA soldiers as allies and 'border protectors' but found themselves at the confluence of both Thai state policies of illegality and perceptions of them as deserters from the KIA.

The dynamics of friend-enemy divisions are, in this case, directly related to multilayered dimensions of Thai control over the border region. It was and remains a politically critical region for all concerned, including the Thai and Burmese states, the legal and illegal actors engaging in trade and commerce, and, of course, for the country's ethnic groups. The relationships forged between the Kachin command in the camp and local/national Thai

⁶³ Minister of Defense and Deputy Prime Minister to Chatichai Choonhavan from 1988–1991; Minister of Interior 1992–1994; Minister of Defense and Deputy Prime Minister to Banharn Silpa-archa from 1995–1996; and, Prime Minister of Thailand by Royal decree in 1996.

military authorities were originally friendly. This situation prevailed as long as the Kachin army camp remained intact, and the army contributed to stabilising the region, both politically and economically. However, who was friend and who was enemy became a pressing issue within the KIA camp when internal divisions within the camp escalated following the assassination of the commander and his lieutenants.

(50) *Ning Hpring Rawt Malan Ninghtoi Masat Poi*: 50th Anniversary of the KIA

February 5, 2011 marked the 50th Anniversary of the establishment of the KIA. Celebrations for this event were held at the compound of a missionary family in Chiang Mai city, the current office of the Pan Kachin Development Society. High ranking KIO officials from Kachin State attended, along with prominent Kachin entrepreneurs living in Chiang Mai and abroad. I arrived early in the morning as the area was being prepared for the day's events. White chalk lines for the upcoming soccer carnival were being painted on the field, and last-minute decorations were being added to the stage. Soon people started to emerge from the dormitories, many from Jinghpaw Kahtawng. The organisers of the event, a KIO delegation from Chiang Mai along with Pan Kachin Development Society members, had rented five pick-up trucks to bring the villagers from Jinghpaw Kahtawng two days before. We greeted each other as we made our way into the small room to begin the day's proceedings. A small stage was constructed at the front: on it were a podium and a microphone. Behind the stage was a large KIA flag. Although there were seats still available inside, many of the Jinghpaw Kahtawng villagers had chosen to stand outside and watch from the window. I found an empty seat in the corner. Just then, a soldier dressed in full KIA uniform walked onto the stage. Before he started, the wife of one of the speakers noticed me sitting near the back. She quickly walked towards me and directed me to a reserved seat in the front. Momentarily hesitant to take such a prominent position, I nonetheless accepted. A quick glance revealed several friends from the village near me. The group that had gathered in the small room fell silent. In a loud commanding voice, the soldier said: "Attention! [*Daju Tsap!*] Salute our comrades and fallen heroes! At ease!" All in attendance stood, saluted in unison, and then sat down.

When the opening address finished, many people left the room. However, former KIA soldiers from Jinghpaw Kahtawng and Chiang Mai who were standing outside, entered and took their seat near the front. Men sat to the right and women to the left. A small white table was brought on stage along with many wrapped gift boxes. The first two speakers, who were representatives from the KIO outlined the history of the KIO/KIA and Office of Kachin

Foreign Affairs in Thailand, and the current struggle for Kachin self-determination in Burma. “It is not only the responsibility of KIA soldiers in Burma to fight, but all Kachin, even former soldiers, wherever they live must also fight. We can never forget our struggle, we are all Kachin” (Extract from the opening speech, Chiang Mai 2011). After his speech, the KIA representative left the room. Then, the wife of the late General Zau Seng walked on stage while another woman stood behind the podium reading out a list of names.

Although little was said officially, this ceremony was in fact an official exoneration of the former KIA soldiers who stayed in Thailand after the assassination of General Zau Seng. As well, it was to award all of those who had been connected with the KIA, including nurses and teachers. All of these people in attendance were given a green KIO/KIA beret and T-shirt. The first called on stage were an elderly Karen man and some women. It was explained that they had helped the KIA establish relationships with the Thai military in the past. Then, the names of former KIA soldiers were read out. They formed a line between the aisles and walked on stage, one at a time, to shake hands with the wife of the late general and to receive their gift. After the ceremony lunch was served and group photos were taken. Later in the day, the soccer finals were held: the team from Jinghapw Kahtawng came third. Later that night, a concert was held. Artists from Burma performed on stage until late into the night.

Although the general atmosphere was cheerful, I noticed tears in Nang Nu’s eyes as she walked off the stage. She had become very close to my family and me during my stay in the village. After lunch I approached her as she sat alone in shade of a tree. She spoke softly about her time as a nurse in Shan State and later about her move to Chiang Mai. She told me that this was where she lived with her husband before he passed away, “I am happy to come here and see that they [KIA] have not forgotten about us”, she said. Her comment reminds us that the re-incorporation of a political identity and/or connection to wider cross-border cultural affiliations are significant elements of the link between exceptionalism and the friend–enemy dynamic that has so strongly influenced the lives of Kachin in Thailand. The ceremony represented a shift in how former KIA soldiers living in Thailand are viewed by the KIO/KIA centre. Importantly, it can also be read as an attempt to solidify and reproduce a unified Kachin political consciousness.

Conclusion

The formation of a KIA camp and later a Kachin village along the Thai-Burma border illustrates movement from rupture to reunification. The ‘exceptional’ aspects of this process became more closely defined by laws after the camp was disbanded and the village established. Before that, we can discern a historical example of exceptionalism as a specific

suspension of law, a space of non-law, and/or a temporary manifestation emanating from a central government decision. The fact of it being “traditionally an emergency or exception, at least as an ideal type, operated by suspending regular law and utilising a range of maneuvers that were both temporary and specific in order to confront a given situation” (Hussain 2007: 735) is only part of the picture.

The camp assumes “multiple forms [which] function as a necessary but uncomfortable and sometimes disavowed support of the reproduction of ‘normal’ citizenship and community life” (Hansen and Stepputat 2005: 18; Agamben 1998: 166-180). The historical movement of the Kachin into northern Thailand, and contemporary fluctuation between different political systems challenge categorisations of neatly defined territory and cultural characteristics. Kachin patterns of cross-border movement occurred in situations where the Thai and Burmese states were attempting to solidify control over their borders. However, neither the Thai nor Burman centralised state authorities, nor indeed any one particular group at the Thai-Burma border was capable of independently exercising the control they desired. Rather, a multitude of competing and overlapping ethnic, cultural and military groupings combined to mediate trade and political relations between northern Burma and varying Thai state institutions with the aim of consolidating their power in the region.

The objective of this chapter has been to explore the concept of the state as a place wherein the socio-cultural and politico-economic interact in the extension of sovereignty and the attempts at control over groups domiciled on the state’s periphery. In border regions, these processes also created resistance, disputation and negotiation, not only among groups, but also among institutionalised state authorities.

Populations in border regions aim to make their own decisions, evident in their struggle to assert and establish their autonomy and, of course, belonging. And, while affected by state elite decisions, they are also based upon the local, existential contingencies of personal, family and group or village survival that tell us how some become or remain ‘friends’, while others become or remain ‘enemies’. Hence, this chapter has identified how internal and external shifts in geo-political power and state categorisation of land and people have impacted on the ways in which the Kachin in Thailand are perceived. The assassination of General Zau Seng in 1975 permanently reconfigured the national spaces, both for the former KIA soldiers who decided to stay in Thailand, and in the establishment of a Kachin village. Political territory in the region was not originally assembled along clear national lines. While ostensibly an official camp, its exceptional status had consequences for the Kachin when the camp was disbanded. The area was Thai; therefore, cultural symbols, pictures of the king, and

admonitions of loyalty to the Thai Kingdom were omnipresent. Thai concepts of ‘other’, illegal migrants, notions of *Thai-ness* or being constantly labelled ‘non-Thai’ were constant reminders to visiting, temporary armies and populations that their membership in Thai society and culture was tenuous. Although the KIA were originally seen as allies helping the Thai state to bring order to the Thai-Burma border zone, this proved illusory and short term. When relations between the local KIA and their central command changed, and orders were given for the KIA units to return to Kachin State, those who chose to remain in Thailand were subject to classification as illegal, undocumented migrants facing possible arrest, detainment and deportation.

Chapter Five

Border Camp to Border Village

In this chapter and the next, I will examine how experiences and representations of ethnic and political make-up of Jinghpaw Kahtawng oscillate between traditional Kachin political structures, Thai bureaucratic governance and localised administrative systems. I explore how the Thai state and its layered institutions move between central government policy as a bureaucratic entity and the selective implementation and use of these policies at the local level as a rational entity. Oscillation has different and time-bound parameters; but one can suggest it remains an enduring dimension of Kachin life and political structure (Leach 1954). It is exemplified in how residents of Jinghpaw Kahtawng have migrated from towns and villages in Shan and Kachin states to create a ‘Kachin’ village in northern Thailand. While they demonstrate a sense of belonging to a specific “homeland” in northern Burma, at the same time their construction of a “new place” remains a potent symbol – appealing, ambiguous and complex. Cross-border subjectivities emerge from the fixed locality of the village interpolated by the fluidity of movement through geographical, political and cultural landscape. My aim is to show the continuing dialectic between the governing centre and multiple local actors relies on historical negotiation of power structures and the existential imagery of the nation and religion.

As a starting point, following Brown (1994), I consider the state as more typically an ‘arena for social contention’ than an ‘independent actor’. The state relies on integrating and coordinating the activities of its political and administrative structures as each responds to pressures or contingencies; for example, societal pressures stemming from the specific ethnic politics of the border regions (Brown 1994). This process requires central governments to continually balance and renegotiate central ideological and management imperatives with local pressures, each with different intensities, leading to diverse administrative responses.

Questions of state sovereignty invariably involve the interaction of the centre and periphery, in this case the territorial border between Burma and Thailand. Here, as I have been describing, complex networks of ethnic peoples, military incursions, private armies, legal and illegal commerce, border crossings and ambiguous states of inclusion and exclusion determine the contours of life. State notions of national sovereignty devolve as ‘exceptional’ those areas that are deemed to lie outside of the ‘normal’. As mentioned, local ethnic groups are seen as ‘non-Thai’, and, even if they are citizens, fall into the category of the ‘other’. As a

consequence, they cannot be easily controlled by state institutions, conventional surveillance or regulatory procedures.

The contemporary position of Kachin in Thailand was reliant on the creation of the Kachin village by former KIA soldiers. These early residents, their descendants and more recent arrivals must navigate the difficult task of Thai registration, acquiring Hill Tribe identification cards (see Appendix 4 for the different classifications of Thai identification) as a prelude for application for Thai citizenship. The precariousness of their position with Thai authorities and local Kachin elites is clearly outlined by Sadan (2013: 11) illustrating that “the local Kachin representatives responsible for this carefully choreographed political interaction with the Thai state jealously guard the relationships they have built with local authorities over many years”.

At the time the RDP arrived in Jinghpaw Kahtawng in 1984 none of the Kachin residents living in the village had Hill Tribe documents. Although, as Sadan (2013: 11) pointed out several prominent Kachin living in urban centres had at the time acquired Thai citizenship. As mentioned in Chapter Two, in Jinghpaw Kahtawng the village leader and his assistant have no official power. The official village headman is from the adjoining Akha village. Only residents with Thai citizenship can hold official positions and vote. Only a very small number of Kachin have Thai citizenship as opposed to the vast majority of Akha from the adjoining village; therefore, all official positions are held by Akha including those of village leader and SAO. At the time of the research only 8 households from a total of 82 had at least one member with Thai citizenship. The remainder had either Blue or Pink Hill Tribe Cards, an undocumented migrant card or an illegal alien card (see Appendix 4).

I have suggested that the classification of people and places as illegal or ‘other’ represents the discursive power to contain such people and places; it creates the legitimacy necessary to produce the provisional inclusion and, by extension, constitutes the condition of non-fit. While this process is not simply a state centred project or a part of the wider design of state governance, it is a position of double selectivity that sees groups both belong and/or become excluded. This occurs at different levels of abstraction, through inter- and intra-ethnic and internal kinships or as a result of historically shifting power relations and political status. The categorisation of the ‘other’, the migrant, or the ‘illegal’ points to the limitations of narrow understandings of sovereignty. As such, moving across the border does not create a condition of ‘forgetting’ the past, one’s culture, history, traditions and identity. It does, however, lend itself to an understanding of cross-border movement as a movement between and through sometimes contradictory states of existence; a friend, an enemy or both. These states are represented in new forms and narratives about power that together structure the workings of

sovereignty as localised decisions based not on territorial control alone, but on the productive nature of non-fit.

My argument depends on the fact that macro-level social and political changes inevitably effect micro-level individual transformations as, “Large-scale political and economic processes constantly alter the landscapes in which local worlds are anchored” (Kleinman and Fitz-Henry 2007: 54). A primary element of this inter-relation is that the politics, resources and institutional frameworks of local communities’ mediate macro-level social and political change and micro-level individual transformation.

The history of the Kachin in northern Thailand and their interaction with state agencies including the Thai military, Border Patrol Police, and state development organisations are projects centred on legitimacy and control. These interactions do not neatly coincide with the law of the central administration. They exemplify what many scholars have argued: the expansion of state control and the simultaneous accomplishment of rule are problematic. For example, Nikolas Rose suggested that government is “not a process in which rule extends itself unproblematically across a territory, but a matter of fragile relays, contested locales and fissiparous affiliations and hence inherently risky” (Rose 1999: 51; see also Li 2007: 264).

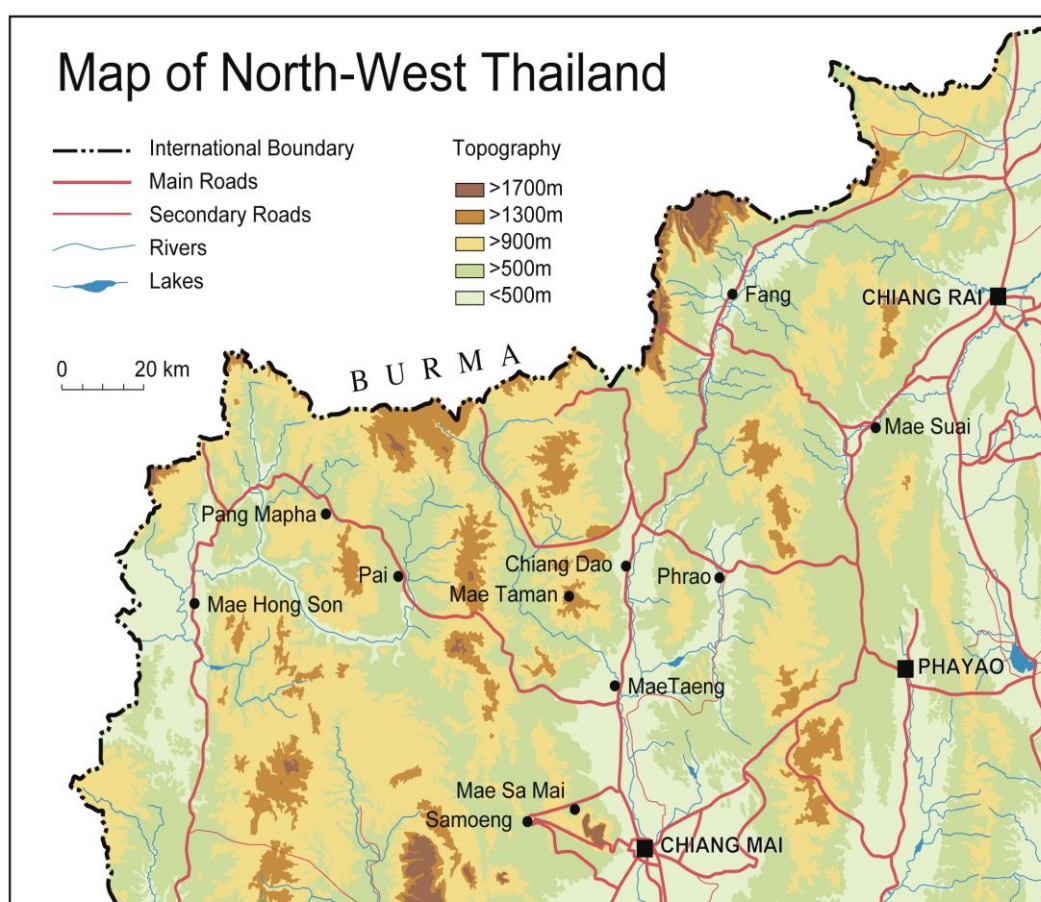
From this perspective governments make a “rational effort to influence or guide the conduct of human beings through acting upon their hopes, desires, circumstances, or environment” (Inda 2005: 1). However, the state is only one element of the relations of power in border areas. The subjects of control, that is, individuals and populations, are complex products of history determined by family, ethnicity, community, state and border. At the same time, through the practice of border crossing, individuals can and do change defining parameters and alter the environment through which power is moderated. In the process, different persons exert different influences and are in turn influenced in different ways (Kleinman and Fitz-Henry 2007: 54-55). This becomes evident in the flows that impact everyday life in the Kachin village.

Embodied Sovereignty: Expel and Contain

As the camp evolved to become a more stable village representing a social and political space for Kachin in Northern Thailand, it began to function as both a physical place for the Kachin in Thailand, as well as a transit point to move further through the Thai geo-political landscape. As such, its construction simultaneously fixes both a physical space and facilitates fluidity of movement through the area based primarily upon ethnic and clan networks and relationships.

In the past there were only scattered houses of Kachin, no Kachin lived in large numbers. Rawang and Lisu who came lived easily with Lisu. Thai people had never heard of Kachin when Kachin first came to Thailand, they were not considered an original ethnic group in Thailand. Only from 1984 did the Thai government begin to legally recognise Kachin, but not to the extent of giving them identification cards or seeing them as Hill Tribes. It's only over the past five years that Kachin have slowly been able to get citizenship. Kachin have become visible (Interview, a Kachin development worker, Chiang Mai 2011).

Soon after the general was assassinated in 1975, several former Kachin soldiers were living in a Palaung village in the adjoining district. It was explained to me that at that time it was very difficult for them to survive. They had no land and no identification cards; therefore, in the eyes of the Thai state, they were illegal. When Thai soldiers came to the village they were discovered without documentation, they were taken by truck to the Burmese border. However, as was commonplace at the time deported Kachin would wait until nightfall and then simply walk back to wherever they had been staying. "After several years of this we decided to move, create our own village, and have our own land (Interview, former KIA soldier, Jinghpaw Kahtawng 2010).



Map 6: Highland areas of North-West Thailand (Prepared by Judith Davis, 2015).

As introduced earlier, my theoretical hypothesis is that the presence of mobile cross-border populations challenges the ways in which we view the political organisation of the state and the compartmentalisation of territory. As such I need to demonstrate that these transient groups challenge the relationship between the political organisation of state and territory as a governed controlled geographic area, and the formation of political subjects under the law. The Kachin village can be used to suggest that the Thai state sustains its sovereignty over national territory through the categorisation of areas, commonly along its borders with Burma, as spaces that are partially and contingently included into the normal bureaucratic functioning of the state. In this respect, lack of citizenship is an example of ambiguous belonging and poses a serious problem for the residents of the village. As the director of the RDP told me: “Kachin registered to the village can stay, but we can’t help with citizenship, it is not our responsibility. It is up to the police and army to arrest and send back those who are illegal” (Interview, RDP staff, Jinghpaw Kahtawng 2010).

The village headman evoked a sense of constraint and containment: “We are the only Kachin village in Thailand, so we are always very busy. Every time there is an opening of a new government building, we are sent to dance. We are now a tourist attraction. When tourists come, we are told to wear Kachin clothes, not jeans” (Interview with the village leader, Jinghpaw Kahtawng 2010). This, in turn, highlights the ambiguity of the Kachin’s relationship with Thai authorities. They might not be allowed citizenship, but they are deemed valuable in other ways. During a subsequent discussion, the head of the RDP noted, “We want Kachin to wear their traditional clothes everyday. Look, they wear jeans and T-shirts. Tourists and visitors can’t tell they have come to a Kachin village. You go to an Akha village you see them wearing traditional clothes. Same with Lahu. Why can’t Kachin wear their traditional clothes?” (Interview, RDP director, Nong Kheow 2010).

Hence, in Butler’s words, we see at the core of the state “a certain tension produced between modes of being or mental states, temporary or provisional constellations of mind, of one kind or another, and juridical and military complexes that govern how and where we may move, associate, work, and speak” (2007: 4). At the personal level, feelings of not belonging intersect with and reinforce the separation of groups at the network or societal level. This boundary is created and maintained through the interaction of the personal and the structural. As a case in point, the latter includes the person’s membership in a group such as the Kachin, living in a Kachin village, having Kachin as a language, wearing ‘Kachin clothes’ and/or conforming to traditional Kachin concepts of kinship and, importantly, identification with a form of worship.

Checkpoints and Crossings

During the period I stayed in the village (between December 2009 and June 2011), two kilometres directly to the north was an official border crossing which was controlled at different times by both Burmese and Wa soldiers. I knew this because I had contacts who frequently travelled back and forth. When the Wa controlled area, they could freely cross the border, but when the Burmese controlled it, they had to travel through the forest. Further to the east, the Wa controlled the forested border area on the Burmese side. I was told that this had not changed throughout my stay. However, to the west, people said a small battalion of Palaung soldiers had guarded a small border at the beginning of 2010. When I followed this up in 2010, the battalion had been taken over by Wa soldiers because of the Palaung soldiers' close relationship with the Thai soldiers (Interview with village member, Jinghpaw Kahtawng 2011).

Checkpoints are sites of both enticements (wanting to cross) and control (wanting to limit crossing). Checkpoints emphasise the intimate relationship between the state (state control/authority) and the population. "The citizen who carries a card, anticipating that it will be checked, is subjugated through that very act. It ties the citizen to the state, the card always pointing to the margin of the state" (Jeganathan 2004: 75). The cognitive notion of 'catching someone' is intensified by the institutionalised assumption that there are many 'illegals' trying to cross the border without proper documents. For the Kachin crossing requires careful planning:

It is difficult for people to travel legally across the border from Burma to Thailand at the border gate, but many people come through the forest (Interview with village member, Jinghpaw Kahtawng, 2010).

The official border crossing point was officially closed in early 2008. Since its closure travel across the border has been less frequent for many residents of Jinghpaw Kahtawng. I was told that:

The Thai side is not the problem; it is the other side that is so difficult, there are Burmese, Wa, Shan and Palong Armies patrolling different areas of the border. When villagers go through the forest and are caught, they are accused of being spies, it is very difficult for us now to travel across the border (Interview with village resident, Jinghpaw Kahtawng 2011).

Between 2010 and 2011, 11 people shared with me details of their travels back and forth across the border. Nine of these people travelled at least five times, while the other two travelled frequently, more than nine times in the year. The reasons given for the majority of these trips included: to visit family, participate in religious events, and business. The duration

110

of the trips varied between one to three weeks and over a month. More often than not, travel was to their home villages in the Shan State. My research has shown that the majority of the residents of Jinghpaw Kahtawng were originally from villages and towns in the Shan State, followed by Myitkyina and Putao in Kachin State. The movement across the border was to consolidate family and village ties. The national border did not stop this movement, nor did the presence of the Thai military.

Soldiers stationed at or near the border have a vague mandate to keep the peace, protect the border from people crossing illegally, and to control the movement of narcotics (and cigarettes and alcohol according to the sign at the checkpoint). To the north of Jinghpaw Kahtawng (past Nong Uk, Haw Chinese community), after you drive 1.5 kilometres you reach the first army checkpoint. As you pass through Nong Uk village, you will see a deserted market area (empty except for Friday mornings when it is full of people from nearby communities, and with traders from Burma selling their products), an army base, and a helicopter landing pad. On market day, the helicopter-landing pad is converted into a car park. However, on other days, it is a restricted area. As you pass the market and army helicopter landing site, you drive through corn and rice fields with forest and mountains forming a natural border between Thailand and Burma in the background. At this checkpoint, there are large red and white striped roadblocks positioned to force vehicles to slow down and stop at a large boom-gate. On one of the roadblocks is a sign reading “no passing”. On the left are the army barracks, with one bamboo guard post on the road.

When I arrived by car, there was one young soldier standing in front of the roadblock with a machine gun casually slung over one shoulder. I parked my car, got out, and noted that he looked rather surprised. Walking over to the entrance of the army camp, next to the portraits of the king and queen and the Thai and Royal flags, I greeted him and told him that I was a researcher staying in the nearby village. I wanted to speak to someone at the camp, and to travel the additional 500 metres to the actual border between Thailand and Burma. I was told that the border was closed and that no one could travel past this point. The commander was not available. Therefore, I was to wait at the guard’s post while he went to fetch the second in command.

A little while later, a middle-aged man smoking a cigarette wearing a T-shirt and camouflage pants, emerged from a nearby bamboo hut. Wiping the fog of an afternoon nap from his eyes, he approached me and immediately asked who I was, where I was from and what I was doing there. While I answered his questions, the other soldier recorded the licence plate of my car and asked for my identification card. I presented the later to him and he filled

out my details in a small book. The three of us, then in the guard's post, sat and stared at each other for a while. The young soldier said that many tourists came through here and he showed me the book where my details were recorded. My name was the third on the first page of a new book: the two names before mine were dated June 2009.

While we were talking, a Thailand Customs van drove through the checkpoint.

There is a meeting today with Burmese Army on the Thai side to discuss when the border will open. It will open soon if the Burmese agree. We will not have any control over who crosses the border that will be up to immigration and customs. They will open the border maybe two days a week.

This was the case for short periods; however, the situation between the Wa and Burmese changed dramatically while I was in the area, causing a fluctuation of power along the border and control of the crossing point.

Again, as we spoke, a villager on a motorbike carrying a large basket of agricultural products, corn and vegetables passed through the roadblock, giving a honk and a wave to the soldiers. The younger soldier got up from his post and opened the boom gate. I asked them about this man passing through the checking point and they told me he was a villager going to the field. However, there were no fields past that point. They would not explain further, why some people were allowed to pass and others were not.

Throughout my stay in the area, weekly I would travel to the border and only on a rare occasion was I permitted to travel all the way to the crossing. According to the commanding officer:

Burmese soldiers are directly across the border to the north. Wa soldiers to the left and right, to the east and west. The border is now closed. Not sure when it will be open again. People are still permitted to cross one to two people can cross at a time when it is safe. Now is not safe. As long as there are no problems, we stay away from the villagers. We are not involved with community work like other sections of the army. We are Special Forces border protection combat unit. If we catch villagers with drugs, we take them to the police. If we catch them with wood, we take them to the RFD. A ten-kilometre line along the border is under our direct control, day and night patrols, focusing on drugs and illegal people. Customs and immigration will take care of what comes through the border crossing. Focused on the control of the trading and trafficking of drugs and people. We have an agreement with soldiers in Burma about this. We do not fight with Burmese soldiers like we did in the past, five years ago. Now the border is clearly defined and agreed upon (Interview with border check point Thai Army unit commander, Border Checkpoint, 2010).

Another incident served to illustrate the context of village life and the complex agreements between border groups, in this case opposing military groups trying to protect their privileges or ‘borders’ in the area. After several months in the village, I was awakened one night by the sound of short rapid bursts of gunfire followed by silence. The next morning I asked several of the villagers who had also heard the noise what had happened. A man explained to me that tensions between the Thai and Wa soldiers on the Burma side had been intensifying after a Wa soldier was reportedly shot and killed by Thai soldiers. He was taken to the nearby district hospital, breaking a local agreement to return fatally wounded soldiers (Interview with a village member, 2011). He continued to tell me that Wa soldiers and Thai soldiers open fire on each other while “protecting their borders” as the area is still used as a trading route for *ya ba* [methamphetamines]. Members of the Thai military, however, had a different account of what had happened. Later in the day, I travelled to the border and spoke with the Thai soldiers stationed there. I was given a very clear answer to my question about the gunfire the night before. They said, “It was villagers hunting squirrels.” The sound I heard came from an automatic weapon, whereas villagers hunt squirrels, birds and other small animals using a slingshot or a single-shot homemade rifle.

As reported to me, Thai and Wa soldiers had entered into an informal agreement as to how each would respond if the other kills one of their soldiers. Incursions by Thai soldiers into Wa controlled territory, and Wa into areas controlled by the Thai military are common; and, when the two encounter each other, gun battles occur. The standing informal agreement is that if a Thai soldier kills a Wa soldier, the body will be taken where the Wa can recover the body without having to formally ask for its return. The reverse is also true. The incident, and its accounting by the villagers and then the military, is a consequence of institutionalised localised agreements between border forces protecting their borders and trading routes (Interview with a village member, Jinghpaw Kahtawng 2011).

We can travel through the checkpoint at the Lisu village:⁶⁴ the soldiers know us. When we are carrying farm tools they don’t stop us. But, it is more difficult to cross the next checkpoint in Chiang Dao town. They don’t know us. We need to get permission from the sub-district office to travel temporarily to Chiang Mai. This is hard. Then we need to get a letter from our employer; then come back to Chiang Dao to apply for a long-term travel document. Many of us don’t bother (Interview with village resident, Jinghpaw Kahtawng, 2010).

However, travelling back to Burma is a much more dangerous decision.

⁶⁴ Situated 1 kilometre south of Jinghpaw Kahtawng.

One former villager here went to visit relatives in Burma five years ago and went through the forest. He was caught by Burmese soldiers and kept in jail and almost beaten to death; finally, he was released (Interview with village resident, Jinghpaw Kahtawng 2011).

The existence of a checkpoint reminds those who seek to pass through that they are crossing a perceived margin of the state and fall into two distinct classifications: those who can and those who cannot pass freely, physical in the sense of soldiers, guns and gates. This requires proof that one can in fact cross legally with the correct documentation. The power of the state is manifest at the checkpoint, both at the international border crossing point and at the two army-controlled points that lie between the village and Chiang Mai city. For the villagers travelling to and from Jinghpaw Kahtawng, the checkpoint represents a physical and symbolic line; that is, a line between legal and illegal and Thai and non-Thai. Freedom of movement is dependent not only on documentation, but also on networks and relationships.

On Being “Civilised”: Religion as a Hierarchy

[Kachin] hardy dwellers of the rugged hills, a people responding to God’s upward call (Tegenfeldt 1974: i).

As the following section will demonstrate, Christianity plays a strategic role in the positioning of Kachin people in both Burma and specifically in Thailand. A Rawang Pastor from northern Burma established the village, and Christianity allows the village to build on these founding local and international religious networks. Christianity is perceived with ambivalence by Buddhist authorities, on the one hand it is preferable to animism in a civilisation matrix - on the other hand it may not translate into distrust. In this sense it is accommodated but does not remove a sense of otherness.

It is here that the link between Thai identity and connections to a Kachin homeland is underscored through both affiliation with Christianity and the level of perceived development of the community. These are not only localised terms used to compare and highlight distinctions between surrounding communities within both internal and external contexts and populations. They also highlight the territorial boundaries of the community and form part of a wider ethno-religious discourse.

Northern Thailand’s ethnically diverse highland areas are prominent sites of conflict, contestation and resistance appertaining to the control of territory and resources. Mainland Southeast Asia in general and Thailand in particular are geographically and politically characterised by hill and valley landscapes, with the image of the valley as the centre of civilisation (Scott 2009). The geo-political highland/lowland division in Thailand continues to have a significant impact on how forest resources and ethnic groups are categorised. Valleys

are viewed as the source of civilisation and integral to statehood, paddy cultivation and Buddhism, while hills are characterised as uncivilised, wild, stateless and non-Thai domains. Historically, Kachin have also constructed 'domains' of rule and authority known as *Jinghpaw Mung*. The examination of informal and formal state practices forms the categorisation of subjects on both sides of the border. The creation of ethnic and state boundaries within the both theoretical and practical paradigms of transborder movement is essentially a means to create order. So too religion plays an important structuring role.

The five villages within boundaries of the RDP are predominantly Christian. Within the geographical boundaries of Jinghpaw Kahtawng, there are three churches: Baptist, Catholic, and Church of Christ. These churches have been constructed with the external support of a wider Christian community, American and Korean missionaries and evangelists, as well as internal support from Kachin in Thailand. The establishment of multiple churches is a significant ethno-religious marker within the village itself. This process represents what could be referred to as a double sense of "civilising" (Hanson 1913; Tegenfeldt 1974; Tangbau-Lasaw 1995). Foreign missionaries and members of the wider Christian community who have supported the individual churches share the ideology of the early missionaries in Kachin State, that of bringing the Word of God to "backward" populations. For the Kachin themselves, this association can be seen as reaffirming their connection with a Christian community. Kachin religious heritage as Christian, largely Baptist, is part of the colonial heritage and missionary involvement in the Kachin State, which further denotes and intensifies the minority status of Kachin practicing their religion in a largely Buddhist state.

The first night I arrived in the village, two women who became very close to my family, prepared dinner for us and greeted us with a special welcoming prayer. From the time I unpacked my gear and was welcomed by the various pastors in the village to my final days before leaving, I was acutely aware of the importance of religion and the church in Kachin society. It served as a centre for the social, cultural and political lives of the villagers. The three churches held services on Sundays and Wednesdays and almost nightly prayer meetings at various households.

The following morning, as I was unpacking my car, a man and a woman rode up on a motorcycle. It was the Baptist pastor and his wife; they welcomed me to the village and invited me to the church service the following day. At 10 a.m the next morning, the church bell rang announcing to the congregation the start of the service. I prepared my camera and notepad, put on the only collared shirt I had brought with me, and walked up the hill with my wife to the church. After shaking hands with the pastor at the entrance, we found a seat near

the back. But, before we could sit down, the pastor's wife walked hurriedly towards us, motioning that seats had been set aside for us in the very front row. We took our seats and greeted those nearby; then, the service began. Towards the end of the service, the pastor called upon my wife and me to stand in front of the congregation and introduce ourselves. I was presented with a black leather-bound Bible in Jinghpaw language and welcomed into the community.

The theme of the particular sermon delivered was a passage from the Book of Genesis on Abraham's meeting with God in which the Covenant was foretold:

Now the Lord had said unto Abram, get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:

And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:

And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

(Genesis, 12: 1-3, The Holy Bible, English Standard Version).

In the days following the sermon, I visited the pastor's house and discussed the use of this particular passage as it related to the Kachin in Thailand. "I was taught to use this passage in theological school in Yangon, Burma, when I was a student and have used it often since coming to Thailand" (Interview, Baptist Pastor, Jinghpaw Kahtawng 2010). At this point, his wife intervened and explained in detail why this passage is important for Kachin in Jinghpaw Kahtawng. She said that it showed the importance of lineage and family, the reality of moving from place to place as a result of promises, and the importance of a Promised Land as provocation for action. It was quite common to hear Kachin religious leaders and pastors in the village speak in terms of "we have been chosen by God, we are His chosen people". The functions and uses of these beliefs and practices may, therefore, along those dimensions noted as well as over time (Beckworth and Demerath 2007; Fenn 2003).

Individuals, communities and states interpret religion as a set of beliefs, practices, rights and responsibilities, in this case, in specific cultural and social contexts. Beyer (2003: 418) focused on the understanding of religion as "pluralistic and cross cultural", as a means of establishing boundaries for individuals, groups and communities. Religion adds to the nuances of geography, group identification, social and cultural similarities and differences in the lives of individuals and communities. As a result of their conversion to Christianity, internalised beliefs of 'civilising' characteristics are common in Jinghpaw Kahtawng and aired frequently by villagers and religious leaders alike. References to their animist past

include: “We were not educated or developed when we followed spirits”, and “Now look at us we are developed we are part of a Christian community.” On one particular occasion, the history of conversion was used as a point of differentiation in the comparison between Kachin and Lahu in a nearby community, “We [Kachin] are more Christian than Lahu, we converted first.” The intrinsic connections between ‘civilising’ and religion are clear in this context. Constructions of internal hierarchies based on ethnic differentials are also subject to religious affiliation and temporal classifications of conversion.

The church plays a central role in the community’s activities, rituals and social organisation. The majority of the village members are Christian; this classification also incorporates the Lahu, Akha and Shan members.⁶⁵ Among the churches, the Catholic Church, is a relatively new arrival in the village and has the least number of members. Its parishioners are all Kachin, and it has no permanent priest. The second largest Church in the village is the Church of Christ, the members of which previously attended the Baptist church. The new building and land were purchased with the assistance of the Morse family, American missionary family based in Chiang Mai. This particular missionary family was previously stationed in Putao, northern Burma. The pastor and the majority of members of this church were Rawang, Lisu and Lahu. A senior church assistant explained:

I am Jinghpaw. All of us were attending the Baptist church and sermons at the home of the [Rawang] pastor before this church were built. When he received money to build the new church, many Rawang, Lisu and Lahu villagers came to worship with him here. I also came, I am Baptist not Church of Christ, but I did not want people to think there was conflict between the churches, you know, Rawang go here and Jinghpaw worship over there (Interview, village resident, Jinghpaw Kahtawng 2010).

The Baptist church, standing on a hill overlooking the village was the largest of the three churches. In Thailand registered churches come under the management of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. Then, they are divided according to their denominations under the Christian Church of Thailand and further sub-divided into 18 districts (Interview with a Christian development worker, Jinghpaw Kahtawng 2011).

In particular, the Baptist church has become a religious and cultural focal point of the village. Christmas, New Year, Easter and Thanksgiving (New Rice) celebrations are held each year. In 2002 representatives from the Korean Evangelical Church in Chiang Mai visited and offered to provide a substantial amount of money to help build a large permanent church in the village. “They are Methodist and we are Baptist. But that’s ok. We are similar. They visit

⁶⁵ During my interviews only three households indicated that they were Buddhist.

us about 3–4 times a year” (Interview with the Baptist pastor’s wife, Jinghpaw Kahtawng, 2011).

Pastors from Burma, Kachin and Shan State are also regularly invited to visit, and to deliver sermons to the congregation. These networks not only reinforce a religious connection between the Kachin in Burma and the members of Jinghpaw Kahtawng, but provide a way to share information about current issues in Burma. On one occasion, an elderly woman told me the following:

My father was a pastor. He would travel all over northern Burma visiting different churches. On one trip he never returned. Our whole family never heard any news what had happened to him. Last year [2009] a pastor from Kachin State came here. I introduced myself to him and he mentioned that he had met my father when he was a boy. He said my father came to his village and stayed at his house: he was very sick and passed away from malaria. I was so happy to hear that my father passed away with people caring for him. It was over 50 years ago.

To unpack the connectivities between Thai identity and connections to a Kachin homeland, I discussed the role of the Baptist Church in Jinghpaw Kahtawng with the pastor and his wife.

Joe: I did not see any special celebration for Kachin State Day⁶⁶ at the Church this year?

Pastor: No, we prayed for the Kachin but nothing special. It is not important to us here: it is history and many people in the village are not interested in it. I think it is because they have been in Thailand for so long now. It is not important for me to remember. I don’t know how others think and feel about it. In Kachin State it is important but not so much here.

It became clear from the pastor’s comment that, Kachin political conjunctions have been removed from the outward functioning of the Baptist Church in Jinghpaw Kahtawng.⁶⁷ Through aligning with pastors and religious leaders from Burma, American missionaries, even though its links are with a Korean Evangelical Church in Chiang Mai, the direction of this church can be seen to be incorporating a wider connectivity to a global Christian community rather than political allegiance with a ‘Kachin Homeland’. The common use of the Bible text (Genesis 12: 1-3) links to the contemporary situation of the Kachin in Thailand, that is, to the importance of a connection or covenant with God as both a dual civilising project and as maintaining the importance of clan and lineage ties in a migratory community. Affiliation with Christianity, and the level of perceived development of the community and

⁶⁶ Kachin State Day is celebrated on January 10 each year. This celebration represents the anniversary of the first conference of The Kachin State Council on 10 January 1948, six days after independence, and the formation of a Kachin government.

⁶⁷ The importance of maintaining a connection with the KIA/KIO for some villagers will be discussed in the following chapter.

persons from the Thai state, form an important locus of leverage. Although used to compare and highlight distinctions between surrounding communities and populations, these are not localised terms, in fact, they highlight the territorial boundaries of the localised community and form part of a wider ethno-religious discourse.

Htoi Aung, a recently ordained pastor in the village told me a story about his experience as an evangelical pastor in a nearby Shan village:

For some time the son and daughter-in-law of the village *mo phi* (spirit healer or shaman) had been secretly coming to the church. One day the *mo phi* was called away to treat a patient in Fang district so the son and his wife decided to convert. They came to me at the church and I took them back to their home (the family home of the *mo phi*). Inside the home there were many different altars for different spirits worshipped by his father. We prayed together for a long time and I sent all of the spirits in the house out. Two days later, their father returned. When he returned to perform a traditional ceremony to call on the spirits in his home, none appeared. He called several times but they still did not appear. In the 30 years that he had been a *moh phi* this had never happened.

That night he had a dream that the house was burning and he had to leave. He told everyone at a village meeting later about this dream. This upset him greatly. After a few days, a sick man came to see him to be treated but he could not help him. The next day his daughter-in-law told him that they had converted to Christianity and did the ceremony in the house. Furious, the father forced them leave the house immediately and forbid other villagers from taking them in. They ended up living in an orange orchard. The husband got work spraying pesticides on a daily wage and got very sick. So did their young baby. He could only work for a short time then had to stop. When the landowner heard the story of their conversion, he made them leave without paying him. They were forced to leave to find work in Chiang Mai: they could not live in the village anymore. On the way to Chiang Mai they were stopped at the army checkpoint. The wife did not have any ID card and was sent back to Burma with her baby. I don't know where they are now. After this happened, the *mo phi* spoke with the village leader and committee and they decided that if a family or a person converts to Christianity they should leave the village. If they stay then no one should help them with money, work. This is what happens to villagers that convert.⁶⁸

As shown above, religious networks flow past the physical boundaries of the village to incorporate a wider "Christian community." In August 1998, a wealthy Kachin entrepreneur, along with assistance from the KIO purchased land to build the Wunpawng Christian Church compound on the outskirts of Chiang Mai city (Interview with Church pastor, Chiang Mai, 2010). During the first five years a small house on the land was used for the church services; however, it could only accommodate approximately 30 people. In 2004, the same Kachin

⁶⁸ For Htoi Aung's full story reference to Appendix 7.

entrepreneur built a large church building that could seat 100 worshippers in memory of his mother. This church soon became, and continues to be, a focal point for Kachin cultural, social and religious expression in Chiang Mai city.

The majority of the Kachin who live in Chiang Mai city are migrant workers, students or work for different NGOs in the area. The church, therefore, represents an ethno-religious space where Kachin can meet, worship and disseminate information regarding personal status and household registration, for example. It is here where the link between the church in Chiang Mai and Jinghpaw Kahtawng is the strongest. As travel remains difficult for most of the Kachin, whether undocumented workers in Chiang Mai or in the village, there is little direct connection between the two. On occasion when Jinghpaw Kahtawng residents are in Chiang Mai (those that can travel that is), on a corresponding Sunday they will attend a service at the church; alternatively, those village residents who are working on a permanent or semi-permanent basis in Chiang Mai will attend regularly. The current pastor who is Kachin has been living in Chiang Mai for several years. The sermons are delivered in Jinghpaw, and simultaneous translation into Thai is common. Sunday School for the younger children is taught only in Thai.

There are four churches in Chiang Mai that Kachin attend. However, the WCC has the largest congregation. One of the four is a small Church of Christ congregation headed by a Rawang Pastor who has strong ties with the Rawang residents in Jinghpaw Kahtawng. Its congregation numbers fewer than 30 members. However, not all Kachin attend the WCC or Church of Christ. Some attend the Catholic Church and others a Korean Church with links to the Baptist Church in Jinghpaw Kahtawng.

What all this tells us is that religion is one of the key variables in the scheme of belonging and non-belonging at the local as well as state level. As outlined by Decha (2003: 80) to narrate a history of Karen, or in fact any of the ethnic minorities of Burma, as a distinct anthropological entity, “is to miss the cultural-political complexities of lives in one of the most diversified areas of the world” (cf. Smith, 1990: 30). Such a position is based upon the notion that each group has produced and reproduced unique cultural identities without interconnection, negotiations or incorporation. Subsequently, as noted by Decha (2003: 83), the European discourse of ethnology followed by the administrators of British Burma in the nineteenth century also fits closely with the civilising discourse of Christianity in terms of categorising the other and introducing civilising projects.

Banton (2010: 26) argued to the effect that “beliefs strengthen structures; structures reinforce beliefs”. It is from this approach that specific cultural practices and organisations of

society become seen as typical or ideal type for a given community. At this level, there is, of course, interaction of ethnicity and politics and religion. For Weber, according to Banton (2007: 26): “It was primarily the political community that inspired belief in shared ethnicity.” Also derived from Weber is the interest in the interaction of ethnic groups and nationalism whereby struggles over boundary making and maintenance exist simultaneously at the wider level of the public and political domain. These struggles include ethnic conflict and at the individual level of everyday interactions which, again referring to Banton (2007: 22), are not just a ‘top down’ determination of local behaviour but a series of ‘bottom up processes’ or exchanges. The latter affects not only a particular ethnic grouping, but the politics, relative autonomy and interdependence of the nation-state and the local autonomy in the governing of the border area. For Kachin in Thailand, Christianity allows access to socio-political networks for the Kachin, this includes Korean and US missionaries as well as visiting pastors and pastors from Burma.

Borders, Mobility and Movement: “being part of the Christian community”

Official territory, delineated by agencies entrusted with the maintenance and integrity of boundaries, has become the primary manifestation of the state in this region. Cultural and border politics are assemblages of power that have surfaced as state and non-state agents on both sides of the border attempt to exert their control over mobile populations. To achieve this level of control, the state requires diverse modalities of government that include classification of resources and people, control of conduct, surveillance, and regulation. These practices of power inevitably embrace institutions such as the army, churches, schools as well as policies, rights, citizenship and knowledge. Van Schendel argued to the effect that “the state’s pursuit of territoriality – its strategy to exert complete authority and control over social life in its territory – *produces* borders and makes them into crucial markers of the success and limitations of that strategy” (2005: 3, original emphasis).

Boundaries are obviously crucial; but their maintenance is always suspect. As Oren Gross (2002: 1011) argued: “Bright-line demarcations between normalcy and emergency are all too frequently untenable, and distinctions between the two are difficult, if not impossible.” Hussain (2007: 735) placed this in context suggesting that most ‘exceptional’ laws are designated as such due to the exceptional circumstances that precede them, in this case the rise of socialism in Burma and the emerging fear of the growing support for a communist insurgency by the Hill Tribes in remote areas of northern and eastern Thailand. These positions have led to perceptions of Hill Tribes as problematic and a threat to Thailand’s

national security. It is here we see most clearly the degree to which the Kachin's social and political relations with the Thai state oscillated between friend and enemy. When helping the Thai state suppress the communist insurgency, they were considered friends; once the KIA disbanded their military encampment⁶⁹ they became undesirable illegal immigrants and subject to detention and deportation.

Many in the village express connection, to and loyalty and support for the KIO/KIA through their outward expression of Kachin political identity. Those who attended the 50th anniversary celebrations of the KIO/KIA in Chiang Mai on 5 February 2011 wore KIA insignia barrettes and T-shirts on their return to the village. However, linked to the above discussion of formal and informal networks or "networks of networks" (Schiller 2006), those who no longer or never supported the KIA or had lost touch with current political events in Burma, spoke of wider issues of "being part of the Christian community", being granted Thai citizenship, and learning to speak Thai as significant elements in their new social realities. These were not examples of a reduction in the significance of Kachin cultural and social practices: the villagers continue to place importance on maintaining *mayu dama* kinship relations. But, it was representative of the diversity of the village resident's socio-political positions.

A Kachin development worker shared the following insights with me:

Many Kachin have security problems, always afraid of being arrested, no ID card. And more and more are coming to Thailand.

We can only use our language at the Church. The Church is a small space to practice our culture and language. From what I can see and feel, there is no strong sense of unity amongst Kachin in Thailand, no desire to keep our culture. There are two main churches in Chiang Mai and people are split between them.

"Why do they speak Thai at the Church?" I asked.

"This is not, I think, a good thing" was her reply.

In terms of maintaining culture, they do not think it is a problem to have many churches and speak in Thai. There are many arguments between pastors as to how to teach children Kachin. But even now there are no regular classes: this is a big concern for me. Sunday School is taught in Thai. For some multi-ethnic congregations in the US and UK, Burmese is used as the middle language. But, using Thai at a Kachin Church in Chiang Mai is a big problem. This is affecting Kachin identity. It's strange to have a sermon translated into Thai.

⁶⁹ Kachin are not officially recognised as Hill Tribes in Thailand, making their current status ambiguous and the path for citizenship almost impossible.

The institutionalised performances of the Thai state, enacted through decentralised channels of local authority regarding classification of people and territorial sovereignty, are legitimised through central law and local authorities. However, non-state normative actions that take on a degree of normativity surrounding these same phenomena are understood and reproduced differently. The state has the power to bind people together to produce a certain image or vision of the nation; it also has the ability to unbind, expel, deport and divide. Essentially, “it expels precisely through an exercise of power that depends on barriers” (Butler and Spivak 2007: 4). Such a move places the population (subjects) within the complex matrix of military power wherein the law and juridical functions become a priority of the military (Butler and Spivak 2007: 55). There is, therefore, a productive nature of non-belonging that produces and reproduces the notion of exceptionalism; an ongoing evolution of the forms, mechanisms and narratives of ethnicity. The continuity and contradictions that exist within the structures of the ‘legal’ and the ‘illegal’, the ‘friend’ and the ‘enemy’, and the ‘non-fit’ are manifest in exceptionalism, not solely as a state-defined project, but as a continually evolving milieu of power that simultaneously incorporates the unique characteristics of belonging and non-belonging.

An important expansion on Agamben’s argument initiated by Butler, and which makes it relevant to our consideration of Jinghpaw Kahtawng can be seen in her conceptualisation that “this is not bare life, but a particular formation of power and coercion that is designed to produce and maintain the condition, the state, of the disposed” (Butler and Spivak 2007: 5). The context of moving from one state of origin to another, whether forcibly or by choice, does not designate citizenship if,

one is received, as it were, on the condition that one does not belong to a set of juridical obligations and prerogatives that stipulate citizenship or; if at all, only differentially and selectively. It would seem that one passes through a border and that one arrives in another state” (Butler and Spivak 2007: 6).

Drinking tea at their homes, working in the field, standing in line at the water tank or waiting in government offices, I would talk to people from the village about their lives. One of the questions I frequently asked was: “What kind of work did you do before coming to the village?” Villagers gave a range of responses:

“I was a school teacher.”

“I was a nurse.”

“I was a ruby miner.”

“I was a soldier.”

“I worked in the jade mines.”

“I was a clerk in a government office.”

“I hunted red panda, snow leopard and wild mountain goat to trade for salt on the Indian border”

However, they all ended in the same way:

“... but now I’m a farmer.”

(Extracts from multiple interviews, Jinghpaw Kahtawng 2009-2011).

Anyone visiting the village on a casual basis would categorise it as a “farming village”, with agricultural activities (growing food crops and animals) as the primary source of subsistence and income. However, approximately half or 41 of the village households relied upon non-agricultural activities as their primary source of income. In contrast, only thirty-six households listed their primary income source as coming from on-farm agricultural activities. Five households reported agricultural activities as their secondary source of income. Alternatively, 15 households listed farm daily wage labour as their primary source, while 17 relied primarily on off-farm daily wage labour for their incomes. Other significant categories of primary income included handicrafts (two households), remittance (four households), and construction and services (one each).

Normative structural organisation with state mechanisms, such as citizenship application, household, land and personal status registration, along with alternative sources of negotiation including incorporation with NGOs in Chiang Mai and resistance to Hill Tribe classification political and social systems, are influenced by the dynamics of Kachin clan and kinship relations. Networks within and through the village variously promote mobility; socially, economically and politically and maintain a form of life that is not ‘bare’ but marked nonetheless by dispossession. These networks are formed primarily through clan and kinship ties, but also through connections and relationships with the Kachin centre, for example, the KIO/KIA, and religious networks. However, this mobility does not always correlate with geographical mobility.

Although the existing village social system remains primarily Kachin, some individuals occupy a position or status in several different social systems simultaneously, including other ethnic cultures and, of course, Thai institutional systems and culture. Jinghpaw Kahtawng represents a specific social system in flux. The extent to which individuals in Jinghpaw Kahtawng manoeuvre their position within these various social systems as a means of expansion, raises the following question: does this manipulation of their position fundamentally alter the structure of the social system and its exceptionalism?

RDP staff⁷⁰, district (DAO) and sub-district officials (SAO), and elected local village level leaders are instrumental in the administration, control and structuring of the lives of residents in Jinghpaw Kahtawng. Local power and authority manifested through state institutions run through these channels (see Sturgeon 1991 and 1999; Turton 2000; Elawat 1997; Hirsch 1993). At the village cluster level (*mu*) the elected Kachin leader has little political authority within the wider structures of surrounding state institutions and communities.⁷¹

The founders of Jinghpaw Kahtawng⁷² retain a degree of local power based primarily on land holdings including claims to the majority of land in the community⁷³. However, these leaders have limited cultural or religious power in the day to day operation of the village. In most practical ways they are viewed as “Kachin elders” using appropriate Kachin status

⁷⁰ During my research, the number of RDP staff stationed at the Nong Kheow project site varied considerably. Permanent staff included the director of the site, deputy-director (who is married to a Kachin woman in the village) an education and development coordinator and a youth project worker. Stories retold to me not only indicated the ambiguity of the status and position of the Kachin but also showed the prejudiced underpinnings of the relationship between the village and the government. They included an account of a visit by the local government veterinarian and his team, who came to vaccinate all the village dogs for rabies. As the story goes, the head of the RDP had two large aggressive dogs that had previously attacked several residents, but, he refused to have his dogs vaccinated, exclaiming in front of a large group that had gathered: “If my dogs bite anyone let *them* have the rabies vaccine!” Another incident occurred in the middle of my fieldwork. I arrived late in the afternoon from Chiang Mai and was unpacking when I heard the following announcement in Thai over the loudspeaker: “Everyone come to the land near the RDP office, there is a fire! Bring water!” It was the dry season, and the reservoir had long since dried up; however, I knew that the RDP offices had their own separate water supply and wondered why the villagers needed to bring their own water. When I arrived at the scene, I saw a small grass fire burning close to two houses. The villagers seemed relatively unfazed and quickly began back burning to protect the houses and the RDP offices. I approached the head of the RDP, who was talking on his phone, and told him that I could bring my truck and all the water I had to help with the fire. In a loud voice, he replied “The villagers should save their water, add some soap and take a bath.”

⁷¹ As discussed earlier the majority of Kachin in Jinghpaw Kahtawng do not have citizenship. Therefore, the election of a village leader for the Kachin community is done at the community level, but is not recognised officially by state institutions. For example, the Kachin village leader does not receive a monthly government stipend nor are they officially referred to as *phuyaiba* (village leader). However, this role is more than ceremonial as the Kachin village leader represents a political link between the community and state agencies providing information regarding upcoming scheduled events, development projects and the like.

⁷² Currently there are only three founders remaining in the community.

⁷³ There are strict land use rules applied and enforced by the RDP and RFD. Early settlers were able to claim sizable plots of land before the arrival of the RDP. This land was later lent, sold or given to newer arrivals in the community by the village founders.

terminology – includes invitation to weddings, community level events and ceremonies.⁷⁴ But, as the following case indicates, they are not seen as knowledgeable “Kachin” cultural representatives.⁷⁵ When I arrived at the engagement ceremony the house was already full, and the pastor was beginning the blessing ceremony for the couple. I sat outside and quietly spoke with several Kachin elders who were sitting on wooden stools smoking Burmese cigars outside of the kitchen. After a brief talk they excused themselves and went into the kitchen. I found a space near the front door of the house and listened to the ceremony continuing inside;

“Stop eating! The ceremony is not finished yet, what are you doing, that’s not Kachin way”. Ah Du⁷⁶, a Lahu man from a nearby house yelled loudly. “The couple are still inside and the parents are still giving their blessings. Kachin can’t eat before the ceremony is finished, you know that, go back outside.” The three elders stopped eating; one simply put his plate down and walked home. The remaining two gave their apologies and joined the ceremony inside the house. However, in passing one of the elders spoke to me, “We do it all the time, he’s just gets upset easily.”

A village resident explained the link between clan and kinships systems and the importance of Thai citizenship to me. As we were talking at a friend’s house, one villager walked up to us and spoke to the owner of the house. After a brief discussion she reached into her purse and handed over her Thai ID card. “In the village and even for Kachin in Chiang Mai citizenship is more important, those with citizenship have more power” (Interview with village resident, Jinghpaw Kahtawng 2011). Only those with Thai ID cards can be involved in RDP projects. Because this man was a recent arrival, he was using the household owner’s Thai ID to register for work on a village road development project. “No one checks, they just need to see the ID so he can get paid,” I was told.

Some people here [Jinghpaw Kahtawng and the Akha village] only sign documents for money. It is clear that when you see something that needs clan and family to come together; could be a wedding, baby naming, or a problem, only sometimes do people attend. They have excuses of work, they are too busy. But, when anything about citizenship or village funding – I mean money – comes up, no one misses that. Even those in Chiang Mai will run back to the village. Many Kachin in Chiang Mai no longer see themselves going back to Burma. They want to work, want their children to study. This is not easy for them, me too, but now it is all we can do (Interview with village resident, Jinghpaw Kahtawng 2011).

⁷⁴ For an in-depth discussion on local power and role of community/village founders in Thailand see Tannenbaum, Nicola and Kammerer, Cornelia Ann. (eds) 2003, *Founders’ Cults in Southeast Asia: Ancestors, Polity, and Identity*, New Haven: Yale Southeast Asia Studies.

⁷⁵ As will be discussed in later chapters this role primarily falls on the church leaders and prominent members of the congregations.

⁷⁶ A Du is Lahu, his wife is Akha and they have been living in the village for many years. They are originally from Burma and often shared their stories of living with Kachin in Shan State since they were young.

In de Certeau's (1988) sense, such tactics explain that the border is culturally, politically and territorially reproduced through particular policies, discourses of nationalism and homogeneity, and furthermore that strategies of control are critical aspects of the 'other', whether externally defined or internally categorised. Hence, we can say that the border is also imbued with a performative dimension. This can be understood as a "sort of material manifestation of how, in a certain moment and space, the state (and its related political community) can identify itself, can see and manage the 'here' and the 'there'; and can, in other words, 'spatialise the political'" (Minca and Vaughan-Williams 2012: 759). In other words, establish a site where sovereign decisions can be enacted in Thailand. The micro-geographic and cultural boundaries of the most distant districts and villages combine to form the boundary of the larger polity itself (Wijeyewardene 1991), essentially producing a micro-galactic polity wherein the power from the centre is sustained, representing a repositioning of centre-periphery analysis. In other words, and this is the key point, the configuration of the national boundaries, power and social organisation in Thailand encompasses not only specific geo-political considerations, but also the complex and ambiguous realities lived on a daily basis in Jinghpaw Kahtawng.

Connections and Re-Connections

We want Jinghpaw from Burma to come and live in Jinghpaw Kahtawng to increase the size of the village. Even now people, Jinghpaw from Burma, come and stay in the village before moving to Chiang Mai (Interview with village resident, Jinghpaw Kahtawng, 2011).

It was an early morning in May 2011. Summer had started and I sat on a mat in the corner of Zau Ja's house. Above me on the wall was a framed picture of Jesus and a Kachin bag and on the opposite wall, a framed portrait of the Thai royal family. Shards of sunlight pierced the gaps in the bamboo walls and the floor creaked as I found a comfortable position to sit. I waited quietly, alone. I could hear noises from the kitchen as Zau Ja prepared green tea. After 10 minutes, he entered the room with tea and a plate of sunflower seeds. Before we could start, a woman carrying a large bag appeared at the door, calling in Thai "Is anyone was home?" As her eyes were not accustomed to the darkness inside, she did not see us at first. Zau Ja called out for her to come in, and with a sigh of relief, she unloaded her heavy bag on the floor at the entrance to the house. "I am selling pictures of the king. It would be very good for your home and family if you had one." Zau Ja replied: "I already have one hanging on the wall." The woman looked over and then pointed out that the picture was lower than the picture of Jesus and should be moved higher up the wall. Zau Ja said nothing, just a nod and disappeared into his bedroom. Moments later he returned with 500 baht and bought one of her

framed pictures. She chose a good one for him, thanked him and left. “Thai people come all the time selling us this type of stuff. We also have Indian traders from Burma come across the border and try and sell us sunglasses and plastic watches.” Once the women left I asked Zau Ja, if he would lower the picture of Jesus, he looked at me replied “no”.

I had been introduced to Zau Ja’s younger sister who was working for an NGO in Chiang Mai in the village the week before. She mentioned to me that her brother, Zau Ja, would be a good person to talk to. Zau Ja started to tell me about his travels to Thailand:

Our family comes from central Shan State, Nam Tu village. My eldest brother was in the KIA and came to Thailand in the late 1970s around 1974, I think. We did not hear from him for many years and were worried. I sent many letters to him with other Kachin travelling to Thailand, but never got any reply. In 1985 I decided to come to Thailand and find out what had happened and send news back to our parents. I was very close to the Thai Burma border, sleeping in a Wa village, I met another Kachin travelling from Thailand. We shared stories and he told me that he had been in prison with another Kachin man, my brother. He even had a letter from him addressed to my father. I read the letter. It explained why he was in jail. He killed a Palaung man in Chai Prakarn town for stealing a KIA horse that he had responsibility for. He explained that there is a Kachin village on the other side of the border. He encouraged our family to move there. The next day, I travelled back to my village and convinced my older brother to come to the Kachin village in Thailand with me. Now my whole family live in Thailand.

Zau Ja continued to explain that after arriving he saw that the lives of Kachin were very difficult. Crops had failed, there was little water, and many older villagers had a problem with opium, and methamphetamines in particular. There were also many pastors from Kachin and Shan states living in the village. At the time, there was only one small church in which everyone worshipped; however, there were problems in the beginning as there were pastors from many denominations: Baptist, Church of Christ and Catholic (Interview with village resident, Jinghpaw Kahtawng, 2010). Being able to speak Shan and wanting to address the drug issue Zau Ja contacted the police in the nearby Shan village of Na Wai. They agreed to help and some Kachin villagers were sent to a rehabilitation centre in Chiang Mai. Zau Ja did not tell me if this was successful: he only said with confidence that soon after, the village no longer had a problem with drugs. By the time the RDP arrived in the area, there were already over 20 households in Jinghpaw Kahtawng.

When we heard the king was coming we brought all our relatives from other villages to come and stay here. I go back to Burma often, just on the other side of the border. I have some Kachin friends in the Wa Army. We spend a lot of time talking about the current

To illuminate the performativity of borders and boundaries further, let me refer to the story of a village founder, Hkun Nawng. He fought with the Burmese Army and subsequently fled, living along the border of Thailand for 20 years before establishing the Kachin village. Following the ceremonies for Kachin Revolution Day in Chiang Mai, I returned to the village. Shortly after arriving, I visited a friend and sat with her and her neighbour as they discussed the recent event in Chiang Mai and what it meant to them. They were both wearing the T-shirt and beret embossed with the KIA insignia that was distributed to them in recognition of their part in the Kachin struggle for autonomy and self-determination in Burma. The KIA held the ceremony to express gratitude for the service of the KIA soldiers in Thailand. They were previously seen as deserters because they did not follow orders and return to Kachin State when the Thai camp was disbanded. In many peoples' eyes, they were still soldiers because they had not yet been officially pardoned to leave the military.

Both of these women had served as nurses in the KIA in various posts in the Shan State before coming to Thailand. They smiled and spoke fondly of the KIA and the general struggle of the Kachin in Burma. Then, the focus of their conversation switched to one of the villagers who had attended the ceremony. "Hkun Nawng is Jinghpaw: he is one of us. But, he was in the Burmese Army. So why did he come and join the ceremony? I was very shocked and upset to see him there. He even smiled and shook the general's wife's hand", one of the women said, while the other sat quietly and nodded in agreement. "He should not have come. He was fighting against the Kachin, fighting against us and our people", the other woman emphasised.

While listening to this conversation, I thought back to the discussion I had with Hkun Nawng several weeks ago, when he explained to me that he was, in fact, a soldier in the Burmese Army. However, he had described that he was very young and was fighting the "White Flags" or the Burmese Communist Party (BCP) in southeast Shan State on the border with China.

I was born in a village near Bhamo in Kachin State. I cannot remember the exact year. I lived in Myitkyina for several years with my family but was recruited by the Burmese Army when I was 14. My father was a sergeant in the Burmese Army. I had four older brothers in the Burmese Army and a half-brother in the Union Military Police. My father and one brother were killed while fighting Japanese soldiers during the Japanese occupation. After my training, I was sent to fight the "White Flags" (Burmese communists) on the Shan State China border for many years. Altogether I was a soldier in the Burmese Army for seven years. After the fighting, I could not return to my home

because I already had a wife and children. I left the army and travelled through the forest along the border to Thailand, living in many different villages.

I returned to my house in Chiang Mai with the two women's conversation in my mind. I looked back over my interview notes and compared them to reference books on the specifics of the political turmoil of the time (Smith 1991; Lintner 1997). By cross-referencing my notes with the history of the conflict in Burma, I was able to see that Hkun Nawng had been a soldier in the Burmese Army during President U Nu's reign when Burma was considered an emerging democracy and well before the establishment of the KIA. Hkun Nawng also explained that he knew little about the political problems in Burma or about the specific years when power had shifted because soon after joining the army as a teenager, he left and moved along the Burma-Thai border where he began to raise a family before eventually crossing into Thailand. When I returned to the village, I explained this to the women, emphasising that he could not explain these details because all he knew was that he was, in fact, a soldier in the Burmese Army. He did not know the political orientation of President U Nu at that specific time in Burmese-Kachin historical relations. While the two women seemed to accept this explanation, they finished by adding that he still should not wear the Kachin beret because he never fought in the KIA.

I use this example to demonstrate people's commitment to the shared symbols of Kachin identity, which was fundamental to their sense of community in the village and elsewhere. The women questioned Hkun Nawng's right to wear Kachin symbols even though he identified as Kachin. Different types of boundaries emerged from these narratives based on the specificities of historical interaction of different actors who adhere to different histories. In this case, actors and village residents have pursued different strategies of boundary-making based upon divergent links to a shared history. This divergence is dependent on and reproduced through specific hierarchies of power and political alliances. Contemporary village networks and relationships are based upon contestation between various means of classification and associated relationships to a cohesive history. However, any claim to moral superiority or entitlement that comes with it is embedded in an adherence to a collective identity linked to a shared political ideology.

Conclusion

When theories and concepts of international borders and geopolitical formulations of the nation-state change under the impact of political events, the discussion and analysis of such forces must also be adapted. When one considers the ethno-political history of the Kachin and their migration across time and space, it is apparent that past contingencies are reflected in

their present-day circumstances as a group, notably in their social structure of leadership and kinship obligations.

The aim of this chapter has been to demonstrate that the history of the Kachin in northern Thailand and their interaction with various state agencies are fundamentally centered on issues of legitimacy and control where such interactions do not neatly coincide with the law of the central administration. Both the KIA camp and the subsequent village although geographically close to the Thai-Burma border, are not only physical representations of borderlands and zones of exception but are also ideologically and culturally-defined border spaces (see Tsing 2005: 4).

The interrelationship between religion and belonging for transborder communities is important here in that it highlights encounters of power that continue to shape relationships between Christian Kachin and the Thai state religion of Buddhism. This represents both an internal and external point of classification and hierarchy. One of the central issues that this thesis tackles is the construction and maintenance of ethnic/religious identities of border-crossing peoples, and the ways in which these practices influence how power at the border is shaped, negotiated and manifested. As the next chapter will show, for the Kachin in northern Thailand, the fixed and bounded nature of these areas is in constant flux, “characterised more by hybridity and liminality than by any uncomplicated citizenship” (Mattingly 2010: 9) or sense of belonging.

Chapter Six

The Non-Assimilable Subject

The power of a country road is different when
one is walking along it from when one is flying over it by airplane ...
Only he who walks the road on foot learns of the power it commands ...

(Benjamin 1978: 66).

The argument thus far has suggested that the Kachin are in an ongoing process of defining and redefining their social and physical landscape in a manner that moves beyond the specific village confines, from a non-statist position. Rather, the boundaries that surround the village and the national border two kilometres away represent both a temporal and physical intersection between implementation of state power and local manifestations of negotiation with this power. The preceding chapters have shown that the perceived link between territory and politics often fails to represent a clear linear historical projection; it does, however, illustrate a situation of disjuncture, rupture and manipulation.

For the Kachin in northern Thailand, ‘exceptionalism’ can be used to refer to that which falls outside the law or the framework of the law creating a non-fit of both the physical space and the people who reside there and the basis for ongoing identity negotiation as to whether they best ‘belong’ as friend or enemy. Such a conceptualisation is neither limited to specific time periods nor to spaces or circumstances that evolve in opposition to state law and authority, essentially an understanding of friend-enemy from Kachin cultural and political spaces. Exceptionalism, from this point of view, is neither static nor confined to specific or permanent apparatuses of government. More specifically, the exception for the Kachin in northern Thailand is predicated on the tensions that exist between imagined and actual representations of the state as a legitimate basis of power and sovereign decision-making in border areas. For these reasons, the ongoing evolution of forms, narratives and practices of power cannot be removed from the historically non-assimilable nature of Kachin and Thai state relations. These processes produce links between spatial abstractions and the politics of actual experience of those living in and connected to the Kachin village where structural elements such as illegality and sovereignty inform and configure social relations.

Classifying the Kachin as ‘illegal’ acts as a mechanism for declaiming any earlier sense of ‘Thai’ identity based on political alliance and approved residence thereby limiting their

participation in state projects. However, their classification as illegal in Thailand does not reduce or limit their 'Kachin' political identity. Rather this produces a spatial exception of the Kachin – people out of place. Undermining this, the residents in Jinghpaw Kahtawng have begun the citizen application process with several receiving full Thai citizenship. Even after being granted Thai citizenship, wider cultural and spatial categories that maintain a sense of difference still exist. In this chapter I examine different ways exceptionalism is maintained such as the shifting nature of place and borders, applications for Thai citizenship, administration structures of the RDP and SAO and centralised process of mapping land and people to a specific geographical and social category. In this context, I wish to address two questions: what mechanisms exist internally and externally to produce and reproduce the village as exceptional? And, how are these structures created and reproduced? To answer these questions, I will examine the ways that physical and conceptual categorisation of space and territory reinforce notions of non-fit and are buttressed through citizenship, state development projects, resource management and mapping.

The Question of Home: or “A short story of how I have come from China to this place”

I belong to a clan of Kachin called Lungjun Lahpai. I was born in a place named Lungjun in China. I moved from there when I was very young, so I can't tell you exactly where Lungjun is. The name Lungjun Lahpai was derived from the fact that we placed stones to mark the boundaries of the land we owned. So when people saw the stones, they said, “Oh, they are *Lungjun Du* (stone planting rulers).” Lahpai had four different names. First, Jinghpaw people called us Lungjun for placing stones at the borders of our land. Some called us Zi Lahpai because we are Zi. They would say, “Those Zi, or Zi Lahpai people.” There was also one name given to us by other Zi people. They called us Lusu. Lusu and Lungjun mean the same thing, “placing stones”. Placing stones is called Lusu in Zi language. Also, some called us Lukmyan, meaning high stones because the stones marking our territory were placed very high. So, they decided to call us Lukmyan [high stones] instead of Lungjun [stone placing]. All these names have one common thing, “stones”. All these names refer to one single clan. In our case, a single clan is referred to as if it is four different or separate clans. It does not matter if you call us Lungjun or Lusu or Zi Lahpai or Lukmyan. We are one family.

My father passed away when I was very young, so I grew up with my mother's family in Lungjun, China. I still remember the time when Mao's people came to our village. My mother was a widow; so, when her relatives were running away from the communists, she also went with them to start a new life in Burma.

Growing up in Burma I mostly lived with my mother and her relatives and went to a place called Hukawng with her [western Kachin State]. We lived there from 1959 to 1963. My parents were animist. When I was 10 years old my mother became Christian.

We became believers. When we moved from China to a town in Hukawng region, my mother became very ill. It must have been because of the climate differences of the two places. She was extremely ill and didn't feel better even though we tried everything we could. Thus, we felt that we had to believe in God and become Christian. It was difficult to worship *nats* [spirits] because we no longer had any animals such as cows, pigs and chickens to make sacrifices as we were on the move and were fleeing from place to place because of fighting. Most of the people from the area were Christians. Almost none of the Kachin from China were Christians, but most of them converted to Christianity when they arrived in Burma. People who were able to perform spirit-worshipping ceremonies could not be found anymore. There was nothing else we could do. So, we converted to Christianity. That's how we became Christians in Burma.

We had a Burmese military base in our town, and the Kachin Army [KIA] was also in the forest nearby. We had to live in the jungle from 1963 to 1966. We were staying in the jungle with KIA soldiers. We lived deep in the jungle, so we couldn't see Burmese soldiers, and they couldn't see us. We would shoot each other if we did. The KIA soldiers and us were not really different from each other. We lived in the same place and ate the same food. We were all living in the barracks, so the army received a lot of new soldiers.

In early 1966, I took some military training and in February I passed. Not all the training, though. I took training for fighting skills. We weren't taught in Jinghpaw language like today. The training was in English because the officers in the Kachin Army were former British allies ... I was assigned to be an assistant in the kitchen first. I cooked meals for the soldiers. In the camp, there were about 300 soldiers: sometimes it was 200 and sometimes 100. A cooking team included about 12 people ...

Rice was hidden in the jungle where mice could find it. There was always a lot of mouse shit in the rice sacks, even more than the rice itself. Two of us, Ma Tu and me, were the only ones cooking the rice brought by the soldiers from the jungle ... We made the fire and after that, dragged out another big rice cooking pot, poured out the rice into it and separated the mouse shit, which were much more than the amount of rice. We threw out the black pieces. No matter how much we threw out, a lot remained. Despite the mouse shit, we had to cook what we had, and the water even turned green! We were in the kitchen cooking a mixture of mouse shit and rice for about a year.

I started serving on the front line in 1969 and lived mostly in war areas after that. Since there weren't a lot of educated people in the army, those who had a little bit of education and were able to read and write like me were ordered to be part of rice collecting projects. I was mostly assigned to collect rice and opium taxes. After serving on the front line for two years, I was mostly working as a rice collector.

I went to Thailand in 1972 to carry artillery: our battalion had 300 soldiers and many horses ... We came down to Thailand from there through Shan State in January 1972 in small groups. It took us four months in total to walk. Actually, it was five months. We walked through areas controlled by Shan, Chinese [KMT], Wa, Burmese and finally Thai soldiers.

Kachin soldiers could cross the border with guns. We had our own guns, army base, and uniforms. We lived together. By together I mean the place where we had our military base on the border was part of Thailand. There were some Thai military camps around us, teaching Thai language. We lived together. We could even bring our pistols with us to Chiang Mai. They didn't ask about identification cards in Chiang Mai.

The specific workings of exceptionalism offer a further perspective to ethnic politics in northern Thailand by uncovering the categorisation of Kachin not only as a state project or a part of the unfinished project of state governance but a reconfiguration of power and sovereignty. The historical movement and settlement of Kachin in northern Thailand as they reorient themselves within the Thai-Kachin dynamic highlights this process at the clan as well as the national level. As this chapter will illustrate Jinghpaw Kahtawng demonstrates and maintains a situation of 'non-fit' based on their position within the wider Hill Tribe classification and their history of cross-border movement. The social and cultural divide is highlighted by the historical construction of Thai identity and its connection to a normative notion of *Thai-ness* or what is needed to be deemed Thai. This process began in earnest with the construction of Thai nationalism at the start of the nineteenth century with the declaration of a Thai state (*chat*), and the related development of a national identity which was based on the foundations of monarch, land and religion, thereby promoting a supposed unity and homogeneity among the population (Jonsson 2010).

Questions of a national identity in border zones emerge most intensely when the "fictional" conflicts with "factional" interests including conflicts over sovereign decision-making and local assertions of rights by, for example, ethnic groupings or other organised institutions (Minca and Vaughan-Williams 2012). Following Schmitt (1996, 2005), tensions and dissensions become intense when the state attempts to "freeze" borders in their fictional state. The state stabilises its control by creating a concrete geographical space and hiding the existence and cultural importance of other forms of social order locally accepted as legitimate or at least pragmatic (Minca and Vaughan-Williams 2012: 761).

Under these circumstances, ethnicity, is "not merely a political mode of identification, locally and globally, but an essential part of the way people imagine their place in the world" to the extent that "the discourse of ethnicity connects the individual, the group and the state in an existential struggle of representations" (Gravers 2007: 6). Representations of self-identity based on ethnic classifications and categorisations "tend to appear as a sacred ontological substance – like a soul: if it leaves the body it is as if we shall perish" (Gravers 2007: 3). In other words the linkage between ethnicity and national identity plays a significant role in defining the terms whereby one is entitled to a sense of belonging.

It was getting late in the evening. I had been waiting in the village leader's house for over an hour for the village meeting to start. The overhead fluorescent light flickered. His three young children huddled over their school books, pencils in hand still in their uniforms. Unconcerned when the meeting would begin, I busied myself helping the children with their homework. Addition and subtraction for the youngest and Thai language for the older two. As we went over the Thai alphabet in unison, three men entered. I had not seen them before. They sat quietly in a corner of the room. The village leader entered, closely followed by his wife who was carrying a pot of green tea. They greeted each other, and then began talking. The older man handed over a small gift, a packet of Burmese cigars and a bottle of Mandalay Rum. They spoke amongst themselves for 15 minutes in hushed tones, then stood up, shook hands and left.

I had been in the village for almost a month when this event occurred. I knew that although Burmese cigars were available on occasion at some stores in the Haw Chinese town, alcohol from Burma was almost impossible to find. "They're Kachin, they arrived tonight through the forest. They were lucky. I heard there are many Thai soldiers in the forest these days", the village leader explained after the men had left his house. Eagerly, I asked several questions at once. "Who were they? Where did they come from? How did they know about this village? Where will they stay?" Smiling the village leader answered my questions one at a time, "They are Kachin from Shan State, the older man is in the KIA, and they will stay in their house." "In their house?" I questioned confused. "Yes, they have a house here. Several years ago they left to go back to Burma. They had relatives take care of their house and fields and now they are back to stay."

Jinghpaw-Thai Citizenship as Exception

... any particular individual can be thought of as having a status position in several different social systems at the same time (Leach 1954: 286).

The illegality of an individual's personal status and level of acceptance in the state are structural elements that highlight the performative nature of state sovereignty and frames Kachin response to it. In this respect, a key focus in this chapter is on the selective integration of local culture and politics to the national space. It is a multi-sided process of belonging / not belonging that Kachin, through the creation of Jinghpaw Kahtawng, simultaneously accept and challenge. It is here where the discussion of integration of Kachin and the Thai State are not mutually exclusive. Inda (2005: 10) suggested that focusing on the subjects of government directs analytical and empirical attention towards how government practices and programs seek to cultivate particular types of individual and collective identity as well as forms of

agency and subjectivity. Put simply, the state is intimately involved in the creation of modern subjects. Similarly, Althusser (1971: 128, original emphasis) argued to the effect that: “State institutions like the Church or other apparatuses like the Army teaches ‘know how’, but in forms which ensure *subjection to the ruling ideology* or the mastery of its practice.” It is important to make a distinction here that while on the one hand, governments may seek to create a homogenous national community (see Anderson 2006), on the other hand, such institutional strategies neither preclude nor diminish local populations resisting these programs and practices.

Leach’s analyses of Kachin political and social dynamics raised the question:

Is it legitimate to think of Kachin society as being organised throughout according to one particular set of principles or does this rather vague category Kachin include a number of different forms of social organisation? Before we answer such a question we must be quite clear as to what is meant by continuity and change with regard to social systems” (Leach 1954: 3).

Similar to Leach, I approach continuity and change as two separate entities that are, both separately and together, intrinsically linked into the social workings of inter- and intra-community relations. The Kachin in the village confront the meanings of belonging and *Thainess* imposed by the state through documentation. The documents that village members use to prove their legality when moving through the social space of the wider Thai population include identification cards (different colours representing a different status and level of belonging, see Appendix 4; Hill Tribes and Citizenship 2000), land registration, household registration, health cards, and birth and death certificates. In short, life for villagers is categorised by state agencies. For individuals, and for the communities they identify with, terms such as ‘illegal migrant’, ‘alien resident’ ‘Hill Tribe’, and citizen have real and practical meaning for a sense of self, and for individual cultural, political and economic futures. The precarious nature of these statuses is highlighted through the uncertain trajectory from undocumented migrant to citizen.

This was emphasised during a discussion with a Thai Army Lieutenant (Interview 2010) stationed at the checkpoint two kilometres from the village on the way to Chiang Mai. He said that “many people in this area have Thai citizenship, but they are not Thai”. This statement emphasises his own ethnic background and identity as unproblematic in the national narrative of normative belonging, indicating that there is more to ‘being’ Thai than holding Thai citizenship. “Why are you teaching them Thai? All they will do is leave the village and work in Chiang Mai” was the response provided by the director of the RDP when approached by

two Kachin university students living in the village who wanted to teach older Kachin in the village Thai language.

The decision by the Thai state to create a state recognised boundary around a pre-existing Kachin village in northern Thailand in 1984 (via the RDP) was predicated on numerous strategic “decisions” taken since the 1960s. Connected with the creation of the “Hill Tribe problem”, customs staff telling me “the area is dangerous”, RDP staff referring to the Kachin as “lazy and illegal”, the theoretical embedding of boundaries in national identity narratives does not completely arise from a unified centralised government perspective. Such a position of viewing residents in this fieldsite area as illegal and not Thai was made clear to me from an interview with a senior staff member of the RDP in Chiang Mai.

Have you ever been to the Chiang Dao District Office?” The director of the RDP in the Chiang Mai office asked me. “I have been several times”, I replied. She continued, “It’s like going to another country, you only hear a little bit of Thai. Lines are out the door and people are waiting in the car park. Most come for citizenship. They should not give it to them, they are not Thai, and they all come from Burma. We should only help with basic white card [registration card], but nothing after that (Interview with the head of the RDP, Chiang Mai office, 2011).

Since Jinghpaw Kahtawng’s official recognition in 1984, it has been under the geographical and administrative control of the RDP. The majority of recent arrivals to the Kachin village – as well as many long-term residents – are classified as illegal aliens, temporary residents or migrated people; and, because of these formal classifications, their path to gain Thai citizenship is increasingly difficult. The director of the RDP explained that: “Officially we are not responsible for citizenship registration. We register villagers to households with the assistance of the village leader. Documents are then provided through the Land Registrar’s Office in Chiang Dao. When it comes to citizenship and personal status registration, villagers must go to the sub-district and district administration office” (Interview with the director of the RDP site, Jinghpaw Kahtawng, 2011).

When I first arrived, I registered with the RDP and then with the Akha village leader and then with the citizenship department at the Chiang Mai district office. The process took over one year. Some people pay and still do not get their ID. Now the Akha village leader charges 5,000 baht per person for his signature (Interview with village member, Jinghpaw Kahtawng, 2010).

A preconception of Kachin as ‘non-belonging’ is confirmed at every stage of officialdom. I had made an appointment with a staff member from the Chiang Dao District Office to discuss issues surrounding citizenship registration for the Kachin in the area. Arriving early in the

morning there were already people waiting in the car park. A line was forming at the front door. Unfamiliar with the layout of the buildings, I waited in the nearest line. When the doors opened I followed the crowd inside and began waiting in a new line. When I reached the front, the officer was surprised to see me. When explained that I had an appointment to discuss citizenship, he immediately asked: “Why did you wait in the line? You should have come to the front?” quickly pointing out that I was in fact in the line for land registration. He then took me to the personal status registration office next door. I waited in line again, and when it was my turn, I was notified that the staff member I was to meet had left for the day: “If you want to know about the citizenship process you must ask about it at the sub-district level first.” Upon leaving the building, I saw two Kachin I knew from the village. They were waiting, documents in hand, for the final step in the citizenship application process. While we were talking, the counter closed and a staff member notified everyone waiting that they must come back tomorrow. As they were disappointed that they could not submit their documents that day, I offered them a lift home back to the village.

The concept of exceptionalism, as discussed earlier, refers to that which falls outside of the law or the framework of the law, and is neither limited to a specific space or time period nor to circumstances that evolve in opposition to state law and authority. In order for the exception to be maintained, the boundary separating legal and illegality must also be continuously reproduced. These boundaries are confirmed through a diverse array of forces, structures and mechanisms. From a legal perspective, the Kachin in Jinghpaw Kahtawng are classified as alien residents or undocumented residents within the wider political framework of Thai citizenship law. They have been provided with conditional use rights over land in the village, and their children can attend local government schools. However, according to the director of the Muang Na SAO⁷⁸ their citizenship status is dependent on “their ability to prove that they are Thai, not only documents but, you know, really Thai” (Interview with the director of the Muang Na SAO, Chiang Dao, 2011).

The major issues facing Muang Na are problems with citizenship – the majority of villagers living in border communities come from Burma and are not Thai. The border area is not secure and not safe. People and goods including drugs cross the border regularly – these movements are not registered and cause a problem for national unity and the stability of the country. We have no responsibility about the movement of goods and people across the border. This responsibility falls with the Thai border army. Custom officers from Chiang Dao District also control the movement of goods. The border has

⁷⁸ Jinghpaw Kahtawng falls under the political administration of the Muang Na Sub-District Administrative Organisation. This office controls administrative and development project budgets at the sub-district level. Citizenship registration is now one of the primary responsibilities of this office. The office itself is located approximately five kilometres from the Kachin village.

been recently reopened on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays for the trade of goods. It's a good idea to have the trade of goods but the major problem is the uncontrolled movement of people. When people cross to sell goods, they do not return. Just look at the Lahu village Nong Kheow and Ban Akha. They started off as very small communities but now are quite large because of undocumented illegal residents (Interview with the director of the Muang Na SAO, Chiang Dao, 2011).

Due to the central government's policy of decentralisation of local government funding the local SAO receive an annual budget directly from the central government, that is, a set budget based on the number of registered citizens within their area of operation. I asked if I could see the budget allocation for the district. Within five minutes I was given a copy of the municipalities *Development Project Budget Three Year Plan 2011-2013*. The projects initiated in Jinghpaw Kahtawng and the surrounding villages included:

- 1) Project to strengthen villages/communities in border areas to be successful in their fight against drugs: proposed budget allocation of 240,000 baht initiated by Border Patrol Police 335;
- 2) Project to protect against forces in border areas that cause a threat to national security – proposed budget allocation of 100,000 baht initiated by Border Patrol Police 335;
- 3) Project to promote *Thai-ness* in border communities – proposed budget allocation 30,000 baht, initiated by Thai Army (Cavalry Division 2). Activities include a field trip to the city;
- 4) Project to prepare soldiers for dealing with illegal migrants along the border: proposed budget allocation of 400,000 baht, initiated by Thai Army (Cavalry Division 2);
- 5) Project to show loyalty to the Thai monarchy: proposed budget allocation of 200,000 baht initiated by RDP; and,
- 6) Project to protect and stop illegal drugs: proposed budget allocation of 400,000 baht initiated by Thai Army (Cavalry Division 4)
(Sub-District Administrative Office, Muang Na 2010).

As seen from the perspective of the local government administrators, the major problem is that there are very large numbers of unregistered and undocumented residents in the sub-district. To use the words of the Sub-District Officer: "A large number of illegal people in my sub-district cause many problems for us." She continued to explain that by

illegal I mean those people that do not have any Thai documents and have come from Burma; they have crossed the border and they now live in Muang Na district. This group consists of Lahu, Lisu, Haw Chinese, Akha, Kachin, Shan and other ethnic groups that cross the border and come and live in the area. If you look at the registered population for this village [Nong Uk, Haw Chinese town] there are approximately 1,200 officially

registered residents. However, the population is more likely double this figure because of illegal people coming across the border from Burma. People that come from Burma live in the village. The major problem with this is because the allocated budget that they receive is based on the number of registered Thai citizens. However, they must now serve, help, initiate and fund development projects for a population that is double the budget they receive.” (Sub-District Administrative Office Muang Na. 2009)

In this sense Jinghpaw Kahtawng and its residents are selectively included in sub-district and district level development projects and represent both similarities and differences from the above narrative. The fixed locality of a Kachin village facilitates a political and cultural foundation for Kachin living in Thailand, it also represents a point which Kachin move through as they travel to Chiang Mai city.

Similarly, the RDP and local Thai military (Development Unit) are also involved in the development and control of the villages in the area in ways that re-inforce both belonging and exclusion.

Assistance as Control: Micro Zones of Development

... making villagers’ life better, increase their income. Along with this we are making the villages stronger and passing on knowledge of the importance to manage natural resources (RDP Annual Report 2010: 1).

The 40th Anniversary of the Royal Development Project was held in the Chiang Mai University Auditorium, Chiang Mai on December 17-20, 2009. For weeks, posters and banners advertising this event lined the streets of Chiang Mai. Pictures of the king, queen and other royal family members are by no means an unusual sight on the streets of Chiang Mai. However, what caught my eye was the RDP insignia and other catch phrase words such as ‘development of highland areas’, ‘nationhood’ (*chat*) and ‘land’ (*phaen din*), the king being the father of the nation and the land. Aware that the village I would be working in was within the boundaries of a RDP site, I attended this “Anniversary” in December 2009, hoping to see a display and to speak to staff from the RDP wherein Jinghpaw Kahtawng is located. The car park was full: small pick-up trucks carrying school children dressed in Lanna (northern Thai) clothing (*sarong* and *pha sin*) flowed into the hall. Entering the exhibition, the first thing one saw were large pictures of the king with short explanations of his work “developing the highland areas”, “promoting sustainable communities”, “destroying opium crops” and “uplifting poor highland people, helping them become Thai”. At the information booth, I was told that there were no individual displays by RDP: everything was combined so that people attending the exhibition could see what each RDP was doing. Inside the hall a market was set

up where RDP produce could be bought. People were lining up to buy carrots, pumpkins, mushrooms and strawberries.

Pointing out over the rice fields, the head of the RPD said,

Look at how green this village is now. When we came, there were no trees, nothing green. Now the villagers know how to care for the environment. We plan to have this whole area green with fruit trees. It would be good if all the villagers grew more fruit trees (Interview with head of the RDP, Nong Kheow, 2010).

The RDP of Nong Kheow covers 22,065 *rai* and encompasses two village clusters with a total population of 4,101 people (RDP Annual Report 2010: 4-5). In total there are five villages under the control of the RDP; two Lahu villages, one each of Lawa, Akha and Kachin.

Joining the RDP's agricultural projects is not mandatory. According to the RDP Annual Report (2010: 8), only 593 from 760 households participate in projects growing mangoes, papayas, avocados or growing vegetables. While the RDP supports mango, papaya and avocado production in the Kachin village, only two households were involved in avocado production, and one household was growing mangoes as part of the RDP. Land ownership is categorised by "use rights" within the village, not by government ownership title. Kachin living within the boundaries of the RDP are not provided with an official title. They are permitted to use the land they occupy following strict RDP policy guidelines and those of the local government land office in Chiang Dao. In contrast, four villagers who have purchased land in a nearby Shan village have been able to secure official land title for their land.

From my experience in border areas there are a lot of Royal Projects linked to protection, development, opium replacement and improvement of livelihoods. Royal Projects opens opportunities for villagers and allows those who are eligible to become Thai citizens (Interview with a lieutenant from the army checkpoint, Muang Na, 2010).

Early one morning in March 2011, the following announcement was made over the village loudspeaker "Officers from the Land Registration and Administration Office from Chiang Dao will come to the village today. All residents who have been allocated land by us [RDP] must come to our office and meet the visiting staff." A village resident explained this process to me:

Every year or so, staff from RDP map the agricultural land in the village then send the information to the land office in Chiang Dao. They come with maps [a real GPS] of the village and we have to mark out our land. They tell us that we will be given full land title

but that has never happened. I now have about 25 *rai*⁷⁹ of land in the village. I have bought it from others over the years but I can't tell the RDP that.

When the RDP first came to the area they allocated each villager with three *rai* of agricultural land and one *rai* for their house (*sit thi tham kin*)⁸⁰ based on a strict system of user rights. "This system of land registration is good for villagers who came first. We have a lot of land already. However, for those who came afterwards, they have nothing. I think now after using all these maps and registering everyone they know how much land I really have, but they did not say anything" (Interview with village resident, Jinghpaw Kahtawng 2011).

The important point here is that early settlers were able to acquire more land which they could sell or rent to maximise their profit. In other words, it constituted a form of belonging that was 'managed' and became a means to 'secure' Kachin identity in Thailand through. As well, original residents could provide new arrivals with agricultural land, people who otherwise would have no land to use. This sense of structural integration into Thai territory was short lived. Subsequently, the RDP director in the village said, "this is it, we cannot expand the village boundaries any further. No new land will be made available." Land use is also strictly monitored by the RDP under specific rules of land management:

- 1) land cannot be burnt otherwise it will be confiscated;
- 2) land must be used continually and cannot be left fallow for more than one growing season. Otherwise, it will be confiscated and redistributed.

Sixty-one households are currently using land they claim ownership of ranging from 2 *ngan*⁸¹ to 24 *rai*. An additional 12 families neither own nor are renting land from other village residents. These 12 families fall under three categories: (1) their income relies primarily on remittances from family members working outside of the village, (2) they are newly arrived and have not been able to organise the rent or use of land within the village, and (3) their income relies solely on daily paid work, both on and off-farm. Another 12 households own land but have increased their holdings through renting additional plots. The amount of land they rent varies from one to 50 *rai*. One family is currently renting 50 *rai* of land in nearby Akha and Shan villages. Any unused land is temporarily given to those who do not have any land and would like to grow crops for the coming season. This most commonly occurs when villagers leave the community and allow someone to use their land while they are gone.

⁷⁹ A unit of area measurement equal to 1600 square metres, 0.16 hectares or 0.395 acres.

⁸⁰ Kachin have been given the right to use the agricultural land provided to them by the RDP. However, as discussed in this chapter, the use of land is guided by strict policies, with the threat of fines and loss of land if the policies are not followed.

⁸¹ A unit of area measurement equal to 400 square metres.

Kachin who rent agricultural land in surrounding Akha and Shan communities pay between 500 baht per *rai* per year to 2,500 baht per *rai* per year.

Agricultural land is predominantly used for rice and corn; yields vary considerably from season to season as crops depend on rain-fed irrigation. During 2010, the planting season began in late May. The rain was unpredictable, and many village residents experienced a difficult planting season. A one villager resident said,

I planted corn in May. It rained a little and the plants took hold. Then, the rain stopped for weeks and they all died. I had to plant for a second time, this cost a lot of money because I had to buy more seed. The rain fell heavily, and all the seeds were washed away. I had to plant a third time, now they are growing well and the rain has been good” (Interview with village resident, *Jingphaw Kahtawng* 2010).

After harvesting, the empty land is planted with peanuts and Japanese sesame. A village resident explained the use of land and how it is distributed within the village:

I followed my sister who was already here in the village: we lived with her when we first arrived. My younger brother, was also already here in Thailand, he picked me up from Mae Sai and drove me directly here. My younger brother bought the land that our house is on. I was given 5 *rai* of land in 2001; it was distributed by the RDP. We can continue to use this land as long as we follow certain rules and regulations told to us by the RDP, but they [RDP] tell us that these are not their rules but the government’s, you have to use it continually, you cannot sell it, rent it, let others use it, and you cannot burn it if you do not follow these rules and are caught by RDP staff the land can be taken away from you. Our land is divided in two places we have 2 *rai* near the main village and another 3 *rai* near the football field. We grow rice and corn, which is enough for our family, and some years we grow peanuts. We also use some land of a Kachin man in Chiang Mai to grow rice. All together we use a little over 14 *rai* of land. We let our friend and his wife use 5 *rai* and help them with clearing, preparing and harvesting because they have no land. We are not involved in any RDP projects but we started to grow several avocado trees in our home garden, a RDP staff member came and helped us to graft the trees so they produce fruit quickly. In 2009 we received almost 3,000 baht from selling avocados to a Thai middleman who comes to the village to buy produce. We do not want to join the RDP, we cannot afford fertilizer so we only get small fruit and sell at 10 baht per kg.

Another village resident recounted the following story, explaining the problems faced when growing avocados under RDP conditions:

I have no land title. In January and February [2011] the government came to survey the land, I had my land recorded as 4 *rai* with them, but no official title yet. I have joined the RDP avocado project growing 200 trees. At first the RDP gave the trees away for free in 1994. Last year I received 12 baht per kg. But they only bought a very small amount from me. They only want a high quality fruit weighing more than 300g each and we have to wrap them and pack them in boxes. I only get a small amount of profit. Whatever RDP

does not buy we sell to middlemen from Nong Uk and Chiang Mai who come to the village. Normally we can sell to them for 7 baht kg. I also give them to other villagers to feed their pigs. We have to buy all the fertilizer from the RDP they record the amount and then deduct it from the payment.

When the village was established in 1984 no Kachin was given Thai citizenship, original residents were however provided with a small plot of land that they can use following the RDP land use guidelines. Subsequently, Kachin who registered with the district and sub-district office at the time of settlement (1984) have been able to receive Thai citizenship. However, the vast majority of village residents are yet to be granted citizenship. When the government first introduced development projects into the village only people with Thai citizenship could be involved and sign up for a loan to be part of the project. This created a significant power imbalance in the village. The main objectives of these development projects aimed at Kachin have fallen under wider state objectives of raising their “level of civilization” through various social engineering projects (Duncan in Duncan 2004).

As the previous and ongoing “National Economic and Social Development Plans” attest, the objectives of the state follow predictable policies aimed at increasing the socio-economic status of its citizens; however, it is where indigenous, ethnic or ‘problematic’ sections of the population are concerned that policies are framed in cultural, geographic and political terms. It is through various policies and development projects specifically targeting these groups that the state implements the contradictory objectives of incorporating them into the wider national networks and institutions and excluding them from full political participation.

One morning in 2010 while I was in the village the following announcement came over the village loudspeaker: “All members of the RDP come to a meeting at hall for a 0900 start.” RDP project members from all of the villages under the jurisdiction of RDP Nong Kheow were invited to the meeting. This included villagers who had joined the RDP to grow avocados, mangoes, papayas and passion fruit. In total, 24 villagers attended the meeting: seven from Jinghpaw Kahtawng and the remainder from Akha and Lahu villages. A friend who planned to join the meeting joked the night before that RDP staff always announce that meetings will start at 9:00 a.m. but never show up until 10:30 or 11:00 a.m. Therefore, I should not rush to get out of bed.

People gathered early around 8:30 a.m. They stood outside the locked doors of the RDP meeting hall waiting for the RDP staff to arrive. One RDP staff member, who arrived at 10:00 a.m. to open the doors and organise the room, welcomed all of the participants and then informed the group that the RDP staff from Chiang Mai were running late and would not arrive until around 11:00 a.m. The head of the RDP in the village arrived at 10:30 a.m. He

addressed all of those in the hall: “This year is a difficult year for fruit trees, especially avocados and mangoes because of the unusually cold weather and lack of water for irrigation.” He spoke briefly about the difficulties faced by other nearby villages: “the Lawa village had a serious problem with passion fruit cultivation this year, small amount of water, low price, no market, heavy unseasonal rain and even fire.” Not as optimistic as people had hoped, he continued, saying that the upcoming projects included a focus on a change of variety of papaya and introduction of a new species of mango. This came as a surprise to the villagers as it was the first time they were informed that they were required to change the variety of papaya and mango to remain in the RDP project. If they did not change the species of papaya they were growing, the RDP would no longer purchase from them.

Within the boundaries of the RDP there were 300 *rai* of avocados and 400 *rai* of mangoes (extract from the speech delivered by the director of RDP Nong Kheow, 2010). However, only 12 *rai* of avocados and 6 *rai* of mangoes were grown by members of Jinghpaw Kahtawng.

Lahu started many years before other RDP project sites growing mango but still are not up to standard. In the past, Nong Kheow only used rain and fire to care for their land. Now you use fertilisers, irrigation and pesticides. You cut the grass and take care of the trees, only now are you seeing the results. I am very happy to see more farmers growing fruit trees now. When I first came to the area villagers only grew rice and corn. Now, after many years more and more villagers are growing fruit trees (Extract from the speech by the director of RDP Nong Kheow, 2010).

He continued, saying: “[However], this year there will be a major problem with water. Starting next month (March 2011), we will have no water. Those of you starting avocado and mango now will have to be patient: maybe in the next 2-3 years you will see some results”. Four RDP staff from Chiang Mai arrived at 11:00 a.m. in a large van. After initial greetings there was very little interaction between the RDP staff from the village and those who had arrived from Chiang Mai. The new arrivals were introduced as RDP agricultural experts from Chiang Mai who would speak about pests and disease. After a short welcome introduction, a DVD was shown on diseases and pests that affect mango production. After the DVD had finished, one of the RDP staff asked: “What do you grow here?” One man answered: “Avocado and papaya”. No one at the meeting was involved in mango cultivation. Disregarding this, the RDP from Chiang Mai showed a very lengthy presentation on pest and diseases affecting mango trees.

Since 1984, the RDP has been prompting a move from rice cultivation as the main crop of the village to a focus on intensive fruit production, for example avocado and mango, as the

above section illustrates. This movement was in part a strategy to, as the head of the Nong Kheow RDP site told me, “to make the village green again”. However, the movement from rice cultivation to fruit trees has resulted in the intensified reliance on water and fertilizers by the farmers.

State development planners, attempting to meet the goals and objectives outlined in the government’s Soviet-style five-year plans (Social and Economic Development Plans for Highland Areas), pressure rural communities to utilise their land more efficiently in a capitalist market sense. This is most evident in the case of the Kachin residents of Jinghpaw Kahtawng. Thailand’s first National Economic and Social Development plan was drawn up in 1961. Subsequently, the Government of Thailand released a new five-year National Economic and Social Development Plan “to be used as guidelines for the mobilisation and allocation of economic, financial and manpower resources” (National Economic and Social Development Board 1986: 1). A central focus of these plans for the upper northern provinces of Thailand (Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai and Mae Hong Son) fell under two categories: (1) deterioration of natural resources based on the assumption of inefficient land use and improper utilisation of forest and water resources and (2) security problems as “a large part of the area is close to the border, is isolated, and has not received the benefits from economic development” (National Economic and Social Development Board 1986: 134).

These examples illustrate that exceptionalism can be enacted at multiple levels of government: national, state and local. Members of Jinghpaw Kahtawng, whether citizens or not, negotiate the politics of categorisation that facilitate the gap between illegal and legal. This occurs not only at the national level, what it means to be Thai but also at the ethnic level, what it means to be Kachin. This process includes decision-making at the local, state and national levels vis-a-vis village and ethnic boundary continuance and maintaining control of the border.

“Law and Practice” Mapping and Being Mapped

Even when we burn a little grass on our fields RDP come running to us and threaten to take our land away. But, when Akha and Lahu burn their fields, the RDP says nothing. They are not afraid of the RDP like us: they have citizenship (Interview with village resident, Jinghpaw Kahtawng 2011).

I asked a former Lahu *kamnan* from the nearby Lahu village: “Why are there such clear ethnic and geographical divisions between the Kachin, Akha and Lahu here?” He replied that when the king came, he pointed in one direction and said, “This is Lahu land.” Then, he

pointed in other directions and said, “There is Akha land and there is Kachin land. We have lived that way ever since.”

Towards the end of my fieldwork, I was able to arrange a meeting with a Lahu man who was well known in the area: We met at his house in the nearby Lahu village. When I asked about the clear geographical and ethnic divisions of the village, he was of the opinion that: “Kachin think they are better than us, they have land [a state] in Burma, and we [Lahu] don’t have that. We came here first. In Burma we worked for Kachin, here in Thailand they work for us. They don’t like that” (Interview with Lahu resident from Nong Kheow village, 2011). There is very little integration between the different villages. The most pronounced division was between the Kachin and Akha. During one visit to the Akha village, I sat and spoke with several Akha men who were smoking and playing checkers in front of a small shop. “Did you join the Kachin *Manau* and concert this year?” I asked. Looking up from the checkerboard, he replied, “Just briefly. I don’t speak Kachin.” “You have lived next to Kachin for 30 years! Why don’t you speak some Kachin?” I asked in return. “We don’t speak Kachin and they don’t speak Akha. That’s how it is. In 30 years no Akha and Kachin have married. Sara [pastor] Daniel [see Chapter Four] brought us [Akha] and them [Kachin] here. He could speak both languages.”

The Lahu interviewee continued, explaining his thoughts on involvement with the RDP: “It will not be long before the villagers and the RDP have a major conflict, to the point where we can’t live together. Villagers turn water on and RDP turn it off. They sit in their offices and have water 24 hours a day all year long. We have no water for four sometimes five months a year. Many people think we will be better off without them. They are only interested in business. They buy avocados from us for 10 baht a kilo and sell them for 60 baht. They don’t care about villagers. But, they are scared that they will not have members in their project, so they are always trying to get people to join” (Interview with Lahu village resident, Nong Kheow, 2011).

When the RDP arrived in the village, all of the land, both agricultural and forest, came under the control of the RDP. Everyone was afraid that the RDP would take their land. No one had Thai ID at the time, and the RFD would arrest villagers for cutting trees in the protected areas. When the RFD caught villagers clearing their fields, they would take them to Na Wai police station where they are forced to pay a fine. If they could not pay they were taken to prison. “This system of land registration is good for villagers who came first. We have a lot of land already. But for those who came afterwards, they have nothing, only what they can borrow or afford to rent. I think now after using all these maps and registering

everyone, they know how much land I really have, but they did not say anything” (Interview with Jinghpaw Kahtawng resident, 2010).

It is common for RDP staff to refer to resources of the community as ‘ours’, meaning the Thai state’s; but, villagers also manage, control and use the land in strategically beneficial ways. Those individuals who are deemed as not following the regulations set out by the development organisation are subject to fines or the seizure of their land. Mapping people and resources are strategic tools used by the state agencies in the village to control, monitor and manage the relationship between people and resources. Although the boundaries of the village do not coincide with the boundaries of National Parks or Protected Areas (see Map 2) wherein access to and use of available resources is strictly controlled. Gillogly (2004: 120), identified the effects of these manoeuvres; “the practice of modernisation in northern Thailand has been one of increasing control. There have been two main themes in this process: establishing administrative control and securing the nation’s borders.”

Control of forests is central within this process. A villager who was helping make some renovations to the house I was renting, that is, building a chicken coop, a kitchen and other small jobs, suggested that we go to the mountain to collect the bamboo that was needed for the work. The next morning, we left for the mountain with another villager, a Lisu man from Putao who had grown up in Tatchilek, and who did not speak Lisu or Kachin, only Burmese. Bamboo, I was told was not managed under any village level resource management system or regulations. “If you can carry it you can cut it. Forestry officials do not normally care about bamboo, only wood.” We spent the rest of the day cutting, sawing, bundling and carrying the bamboo from the mountain to the car. By the end of the day, we had a carload full and returned to the village.

A second example demonstrates the inter relationships between Akha and Kachin as well as integration into the Thai state, in particular citizenship. A village resident recounted the following story:

When I arrived I had no money. My crops were failing and I wanted to move to Chiang Mai and study theology to become a pastor. My wife was sceptical and with three young children, we needed rice and corn for the coming dry season. I heard that an Akha man was looking to hire labour to go into the forest and cut wood for the construction of a new house. This was risky because it was illegal to cut wood in the forest. If the forestry people caught us, we would be arrested and the wood taken away. It is common for Akha with citizenship to pay Kachin to cut wood for them; they would not risk it themselves, but the money is good if you can do it.

A third example revolves around a similar case of clearing land in a nearby village. Not long after the village was settled, Pastor Daniel Cannon asked several Kachin villagers to help clear, burn and prepare a section of agricultural land for nearby Lawa Christian families. While doing this over the course of several days, forestry officers were notified and arrested the villagers involved. One resident of the village was arrested and subsequently imprisoned for three years. Land classification in and around the village encompasses specific rules and obligations regarding use and access. In 1982, when Kachin first moved into the area, “the land was barren, no trees, nothing was growing. We could cut as many trees as we could to build our houses. There were no restrictions, no one to tell us to stop” (Interview with village member, Jinghpaw Kahtawng, 2010). Soon after the arrival of the RDP, residents were officially provided between 3 and 5 *rai* of land. This subsequently led to their enmeshment in the land use policies of the RDP and RFD. It was at this point that the lives and land of the Kachin living in the village at the time, and of those who would move to the area later, became ever more deeply entwined with the politics of the Thai nation-state. Current narratives of resource management perpetuated by RDP staff characterise the Kachin as “destroyers of the forest”. Several times when discussing the history of the village with RDP staff, they would emphasise the fact that, according to them, “when we arrived there were no trees. Kachin had cut them all down” (Interview with the director of the RDP, 2011). In fact, as the Kachin settlers explained, the land was formerly agricultural land of the Haw Chinese living in a nearby town. They had left it fallow.

It was common to hear RDP staff talk about the village as “lying within the boundaries of the Pa Daeng National Park” and how the Forestry Department monitored the area closely for encroachment and illegal resource use, for example, burning the fields. However, from interviews with forestry staff from the local office including a document titled “A Survey on the Villages Inside the Pa Daeng National Park”, no villages under the control of the RDP fell within their boundaries. Resource management in Chiang Dao is governed by national forestry policy, as is much of the forested and non-forested land in northern Thailand (Planning and Information Division, *Forestry Statistics of Thailand 2002*). The Chiang Dao National Park that has a total area of 1,123 square kilometres incorporates the sub-administrative areas of Pha Daeng National Park and Chiang Dao Wild Animals Protection Area, encompassing the districts of Chiang Dao, Wiang Haeng and Chai Prakarn (Planning and Information Division, *Forestry Statistics of Thailand 2002*). The lack of clarity around division of land, resources and people highlights the challenges and risks faced by not only Kachin, but by other ethnic minorities in the area.

Interconnected with land registration in the village is the process of household registration. Both processes contribute to the “formalisation” of the village and of the residents who live there. From the villager’s perspective, the dual processes of land and household registration are significant elements contributing to the people’s survival in the village. Although cross-border movement has been frequent during different historical periods, movement through the nearest border has been more sporadic. This movement is based primarily on family and clan lineage connections. Movement and connection patterns assist in the process of formal registration for Thai identity cards that, in turn, facilitate movement and employment opportunities. As a former village resident said:

When I was studying 9th grade in Myitkyina [capital of Kachin State, Burma] I made an agreement with my Nepalese friend, [that] if we got good grades we would study further. If not, we would go to Thailand together. We did ok, but it was a very difficult time. Many of our friends went to the jade mines in Kachin State. I also decided to go. I stayed two years, [but] it was too much for me. The work was very difficult, I made no money and got malaria. My mother called me back home and told me to go to Thailand. So, I left for the border. There was a man in our village who said he could take us to the border for a fee; so 14 of us went together.

On the border near the checkpoint [near Jinghpaw Kahtawng] we stayed with Burmese soldiers. They checked our documents but did not care too much. One soldier agreed to take us all across the border at night to Jinghpaw Kahtawng for 2,000 baht each. We stayed at a villager’s house: he spoke to us one at a time for a long time. “Why did you come?” “Where are from?” I stayed one year in the village. I stayed at one man’s house the whole time: I worked for free on his land. Sometimes I worked for the RDP for 80 baht per day. I left after one year to find work in Chiang Mai.

In 1999 I registered for the Hill Tribe card: I was registered at the house of a villager. The Chinese at Nong Uk charge between 200,000 baht and 400, 000 baht to use their household registration. Now I work in Chiang Mai, I have not been back to the village for many years (Interview with former village resident, Chiang Mai, 2011).

As discussed earlier, the fixedness of the village (permanence within the Thai bureaucratic administration) has facilitated the movement of new arrivals to the village. Contemporary cross-border movement is helped by the increased familiarity and knowledge of the existence of Jinghpaw Kahtawng. Family pictures and the names of each of the household occupants are displayed at the front door of each house. The months of March and April 2011 were the designated months for official household registration in Jinghpaw Kahtawng. “All villagers who are not registered can come to the Muang Na sub-district office and register for a ‘0’

card, the white card”⁸² (Interview with Muang Na municipality staff, Muang Na 2011). The first stage of this process is household registration. Several months prior there were announcements at the Kachin Baptist Church in Chiang Mai regarding the upcoming household registration process in Jinghpaw Kahtawng. Those wishing to be registered had their fingerprints taken and documents filled out. Within the village itself, this provided an opportunity for family members who registered in the village at different times and with different households to re-register under the same household.

As Gravers (2007: 3) reminded us, external representations of ethnicity, in this case the Kachin, combined with internal connections with spatial and temporal ethnic and political boundaries, constitute evolving narratives of power. Contemporary forms of exceptionalism, as seen in the following cases, represent the reproduction of non-fit as an ontological project in the analysis of power at border regions. Exceptionalism and movement, when analysed together, create an historical paradigm for a specific type of control. From this perspective, a dialectic emerges between the governing centre and multiple local actors, and ultimately involves the historical creation and subversion of power structures and the existential imagery of the nation. This process occurs at both the national and local levels simultaneously, however, it manifests differently.

Highland to Lowland or Simply Moving Closer to the Centre

The formalisation of the Thai national borders and expansion of state control over peripheral areas has coincided with the problematisation of those peoples living in Thailand who are not considered Thai. These groups include migrant workers, ethnic minorities, and some Hill Tribe members. People living at the margins of the Thai state have become the target of state-centred civilising projects focusing on development of border and highland areas (Public Welfare Department 1966, 1971). A major element of these civilising missions is to bring these people under central control rather than the objective of full integration into the Thai state and polity as citizens. Associated projects have included data collection, formalised schooling, and the mapping and control of resources (see Scott 1998; Li 1999, 2007).

Not long after I arrived in the village, I met with a Kachin development worker who was working with a large NGO in Chiang Mai, the Inter-Mountain Peoples Education and Culture Association of Thailand (IMPECT). She explained to me that this particular organisation was

⁸² A card “0” or *baht khao* (white card) is considered a basic registration card for previously undocumented persons. Attaining this card does not ensure a direct path to Thai citizenship.

assisting with the compilation of a history of the Kachin, to be translated into Thai and Jinghpaw “so that the Kachin youth can read about their history. We have started a Kachin Peoples Network of Thailand: our focus is on education and the history of the Kachin.” I asked if they were helping the Kachin with citizenship registration. As I was familiar with this organisation, I knew that they were heavily involved in the citizenship registration process. Her answer was blunt: “No, they are not helping us with that. They see us as coming from Burma.” After this short exchange, she pulled a rolled-up piece of paper from her bag and gave it to me. “Here, this is the Kachin cultural calendar that we produced with IMPECT.” Looking at the colourful depiction of the Kachin, with its six different smaller pictures representing the six-groups, and using local youth as models, I realised something was not right.

The six sub-groups depicted were Jinghpaw, Rawang, Zaiwa (Azi), Lashi (Lachid), Maru (Lawngwaw), and Guari. I pointed out that the Guari were not considered a sub-group of Kachin. Guari is a Jinghpaw clan. “Where are the Lisu?” I asked. She told me that the staff at IMPECT would not allow them to include the Lisu as a sub-group of Kachin. “They [the IMPECT director] told us to take it out of the calendar. We did not want to have any problems, so we did.” In terms of Kachin cultural representations IMPECT has selectively excluded the Lisu from the Kachin State as a sub-group of Kachin. These classifications have different political meaning embedded in their meanings on either side of the border. In Burma, for example, the incorporation of Lisu as part of the wider classification Kachin denotes inclusion into a specific political identity. On the Thai side, since the 1970s, NGOs, activists and researchers have been struggling for the inclusion of ethnic groups in the wider Thai polity, for example, citizenship, land registration and access to basic rights and freedoms. Therefore, identifying Lisu as a sub-group of Kachin is seen as a threat to the legitimacy of this work. Such categorisations distinguish between different internal hierarchies of power and interactions that include village social structure, external networks, government bodies, policy and external classifications.

It is difficult for Kachin to find a place in the politics of ethnic minorities, especially working with development organisations such as IMPECT. They still don’t really see us as an ethnic group of northern Thailand. We have been here a long time, but no one noticed us before. We didn’t have our own village until 1984 (Interview with the head of the Kachin Network of Thailand, Chiang Mai 2011).

The major challenges facing Kachin in the wider context of ethnic politics, according to this interviewee were as follows: “[The reason why] other ethnic groups are connecting with organisations such as IMPECT is that it has become too political. What I see is that ethnic

groups in Thailand fight hard to maintain that they are Thai and then, trying to get citizenship, land rights, they don't want to recognise or help other groups that they say are from Burma like Kachin."

Over a period of two years from January 2010 to December 2011 the Kachin were invited to perform traditional dances by both government and non-government organisations on a regular basis. As the village leader explained to me: "We are the only Kachin village in Thailand, [so] if there is an ethnic festival or new government building opening in the district we go and dance." Kachin performed at the City Hall in Chiang Mai three times. They danced for members of the RDP in Chiang Mai; attended ethnic festivals in Chiang Rai three times; travelled to Bangkok to dance and sign the visitors' book when the king was admitted to hospital; and, performed at the opening of a new building at the sub-district government office.

The performative nature of *Thainess* is displayed in these performances, both implicitly and explicitly. The cultural constructions of ideal states of existence in the borderlands praise specific elements of peoples, their performances and history and at the same time devalue, denigrate and demonise others (see Wilmsen 1996: 3). From this perspective, what becomes politically significant is the effect of the perceived finality of the borders by state officials and the liminality of the representation of the people (Bhabha 1990: 302). Kristeva (1991) argued that national borders are characterised by a double temporality pulling them in two different directions at the same time.

This temporality and encompassing structural mechanisms both tie and separate certain groups to the state. The staging of an ethnic sports carnival in Jinghpaw Kahtawng was representative of such tensions. The theme of the sports carnival, although contextualised around 'sport', was primarily concerned with classification and categorisation of those who attended, namely Kachin, Lahu, Akha, Shan, Haw Chinese, Palaung and Hmong. While such events are not unique to this area, this event does hold significance in terms of analytical representation of 'us' and 'them', and 'Thai' and 'non-Thai'. This carnival represents state power and control in the region, it was organised by the RDP and local military command, and attendance was compulsory (see Jonsson 2000). The Kachin took part, stood in line in the hot sun, bowed their heads to the national anthem, wore their traditional clothing, and performed a Kachin dance for the special guests who were in attendance. They displayed both a level of *Thai-ness* and cultural uniqueness as a representative Kachin village in Thailand, a fact that was reconfirmed in the district governor's opening speech. At another level, this event was illustrative of the complex nature of the reproduction of exceptionalism and non-fit

for the Kachin, not simply as the difficult, vexed movement from one category to another (Kachin to Thai), but how such flux is a constitutive element of the ethno-political identity of the Kachin. At the personal level, feelings of not belonging intersect with and reinforce the separation of groups at the network or societal level. All societies have a central narrative, be it historical, political, and cultural or a complex synthesis based upon their histories and dominant culture, as to who is inside and outside of the boundary (Butler 2007: 4-5). It is here at such events that these narratives are combined and categorisation of who falls inside and outside the boundaries of Thai-ness becomes most clear.

At 6 a.m. in early August 2010, the following announcement came over the loud speaker: “Ten Kachin must go to the sports field at 8 a.m. to clean the area for the Ethnic Sports Day.” The first announcement in Thai was followed by a similar announcement in Jinghpaw. Over the next several days, the grass was cut, toilets were built, and bamboo-shaded structures were constructed for the visiting officials. On the actual morning of the event, there was once again an announcement over the loud speaker by RDP staff explaining the day’s schedule. “Everyone participating today must arrive at 9 a.m: the opening ceremony starts at 10 a.m. One person from each household must come wearing traditional clothes. If you do not come, you will be fined.” When I arrived, the road was lined with motorbikes, cars and trucks, along with two army trucks. A large banner that hung over the makeshift entrance to the soccer field bore the words: “*yindi ton rap kila phuenban chonphow khrang thi hok*” (Welcome to the Sixth Annual Traditional Ethnic Sports Carnival).

On entering, the eight ethnic groups involved in the carnival started to line up behind the signs designating their ethnic group and village: Hmong, Kachin, Shan, Haw Chinese, Palaung, Lahu, Akha and Lawa. On one side, three large bamboo structures were reserved for the visiting district officials, army officers, local government staff, RDP staff, and the leaders of each village. Half-jokingly, I asked the Kachin village leader if he would be joining the visitors. “No, I will be standing in the sun with the Kachin. They don’t recognise me as an official leader”, he replied. As those attending continued to get in the appropriate line, I took time to walk around the field. Three poles were erected upright in the middle of the field: a man was busy rubbing them with pig fat. Although curious, I did not stop and ask what he was doing. Towards the back of the field there was a large muddy pit: it looked like a pigpen. When I asked a RDP staff member what this equipment was for, he explained: “These are traditional Hill Tribes games, climbing a greasy pole. There will be 500 baht at the top. And, catching a pig in a mud pit. Whoever catches the pig gets 500 baht. But, we couldn’t get a pig today so they can’t play that game.”

Viewing themselves as the pinnacle of social development, or at least as close to it as any of their countrymen have reached, government bureaucrats living in national capitals seek to impose programs that will help, or force, the less developed to reach their point of socioeconomic development – to turn the savage into the civilized, turn the “other” into “us” (Duncan 2004: 4-5).

The opening speech delivered by the district governor of Chiang Dao highlighted several themes common to the representation of relationships between government officials and local communities, in particular ethnic communities. “Welcome to the Sixth Annual Traditional Ethnic Sports Carnival”, he said as he stood between two very large portraits of the king and queen. As representatives of each ethnic group within and near the RDP sites in the area stood in line in the hot sun, the governor continued:

You should all be thankful for the support of the RDP. Without them you would not be here today ... The king started the RDP to stop opium growing, reducing forest destruction and give you a better life. You are now developed and can live sustainably here (Extract from the district governor’s speech, Jinghpaw Kahtawng, 2011).

As argued by Agamben (2005) the *homo sacer* is a person who is cast out from the protection of the law, who is stripped of human political life (*bios*) and becomes bare life (*zoe*). This sports event highlights not a group being stripped of political life, but a group given and wanting acceptance into a wider political system they cannot freely access through legal means such as citizenship application. Incorporating themselves into and simultaneously challenging state ethnic and cultural categories exemplify a situation wherein Kachin are not reduced to ‘bare life’ per se but rather are called upon to navigate a sense of belonging and non-belonging borne of multiple and diverse sites and performative spaces. Together this precarious engagement creates ambiguous notions of sovereignty through fluctuating political alliances as a means of creating and maintaining ‘friendships’ or, alternatively being typecast as ‘enemy’.

The performances involved in this ethnic sports carnival closely relate to issues of ethnic oscillation raised in Chapters One and Two. Leach (1954) introduced us to the political and cultural oscillation with their shifts in political organisation and social formations of highland Kachin and lowland Shan populations. In this perspective, highland Kachin could become lowland Shan by engaging in wet rice cultivation and converting to Buddhism. Historical manifestations of shifting power relations are brought into contemporary life of ethnic minorities in northern Thailand through involvement in state performances such as sub-

district and district level sporting events.⁸³ Jonsson (2000: 231) suggested that this typifies a situation within the contemporary context of nation-states wherein “rural communities place themselves within larger social orders (the nation, primarily) through having schools and sporting teams” in order to become on a par with other lowland, ‘civilised’ communities. For the Kachin in Jinghpaw Kahtawng, it is no longer a shift from highland to lowland that forges their cultural, social and political status; rather it is affected by the visible move towards the ‘centre’. It is here that the ambiguity of Kachin belonging not only within the wider Thai state apparatus but within the larger affiliation with a Kachin community that spans across the border gives meaning to multiple interpretations of belonging.

The complexity of this dynamic is highlighted by Butler who suggested that,

What distinguishes containment from expulsion depends on how the line is drawn between the inside and the outside of the nation-state. On the other hand, both expulsion and containment are mechanisms for the very drawing of that line. The line comes to exist politically at the moment in which someone passes or is refused rites of passage (Butler and Spivak 2007: 34).

Within this mould, however, specific populations that do not fit the state ideology of appropriate citizens are seen as a direct challenge to territorial and social integration and, by extension become the exception. The relationship between borders, state authority and different bodies of subjects in northern Thailand illuminates how sovereignty is practiced, circumvented and reconfigured and becomes simultaneously an activity of the centre and periphery.

Kachin–Thai Reconnections

To suggest that the residents of Jinghpaw Kahtawng are both at the centre and the periphery is evident in their physical location at the edge of the state bounds and readily subject to expulsion and their placement at the hub of Kachin cross-border networks that move through their village. The permanence of the village under the auspices of the RDP has assisted in the facilitation of Kachin-Thai connections at the national level, as highlighted through the historical significance of their presence in border regions as both a buffer zone and an ally in the suppression of the CPT. Conversely, they can also be seen as having peripheral loyalty to the Thai state as their actions are inevitably tied to Kachin culture their perceived role in the continued struggle for an autonomous ‘sovereign homeland’ in Kachin

⁸³ For an in depth analysis of the link between and integration of ethnic minorities and wider state mechanisms and ideologies see Hjørleifur Jonsson’s, 2000, ‘Traditional Tribal What? Sports, Culture and the State in the Northern Hills of Thailand’, in Jean Michaud (ed.) *Turbulent Times and Enduring Peoples: Mountain Minorities in the South-East Asian Massif*. Richmond: Curzon Press, pp. 219-245.

State, Burma. In this vein, we see belonging, connection and exclusion as constant struggles in maintaining loyalty not just to Kachin ethnicity, but also to the Kachin State.

In 1983, Kachin representatives from the Representative Office of Kachin Foreign Affairs arrived in Mae Hong Son and stayed with Shan soldiers along the border. At the time, armed groups including Shan, Karenni, Pa'O and Karen held significant political and territorial sway along the border regions. When the Kachin arrived, they began to initiate contact and rebuild relationships with local armed ethnic groups and the Thai government. There was a need to create what essentially became known as a United Front of ethnic groups along the Thai-Burma border to initiate communication with the Thai government and the international community. "The Thai government warmly welcomed us. They wanted a buffer zone between Thailand and Burma, we stayed in Mae Hong Son for 10 years" (Interview with a KIO representative, 2011). At the time, relationships between the Thai government and Kachin were described as 'semi-official', "we communicated with Thai Military Intelligence, the Prime Minister's Office in Bangkok and the National Security Department" (Interview with a KIO representative, Chiang Mai 2011).

The following historical data comes from an interview with a KIO representative in 2011. In 1987, the late KIO Chairman Brang Seng travelled to the Thai border to work with the United Front. Brang Seng soon began to establish closer relations with the Thai government and international community, travelling to the UK, Germany, China, Japan, Taiwan and Hong Kong. In 1989, a Kachin delegation met with the Thai Prime Minister Chatchai Choonhavan and General Chavalit Yongchaiyudh, Commander in Chief of the Royal Thai Army. The Kachin representatives presented the Thai Prime Minister with a traditional silver Kachin bag and a ceremonial sword, and General Chavalit Yongchaiyudh gave the Kachin delegation a plaque with a silver medallion bearing the following inscription:

This silver medallion has been received as a token exchange of friendship by His Excellency Mr. M. Brang Seng, Chairman of the Kachin Independence Organisation on February 13th, 1989 from His Excellency General Chavalit Yongchaiyudh, Commander in Chief of the Royal Thai Army. Upon being presented a symbolic gift of friendship, a traditional Kachin silver bag and ceremonial silver sword.

During the meeting, discussion surrounding the process of democracy in Burma and the struggle of the ethnic groups was high on the agenda. They asked the Thai government to support the democratic struggle of the various ethnic groups. "Chavalit already knew about Kachin in Thailand. We did not speak about Jinghpaw Kahtawng, but after that meeting all the top Thai officials knew about Kachin in Thailand" (Interview with a Kachin elder, Chiang Mai, 2011).

From a politically strategic vantage point the establishment of a Kachin village in Thailand was an important step towards reconnecting and rebuilding Thai-Kachin relations. This village would then facilitate greater national recognition of Kachin, fluidity of movement of Kachin through the village, an official point of contact, household and personal registration and finally possible citizenship. The following is an extract from the interview (2011):

Joe: Does Jinghpaw Kahtawng have a strategic significance?

Interviewee: Yes, both for the KIO and the Kachin people in Thailand to have a physical base, a contact point in Thailand.

A high-ranking officer from the KIO, his wife and three others (two soldiers and one assistant to his wife) visited Jinghpaw Kahtawng in October 2010. He had two different reasons for the visit. The first reason, I was told, was that he had simply come to Chiang Mai and was told about the village. He wanted to support the villagers and hold a *Manau* festival in November. The second reason was that former KIA soldiers founded Jinghpaw Kahtawng. I was also told that he wanted to meet with those soldiers to see what their life was like now in Thailand.

At the time, I arrived in the village just after midday and noticed a large gathering of people outside a nearby house. Men seated on folding plastic chairs smoked cigarettes outside the house while women were in the kitchen preparing food. The special guests were seated at the back of the room. After a very long introduction and a prayer offered by the village pastor, the guest stood and addressed the crowd.

Following lunch, ten villagers took the guest to the *Manau* grounds and explained the history of the village. They showed him the *Manau* posts, the museum, and the traditional house. When he was told the date that the village was established (anniversary of the establishment of the KIA), his face showed surprise but he did not comment. After taking photos in front of the *Manau* posts, the group walked up to the RDP office for a prearranged meeting with the head of the office. The visitor was introduced to the head of the RDP in the village as Head of the Kachin Cultural Dancing Committee from Kachin State. The RDP director asked him if he had come through the forest or come with a passport. The villager who was acting as interpreter between Thai and Jinghpaw did not translate this question. Instead, the translator answered himself, stating that he came with a passport and was travelling to Singapore. The RDP director seemed surprised about this. He continued that it was good that a member of the Kachin Dance Committee had come to the village because “the villagers needed to learn how to dance”.

Extra-Territoriality: The *Manau*

The *Manau* posts (dancing ground), traditional Kachin house⁸⁴ and ethnic museum⁸⁵ represent the performative and productive nature of ‘non-fit’ in the Thai periphery. The *Manau* ethno-cultural performance both constitutes and reinforces a unique political dynamic through: (1) connecting their Kachin cultural identity into narratives of *Thai-ness* by holding this event to commemorate the king’s birthday as well as having Thai and royal flags adorn the top of the *Manau* posts; (2) exemplifying its cultural uniqueness as the only Kachin village in Thailand while maintaining cultural links and reinforcing political connections to Kachin areas in northern Burma; and, (3) moving past representations of tradition and resistance as the *Manau* dance highlights the placement of Kachin within the wider ethnic political discourse in Thailand as no longer an enemy, but far from friend.

Built in 2002, the permanent concrete *Manau* posts stand in a central location in the village (see Illustration 1). The performance is commonly held over two days every two years in the village on dates that celebrate the king’s birthday.⁸⁶ A similar festival is held in Myitkyina, Kachin State to commemorate Kachin State Day on 10 January. The *Manau* has its origins in Kachin pre-Christian animist traditions. Sadan (2002: 119, original emphasis) argued that the *Manau* festival has become the “pre-eminent symbol of Kachin peoples in Burma, and the *Manau* posts, or *Manau shading*, have become their emblem.” Sadan (2002: 121) outlined the most commonly related myth of the *Manau* dance: “The dance was learned from a flock of birds celebrating at a banyan tree bearing an abundance of fruit.” Contemporary narratives emphasise that all of the birds were dancing in unison representative of the unity of all sub-groups of Kachin.

The *Manau* posts stand in the middle of a small field encircled by an ethnic museum and a traditional Kachin long house. The first *Manau* was held in the village in 2002, and subsequently held in alternate years. The event is usually held over two days, with an opening

⁸⁴ Construction of the ethnic museum on the boundary of the *Manau* dancing ground began in 2003 and was completed in 2004. A Kachin entrepreneur wanted to donate money to the village for cement roads. At the time, all roads in the Kachin village were dirt and in the dry season clouds of dust would cover the village. In the rainy season the roads turned to mud. However, a senior RDP staff recommended that the money be used for the construction of an ethnic museum for tourists. Residents of Jinghpaw Kahtawng donated clothes, swords, woven cloth to be displayed in the museum. The museum is not exclusively Kachin as it displays clothing and other designated culturally significant items of Karen, Akha and Lahu. For a more detailed analysis of this museum, see Lahpai (2007). The museum remains locked with the keys held by RDP staff. During my fieldwork, the museum was only opened twice, once for the *Manau* and once when Thai journalists from Bangkok visited the village.

⁸⁵ The traditional Kachin house was constructed before the first *Manau* in 2002. Made of wood and bamboo and with a thatched roof, the house was built on stilts with a rice pounder and drum decorating the front entrance.

⁸⁶ Over the past 10 years, the *Manau* in Jinghpaw Kahtawng has been celebrated in October, November and December. Although, the dates of the *Manau* do not directly correspond with the king’s birthday, 5 December, it none the less remains a primary reason for holding the festival.

ceremony that involves representatives from the local villages and speakers from the district government. This is followed by opening prayers, and the commencement of the dancing. In the evening, Kachin singers from Myitkyina perform a concert. The event in 2010 deviated little from this format.

The political expression of the *Manau* in Kachin areas in northern Burma is a significant element in contemporary Kachin identity. However, the *Manau* in Thailand for the villagers in Jinghpaw Kahtawng remains distinctly separated from political connections and resistance to state power and control articulated in Burma. Kachin residing in the village and Chiang Mai as well as local governmental support for the RDP initiated the *Manau* in Jinghpaw Kahtawng as a cultural performance of Kachin in Thailand. Although, the motives of these two groups diverge, the ethno-political objectives of the Kachin and those of the RDP and local government come together. Intrinsically linked to issues of cultural belonging and political performance are the different interpretations of the event within the community. “*Manau* for us is cultural and religious: we show our culture to everyone in Thailand” (Interview with a religious leader, Jinghpaw Kahtawng, 2010). Alternatively, “this *Manau* is more than cultural. We are showing our support for the Kachin in Burma” (Interview with village resident, Jinghpaw Kahtawng, 2010). Divergent interpretations of the *Manau* and its underlying objectives are based on the level of real and perceived integration in both Thai and Kachin socio-political systems.

I spoke frequently with friends in the village whether there would be a *Manau* held in the village in the future. The responses I received ranged from uncertainty to a definite ‘no’. “We do not have the time or money to hold it again soon” (discussion with village resident, Jinghpaw Kahtawng, 2010). In mid-June 2010, I was told of an upcoming meeting between the village committee and the RDP to discuss the possibility of holding a *Manau* at the end of the year. I arrived early at the village childcare centre and waited for the meeting to begin. Members of the village committee arrived and sat inside the room, RDP staff waited outside for the meeting to begin. The head of the RDP was the first to speak: “You will need a lot of money to hold the *Manau* this year. Muang Na municipality will not give any money this year. You will need to join with other groups like Lisu, Lahu, Lawa, Akha and Shan to perform the ceremony for the king. Kachin will do a *Manau* but other groups will also perform. We cannot help you this year. In other RDP areas, villagers take responsibility for all their cultural activities.” A Kachin man responded: “It was your idea for us to hold the *Manau*.” “No, no, a Kachin man from Chiang Mai came to me and told me that you will be organising the *Manau*. It’s your responsibility. Remember it’s the king’s 84th birthday and this *Manau* is for him”, the head of the RDP answered. By the end of the meeting, it was

agreed that the Kachin in the village would hold the *Manau* and invite dancers and Kachin singers from Burma for the stage show.

It was decided that the *Manau* would be held in the village over a two-day period on 26-27 November 2010. Preparations started weeks in advance; they included preparing the dancing area, building bamboo fences, a stage, and stalls. Banners and other decorations lined the roads in the village. A large banner near the entrance to the RDP offices outlined the *Manau*'s objectives: (1) To pay respect to the king and Thailand; (2) to pass on cultural knowledge for Kachin children and youth; and, (3) to promote Jinghpaw Kahtawng as an important tourist site. On the day before the event, trucks started arriving early in the morning. Kachin clothing stalls, a large jumping castle and food was set up. In addition, a small market was set up in the front yard of a Lahu villager's house, selling everything from jeans to children's toys to Thai music CDs.

The official border crossing two kilometres away was opened so that people could freely cross from Burma for the two-day *Manau*. The village was full. Many Kachin residents who worked in Chiang Mai and Bangkok returned along with large numbers of Kachin who had Thai travel documents so could make the journey to the village. When the stage was completed and the audio system up and running, RDP staff took over the music selection. Thai pop and rock songs were played continuously throughout the night. "We had an agreement that there would be no drinking but look at the RDP staff and local government officers. They are drunk and playing music all night. We can't play Kachin music: we can't stop them" (Interview with village resident, Jinghpaw Kahtawng, 2010).

On the morning of the *Manau*, announcements over the village loud speaker started at 5:30 a.m. The opening ceremony was scheduled for 9:00 a.m. on a plot of land across from the *Manau* dancing ground. Kachin were the first to arrive. Slowly, representatives from other ethnic groups within the boundaries of the RDP started to arrive and line up in front of the stage. There was an announcement that the district governor was coming, Kachin lined both sides of the road and began beating their ceremonial drums to welcome the visitors. After 10 minutes, there was yet another announcement. The district governor was in fact not coming and his representative would be another 30 minutes. While this was occurring, a religious leader from the village said to me, "We have to wait; only high-ranking Thai officials can open the ceremony and make it official." After an hour of waiting for the ceremony to begin, the assistant district governor and local government representatives arrived and walked on stage. Only 10 Akha villagers attended; so, the RDP staff quickly directed a group of Lahu school children dressed in uniform to stand in line with the Akha.

The opening ceremony began with government officials lining up and walking onto the stage in single file. The first was the assistant governor, followed by the village leaders (Kachin, Lahu and Akha), then a high-ranking military officer, local government representatives, and finally the religious leaders of Jinghpaw Kahtawng. The ceremony began with an opening speech and a commemoration speech for the king's birthday. The national anthem and a closing prayer by a religious leader of Jinghpaw Kahtawng followed. After the conclusion of the speeches and prayers, many villagers returned home. The Kachin walked across the road to the *Manau* ground to the sound of the beating drum and horns. There were four ceremonial dance leaders (*nau shawng*) at the front and two lines were formed behind them. The Baptist pastor gave a blessing before a ribbon was cut and the dancers entered the ground. Kachin women carried woven rattan baskets of offerings to be placed at the base of the *Manau* posts. Lahpai (2007: 151) pointed out that this performance closely follows the traditional *nat* or spirit offering of the past. Since "Kachin have converted to Christianity, the offerings are no longer to spirits of the ground, sky and others, but they [have] become symbolic offerings to God or *Karai Kasang*" (Lahpai 2007: 151). Men pounded a large drum at the base of the *Manau* posts while women sang. Dancers followed the leaders in a circular pattern around the *Manau* posts and there was a continual commentary in Thai over the loud speaker. "After the dancers complete the first lap, only then can others join in."

Several foreign tourists had come, as well as a Thai television crew and researchers from Chiang Mai University's Social Research Institute, to conduct research into Kachin cultural practices. As well, there were people from local NGOs. After the first dance began, I entered the traditional house and met with two Kachin elders from Kut Hkai in Shan State who had assisted the villagers with preparations for the *Manau* ceremony. However, the mood quickly shifted as the music from outside made it impossible for us to hear one another. Then, the Akha youth group began their cultural performance, a modern dance to Michael Jackson's *Billy-Jean is Not my Lover*.

Following the end of the morning dance the leaders led the dancers to the steps of the nearby traditional Kachin house and stopped at the front steps. This was done to pay respect to the Kachin elders who had come from Burma. The dancers then dispersed back to their homes to prepare for the second dance that was scheduled for 5:00 that evening. The *Manau* dance leaders, the village leader and guests entered the traditional house. I followed and took a seat along the wall in the crowded room. The Thai television crews attempted to enter but were told they could not come in as this was a special gathering for Kachin only. Elders sat around a fire pit in the middle of the room and spoke about the meaning of the *Manau* and its importance for Kachin to celebrate it as a show of cultural and political identity. The extent to

which the *Manau* is primarily a political and/or cultural performance in the village is, as argued earlier in this section, acted upon and accepted differently by different actors within and external to the community. Urban Kachin residing in city centres such as Chiang Mai see this event as a political extension of their status vis-a-vis the Burmese state translated into the *Manau* in Thailand. However, many residents in the village expressed an alternative viewpoint foregrounding the cultural significance of the event as representative of the only Kachin village in Thailand. It signifies not only their exception, but their potential inclusion into wider state institutions. That night, the Kachin singers sang Kachin and Burmese pop songs well into the following morning.

The productive nature of place-out-of-place in respect to the *Manau* festival indicates a complex structure of power and belonging. The meaning of *Manau* is not homogenous throughout the wider Kachin community and state agencies in Thailand. The contemporary relationship between village residents, state agencies (RDP, local government and Thai Army), and the wider Kachin community in Thailand and Burma indicates a fluid political-cultural affiliation that incorporates legitimacy, belonging and integration. This case highlights both the cultural uniqueness of the Kachin in Thailand as well as political connections to Kachin in Burma challenging the edges of the inclusion—exclusion dynamic and creating a sense of constant flux.

Conclusion

States might not be the sole regulators of social life in border areas where they seek to establish territorial sovereignty and cultural legitimacy through what Althusser (1971) classified as an ideological state apparatus. There has, nevertheless, been an increase in ‘state-like’ institutions involved in the everyday lives of the populace, which includes multiple state institutions and local administration offices, diverse military groups and development agencies. This is emphasised by Deluze and Guattari, who argued that “it is a vital concern of every State ... to control migrations and, more generally, to establish a zone of rights over an entire ‘exterior’, over all the flows traversing the ecumenon” (1987: 385).

Brown (1994) characterised the Thai government’s concern for the development of its rural regions by suggesting that any welfare concern for these rural, peripheral areas was less important than the central government’s need for economic and political security from the ‘Bangkok centred state’. Thailand’s pursuit of development in peripheral areas was about order and control. Brown saw this process as a type of “neo-parasitism” whereby the security needs of the centre made their power dependent upon developing regional peripheries. This led to “increased centrifugal flows” of aid from the centre to the periphery, but the central

Bangkok state, keenly aware of its political and power interests, continued to powerfully regulate when and how aid would flow to these regions (London 1980). The RDP is one example of the control and regulation of aid and support from the centre to the managed peripheral areas.

Malkki (1995: 11) took this analysis of state control of movement in border zones a step further: “The discursive constitution of the refugee as bare humanity is associated with a widespread *a priori* expectation that, in crossing an international border, he or she has lost connection with his or her culture and identity.” The situation of the Kachin in Jinghpaw Kahtawng is illustrative of such complexities, in the context of Thailand’s ethnic policy and selective incorporation of ‘others’ into the Thai state. This results in a condition not simply of “bare-life” (Agamben 1997, 2005) or “undifferentiated raw material” (Turner 1967: 98-99), but a position of double selectivity, whereby the Kachin are simultaneously included (Hill Tribe activities at the sub-strict level) and excluded (Thai citizenship).

It is often the case that decisions regarding who falls in or out of the law and the gaze of the state are made by multiple agents and institutions. As we have seen with the Kachin in Thailand, the category of friend and enemy contains both implicit and explicit dimensions of power within the ambiguous conditions that frame the localised production of oppositions. In this sense, political belonging can sometimes be distinct from the legal, moral, aesthetic and economic ways of distinguishing groups in a nationstate. The gaze of the state regarding Kachin as illegal, or at best controllable residents within a RDP site, remains fixed. However, how Kachin negotiate these categorisations through compliance with village, sub-district and district level activities in attempt to gain greater Thai political status in the form of legal identification while maintaining cross-border economic, social and religious ties in support of an idealised ‘homeland’ lends to a more complex understanding of cross-border identity formation.

In Thailand, preoccupation with national unity and the sustaining ideologies, policies and actions which these are based upon, tend to conceal and obscure the myriad diverse actors that have shaped the modern nation-state (geo-political body). As already suggested, one of the central mechanisms in the “standard total view”⁸⁷ (see Ivarsson and Isager 2010: 2) of the formation of the modern Thai state is the creation of rigid geo-political borders, a position which also constructs an interpretation that ‘illegal’ border crossing represents a challenge and a threat to the authority of the state and the modernist project of state formation. And yet

⁸⁷ The term “standard total view” was coined by Michael Vickery (1984), *Cambodia 1975-1984*, Sydney: Allen and Unwin.

as I have shown in this chapter such a project constantly reproduces, and one might say relies on, specific micro-examples of exception.

Chapter Seven

Exceptions, Decisions and Borders

How do we cross borders? It can be done in a completely indifferent and apathetic fashion, although the person who crosses borders in an indifferent fashion never crosses borders

(Cixous 1993: 131).

This thesis has sought to demonstrate complex social fields created by Kachin movement within and across ethno-political borders and boundaries. Ongoing mobility and its stabilisation can be interpreted variously as a political, social and geographical phenomenon. The preceding chapters have unveiled how the ethno-political history of Kachin in Jinghpaw Kahtawng feeds into formative experiences of physical borders, ethnic framing of minority and majority relations, and classifications within the territorial limits of the nation-state. In so doing, I have suggested that contemporary Kachin social fields are part and parcel of trajectories that traverse the politics of exceptionalism with its attendant poles of belonging and non-belonging.

A key component of my argument is that analyses of social relations of border populations cannot be confined within the boundaries of a single nation-state. Cross-border movement, and the eventual establishment of a military base by the KIA in northern Thailand in the 1960s were historically significant in the establishment of the Jinghpaw Kahtawng settlement in 1982. Both of these sites were based on a political and territorial exception and a decentralised decision-making process. The presence and survival of the KIA military camp was based on formal and informal collaborations with other army groups including the Thai, KMT, Shan and Kokang. Kachin achieved temporary legitimacy in the eyes of the Thai state through involvement in these networks and alliances that exemplifies the central theoretical position of this thesis, that is, an analysis of power in border zones implicates complex and multi-dimensional forms of belonging.

To make this argument, I have drawn on the work of Agamben (1998, 2005), Schmitt (1996) and Butler (2007, 2013) to support my analysis of border dynamics and the formalisation of power through contemporary manifestations of exceptionalism. Analysed from this perspective sovereignty is not to be understood primarily as a statist notion.

Following this approach, I have analysed the historical movement of the Kachin from northern Burma to northern Thailand, highlighting their physical and conceptual trajectory from friend to enemy to a more ambiguous status on both sides of the border. In the process, I have delineated a situation where the Kachin are not resisting state power, *per se*, but incorporating and negotiating complex political and cultural contexts of belonging and non-belonging. Narratives of movement and power indicate personalised linkages between an imagined past and contemporary inclusion within wider Kachin (or pan-Kachin) cultural structures and a specific ethno-political consciousness. For the Kachin in Jinghpaw Kahtawng, this reveals not only ruptures in notions of a unified homogenous state and secure borders, but also an oscillation between political and social legitimacy within the wider Kachin population.

An underlying theme of this research has been to advance an understanding of the processes of exception and sovereignty as they apply to any one group in a specific locale in the decisions – some of them seemingly insignificant – emanating from diverse places and at different times. When we consider the ethno-political history of the Kachin and their migration patterns, we see that past contingencies are reflected in their present-day circumstances as a group and, notably, their social structure of leadership and kinship obligations. Undoubtedly, the majority-minority relations in Burma and Thailand, together with ongoing conflicts, significantly influence the Kachin's present-day experiences in the village.

Underlying my discussion is the intent to challenge the commonplace assumption that national identity is founded upon a natural idea of 'nation' and upon a specific correspondence between the state and the nation. Massey (2004: 5) described place and locality as an articulated moment in the networks of social relations and understandings. Such a description informs much of my preceding explorations of border dynamics as multiple interrelated sites of power, state institutions, army, church, ethnic policies, the movement and settlement of ethnic minorities. The subjects of control in these settings, that is, individuals and populations, are both products and agents of history determined by family, ethnicity, community, state and border relations. Through the practice of border crossing, individuals can and do change their contexts and thereby alter the environment through which power is moderated.

Taken together, preceding chapters have shown the evolution of village life to be a story of the historicity of the border, that demonstrates how mechanisms emanate simultaneously outward from the centre (Bangkok, Yangon and KIA headquarters) to the periphery and from

the periphery back to the centre. The Kachin in this particular border area are contesting the space and power that the state creates rather than directly challenging the physical geographical line of the border. Viewed from this standpoint, sovereign power is both decentralised from and working as an integral component of centralised authority. In other words, we see that various agents and agencies with multiple and often conflicting objectives implement centralised policy. However, the dispersal of sovereign power does not render state apparatuses less visible or less powerful. The ambiguous positioning within friend—enemy oscillations is a result of shifting dimensions of geo-political power for the residents of Jinghpaw Kahtawng. My examination of Kachin narratives and experiences illustrate a specific integration of practices, processes and performances that are created from the diversity within the border landscape itself. This is a malleable and sometimes tenuous articulation between ahistorical totalising versions of Kachin history and culture, and contemporary contextual variants constructed and reproduced through lived experiences of integration.

This thesis has also explored the ongoing attempt to define and categorise Kachin political and social systems. As suggested in Chapters One and Two, any analysis of Kachin social systems from an historical perspective can only be relevant in terms of the specific social, economic, religious and political contexts in which it emerges. Within these changing contexts, individual choice and fluidity are characteristic of social change even in circumstances where social reality is marked by sharp ethnic boundaries (Wimmer 2013: 2), challenging the ongoing search for something that ‘fixes’ what it is to be Kachin.

From this vantage point, the performative nature of the state – symbols, anthems, categorisation of land and people, legal frameworks and political ideology – points to an empirical functioning of sovereignty that both denotes and dictates how borders are governed and maintained and how groups in the area are to be identified. As I have shown, the interactions between Kachin in Jinghpaw Kahtawng and the RDP represent a confluence of symbolic and practical connotations of power. The use of the Thai flag, Thai national anthem, portraits of the king and queen are not benign symbols of benevolent state power but represent nascent examples of how exceptionalism is reproduced through mechanisms of control, categorisation and classification in and beyond the village boundaries. As illustrated in chapter six the *Manau* in Thailand for the villagers in Jinghpaw Kahtawng remains distinctly separated from political connections and resistance to state power and control articulated in Burma. Kachin residing in the village and Chiang Mai as well as local governmental support for the RDP initiated the *Manau* in Jinghpaw Kahtawng as a cultural performance of Kachin in Thailand. For the predominately Christian Kachin, in its

contemporary manifestation the *Manau* is a religious orientated ceremony. The above description of the *Manau* ceremony (see chapter 6) details both the incorporation of Christian prayer and the symbols of the Thai state – monarchy and flag. In this circumstance prayers were performed entirely in Jinghpaw language were as other more official performances were performed in Thai representing a clear demonstration of interconnections between symbolic and strategic hierarchies. As seen through Schmitt's friend–enemy distinction, local transformations of social systems – resulting from selective inclusion and exclusion – are highlighted through broader political, ethnic and religious discourses. This, in turn, requires the reconstitution of social configurations in different historical periods.

I have argued throughout this work that analysis of the Kachin in northern Thailand, in particular residents of Jinghpaw Kahtawng, reveals a situation where exceptionalism is specific in its historical trajectories as well as spatial and ethnic categorisations, that is, internal and external boundary maintenance. These factors both produce and reproduce a condition of non-fit. However, the structures and process – both real and imagined – that constitute the exception can be expanded to incorporate broader analyses of power in a wider framework of subaltern studies, in terms of the reconfiguration of ethno-political space. This is seen through analyses of territory and sovereignty as a spatial multi-sited project. It is, therefore, not only a bounded space, but a site of non-fit enacted by those living in and categorised by the exception. Through the combination of exceptionalism, friend–enemy and sovereign decision-making, analysis shifts from a focus on local resistance to more complex and nuanced consideration of local and state encounters of power. This approach lends support to the contention that exceptionalism not only emerges in state projects of rule and control over people and territory where state reach is attainable, but also in spaces where political territory is not aligned and assembled along national lines.

For the Kachin, examples of exceptionalism are specifically predicated on constitutive tensions that exist between imagined and actual representations of the state as a legitimate basis of power and sovereignty in border areas. This process includes decision-making at the local, state and national levels associated with village and ethnic boundary maintenance while simultaneously securing control of the border. The latter is culturally, politically and territorially reproduced through policies, discourses of nationalism and homogeneity, and strategies of control. Taken together, these policies discourses and strategies underscore critical aspects of the 'other', whether externally defined or internally categorised, and establish a site where sovereign decision is enacted in Thailand as elsewhere. Exceptionalism is not exclusively a state project: it signals an important role and positioning of the Kachin and their cultural and political space in Thailand and Burma. Exception is neither static nor

confined to spatial or temporal state apparatuses of government. Internal and external non-state networks, alliances and relationships are maintained and reproduced in this performative space.

Kachin residents of Jinghpaw Kahtawng anticipate staying in Thailand. The ethnography presented here indicates a need to appreciate, investigate, and analyse cultural differences, while abandoning perceived notions of (localised) culture and fixed places. As one example, the link between Thai identity and connections to a Kachin homeland is underscored both through affiliations with Christianity and the level of perceived development of the community. This was illustrated through Kachin rejection of land and other opportunities in Thailand following the establishment of the KIA camp. The premise for such a refusal was to stay true to the idea of fighting for, and ultimately returning to their perceived Kachin homeland. This historical narrative provides the foundation for understanding the shifting and contingent relationship between not only Kachin themselves, but also understandings of belonging and non-belonging at the ethnic group level and with the state. As discussed throughout this thesis, the historical construction and subsequent dismantling of the KIA camp was integral for Kachin in Thailand in terms of self-recognition, ethnic group level belonging and connections to a homeland. These elements were intimately linked to individual decisions of Kachin to settle and build a life in Thailand.

A key finding is that inclusion and exclusion can emerge as a consequence of strategies to establish control over a group or population, especially those at the cultural edge of so-called normal society. Kachin living in the village and in the nearby city of Chiang Mai have been selectively included or excluded from access to the Thai state over different historical periods, and under shifting government policy mechanisms, laws governing the control and access of the community have been flexibly implemented. From the perspective of the Thai state and citizenry, it is more an illusion of control and containment of borders than control in any absolute sense, even where notions of national unity or the cultural symbols of nationalism are imposed upon an area characterised by groups with markedly different cultures and pragmatic interests. This is typified by the historical presence of external armed groups occupying the Thai-Burma border, along with the contemporary movement of people across the same borders.

In sum, this thesis has sought to demonstrate that the contemporary situation of the Kachin in Thailand and, more explicitly, those who are connected with the Kachin village, exemplifies a situation where unveiled intersections of regional security, sovereignty, territory, law and place expose the dynamics and networks sustaining the narratives of the

state. The specifics of ethnic, religious and political relations are determined within in the context of particular and distinct histories of uneven power relations. In this context, the constant and intensive interaction between public and private or civil groups affects village life, varying from issues of citizenship to concepts of belonging and the allocation of land.

Through their experience and connections with groups particular to these networks, the Kachin are able to influence how, for example, Thai officials respond to them. To some extent, they can maintain their ethnic and village boundaries, and established social institutions while at the same time adjusting to broader changes in the nature of government, and the ways in which the respective central governments, both Thai and Burmese, delegate or devolve authority to the local level, directly impacting on Kachin positions of power and relative autonomy

The governmentality of the Thai state, enacted through decentralised channels of local authority regarding classification of people and territorial sovereignty, is legitimised through the combination of central law and local implementation. However, non-state normative actions surrounding these same phenomena are understood and reproduced differently under diverse processes. There is, therefore, a productive nature of non-belonging that produces and reproduces the notion of exceptionalism and is evident in an ongoing evolution of the forms, mechanisms and narratives of ethnicity. The continuity and contradictions that exist within the structures of the 'legal' and the 'illegal', the 'friend' and the 'enemy', are not solely a state-defined project, but products of an evolving milieu of power that simultaneously incorporates the unique characteristics of belonging and non-belonging. The boundaries of the village are territorial, political, religious and social, contributing to a group identity and at times external expressions of solidarity. Although there have been transformations in the Kachin social structure, they have not resulted in the permanent incorporation of being 'Thai' over being 'Kachin'. Rather, the Kachin in the village are still seen as non-assimilable bodies connected to the process of inclusion and exclusion intrinsic in the Thai state and polity. This raises the wider question: Are Kachin assimilable elsewhere, and how is this process represented in ongoing identity formation? Kachin liminality or non-fit is underlined by the enduring fact that they are neither considered Thai, Burmese, a Hill Tribe nor refugees. At the same time, the Kachin cross-border movement and creation of alliances and networks, incorporating and challenging state ethnic and cultural categories, exemplify a situation wherein Kachin are not reduced to 'bare life'. To the contrary, the Kachin in northern Thailand simultaneously produce and embody exceptionalism from multiple and diverse sites and performative spaces, creating ambiguous notions of sovereignty through fluctuating political alliances as a means to create and maintain 'friendships'.

Who is a friend?
Who is an enemy?
Who is a target?
Who is a terrorist?
Who is a combatant?
Who is innocent?
Who is “high risk”?
Who is “illegal”?
Who is free?
Who serves?
Who belongs?
Who decides?
Who’s next?

(Cowen and Gilbert 2008: 1).

Epilogue

Burmese Army Attacks KIA Outpost, 9 June 2011

On 9 June 2011, while spending time at our rented house in Chiang Mai news started to trickle through about Burmese Army attacks on the KIA. Slowly at first, followed by more and more reports and details, Kachin blogs and networks of friends were reporting large scale military attacks against the KIO/KIA in Kachin State, Burma. These attacks marked the end of a 17-year ceasefire between the Burmese Army and the KIO/KIA. Three months prior, in March 2011, ex-General and former State Peace and Development Council Prime Minister Thein Sein was elected President of Burma, on the premise of transition to democracy. After decades of military rule, this was a positive move forward. But, for the Kachin, hope for a peaceful future soon faded. As I wrote this section, the last of my thesis, Burmese military attacks against KIO/KIA and civilian targets continued. To date, these attacks have resulted in over 120,000 internally displaced Kachin, forced from their homes and villages by the Burmese military. This situation highlights two interrelated factors: the institutionalised and systematic culture of violence and terror embedded in the actions of the Burmese military and, at a localised level, the Kachin’s continuing struggle for autonomy and self-determination.

Before these events unfolded, few Kachin in Jinghpaw Kahtawng spoke about a contemporary connection with the KIO/KIA. Invariably, discussions were framed in the past tense. When I asked questions regarding their current feelings and thought about the KIO/KIA, our conversations would quickly shift to other more benign topics. The stories the

Kachin shared with me seemed to stop at a specific historical time when they were discussing the KIO/KIA. It was as if the border represented more than the division of the categories legal/illegal, but somehow blocked the flow of reminiscence at a predetermined historical point. “When I left the KIA”. Memories were historically spatialised in terms of the passage of time and movement across the border.

Soon after the 9 June attacks, I returned to the village. Friends were either sitting around radios listening to broadcasts about the fighting or talking openly in groups about the increasingly violent escalation of the Burmese Army’s attacks on Kachin civilians. The village, or at least parts of it, became more unified in support of the KIA’s decision to defend Kachin territory and protect the displaced civilians. The Kachin in Jinghpaw Kahtawng had new stories to share based on information from friends and relatives. In many ways their Kachin political identity was re-emerging in this time of open conflict, framing not only representations, relations and connections to a unified pan-Kachin identity, but also their future expressions of their Kachin political identity with the geo-political and cultural boundaries of the Thai State.

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Appendix 1

Ethnic Group and Provincial Location in Northern Thailand

Table 2: Hill Tribe populations in 20 provinces of northern Thailand

Ethnic Group	Village Clusters	Number of House-holds	Number of Families	Population				
				Male	Female	Boy	Girl	Total
Karen	1,912	87,628	95,088	151,186	147,168	70,193	69,584	438,131
Hmong	253	19,287	24,551	45,382	25,703	31,578	31,292	153,955
Mien	178	6,758	8,022	15,260	15,442	7,609	7,260	45,571
Akha	271	1,178	12,909	20,948	21,876	12,756	13,073	68,653
Lahu	385	18,057	20,347	32,059	32,094	19,430	19,293	102,876
Lisu	155	6,553	7,338	12,345	12,505	6,737	6,712	38,299
Lua	69	4,361	5,098	7,454	7,553	3,536	3,717	22,260
H'Tin	159	8,496	10,474	15,512	14,941	6,084	6,120	42,657
Khamu	38	2,256	2,523	3,991	3,873	1,366	1,343	10,573
Mlabri	2	63	63	76	68	71	67	282
<i>Total</i>	–	<i>164,637</i>	<i>186,413</i>	<i>304,213</i>	<i>301,223</i>	<i>159,360</i>	<i>158,461</i>	<i>923,257</i>

Source: Government of Thailand. 2002, *chumchonbonthisoon painaiyiisipchangwat naiphrathetthai Highland Communities Within 20 Provinces of Thailand, 2002*, Department of Social Security, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, Bangkok.

Table 3: Ethnic group populations in 20 provinces of northern Thailand

Ethnic Group	Village Clusters	Number of House-holds	Number of Families	Population				
				Male	Female	Boy	Girl	Total
Palaung	7	459	500	663	769	472	420	2,324
Tongsu	4	42	43	99	79	24	24	226
Thai Lue	16	857	998	1,521	1,599	328	332	3,780
Haw*	55	3,773	4,109	9,028	8,556	4,153	4,588	26,325
Thai Yai	71	4,059	4,658	8,057	8,500	2,402	2,452	21,411
Khmer	1	1	1	-	1	-	-	1
Chinese	8	599	700	1,419	1,489	666	802	4,376
Burmese	12	285	287	349	374	274	240	1,237
Mon	31	1,616	1,815	2,242	2,193	1,107	1,283	6,825
Lao	2	18	23	27	37	26	14	104
Others	3	93	96	211	177	78	97	563
<i>Total</i>	-	<i>11,802</i>	<i>13,221</i>	<i>23,616</i>	<i>23,774</i>	<i>9,530</i>	<i>10,252</i>	<i>67,172</i>

* Haw Chinese

Source: Government of Thailand. 1997, *chumchonbonthisoon painaiyiisipchangwat naiphrathetthai Highland Community Within 20 Provinces of Thailand*, Public Welfare Department, Ministry of Labor and Social Security in Thailand (in Thai), Bangkok.

Table 4: Ethnic group populations in Chiang Mai Province 2002

Ethnic Group	Village Clusters	Number of House-holds	Number of Families	Population				
				Male	Female	Boy	Girl	Total
Karen	670	27,607	30,496	47,735	47,159	21,975	21,578	138,447
Hmong	57	2,946	4,229	8,079	8,067	4,429	4,320	24,895
Lahu	153	7,136	7,931	11,909	12,178	7,650	7,300	39,037
Mien (Yao)	5	247	250	395	392	271	295	1,353
Lua	29	2,385	2,578	4,085	3,999	1,783	1,815	11,682
Lisu	74	3,187	3,519	5,895	5,979	2,995	3,077	17,946
Akha	33	977	1,056	1,879	1,891	973	974	5,717
Chinese	7	597	698	1,415	1,487	663	799	4,364
Haw*	18	2,301	2,334	5,509	5,178	2,345	2,765	15,797
Thai	340	14,051	15,006	21,467	20,793	6,436	6,493	55,189
Shan	30	1,087	1,115	2,140	2,232	754	800	5,926
Palaung	7	459	500	663	769	472	420	2,324
Burmese	1	6	6	11	12	2	7	32
<i>Total</i>	-	67,986	69,718	111,182	110,136	50,748	50,643	322,709

* Haw Chinese

Source: prachakhornchomklumnoi *painaiyiisipchangwat naiphrahetthai* Ethnic Group Population 20 Provinces of Thailand, Ministry of Social Development and Human Security 2002. Public Welfare Department, Ministry of Labor and Social Security in Thailand (in Thai), Bangkok.

Appendix 2

Chiang Dao Historical Setting

I had been told by people living in Chiang Dao town, the district administrative centre of the area, situated approximately 30 kilometres from Jinghpaw Kahtawng, that the best person to ask about the history of the area was the head monk at Wat Jai Dong Dhevi. I waited quietly outside the main temple for the monk to finish his morning prayers. I had prepared a small offering earlier that morning and was interested to hear his story on the history of Chiang Dao. After the offering of alms and blessings we sat in the shade of a large tree in the temple compound.

“I have been told that you are collecting the history of Chiang Dao. I would like to speak with you about what you have learned.” He replied in a soft voice: “Did you bring a thumb-drive?” I happened to have a USB in my bag and handed it over; he then removed a cloth covering a laptop on the table, and we both stared patiently at the blank screen waiting in silence for it to start. After a couple of minutes trying to locate the file, he copied and pasted a three-page document titled “The History and Background of Wieng Jiang Dao (Chiang Dao town) collected by Wat Jai (Dong Dhevi)”. He did not say much about the document, only that he has been writing it for several years. After showing me around the temple, he asked me to drive him to a nearby phone repair shop because he was having trouble with his mobile phone reception. The following extracts are from his records:

Amphoe Chiang Dao or Muang Chiang Dao was mentioned in the Chronicle of Yonok as the city that King Mengrai (Phaya Mengrai), the first king of the Lanna kingdom and the ruler of Chiang Mai city, gave to Khun Kram, his second son who was also the ruler of Chiang Rai, as a reward for his victory in the battle with King Boeg (Phaya Boeg) of Kelang Nakorn (Lampang) who tried to retake Hariphunchai kingdom back from King Mengrai in B.E.1838 (A.D.1295).

To celebrate his son’s victory, King Mengrai threw a banquet for seven days and seven nights and promoted Khun Kram’s title to *Chao Chaisongkram*. The king also rewarded his son with royal goods and entrusted him to rule Chiang Rai city as well as Chiang Dao city. As mentioned in the Chronicle that after bidding farewell to King Mengrai and return[ing] to Chiang Rai city, Chao Chaisongkram sent his noblemen to develop Chiang Dao city and built a palace together with [a] military building, horse stable, elephant corral, rice barn and salt barn.

Later the Chronicle mentioned the name of Muang Khong (Khong city, now a sub-district under Chiang Dao District) and Muang Chiang Dao during the era of King Saen Phu (Phaya Saen Phu), son of Chao Chaisongkram. Muang Khong was a vassal state under

Muang Chiang Saen, which at that time had 65 small vassal states under their subordination, including Chiang Dao.

Later history mentioned Chiang Dao's name again during the time that Somdet Phra Naresuan Maharaj (King Naresuan) and Somdet Phra Ekathotsarot (Prince Ekathotsarot) led their armies past Chiang Dao to Muang Hang (Hang city) on their way to invade Muang Inwa (Ava city) [present day Pagan in Burma]. However King Naresuan passed away in Muang Hang while Prince Ekathotsarot continued on his way to Muang Fang (Fang city) and later to the Tai Yai [Shan] area.

(Historical Background of Wieng Jiang Dao (Chiang Dao city) to Wat Jai (Dong Dhevi), 2010: 1-4).

By the late nineteenth century, a group of Tai Lue people from Sibsongpanna (Xishuangbanna) led by Tao Brahma – together with his family and followers – migrated southward till they reached Chiang Dao town and decided to settle at this deserted place. Tao Brahma and his people called their village 'Baan Piang Dao' because Doi Luang Chiang Dao (Chiang Dao Mountain) stood prominently as a symbol of their village. After the reign of Tao Inn, Chiang Mai sent Phaya Jaya (Phaya Jai) to govern Ban Chiang Dao. His descendants were called Phaya Wong and Phaya Rat. Nowadays their lineages use the family names 'Phaya Wong' and 'Phaya Rat'.

The village expanded rapidly and the village boundary widened. In the late nineteenth century, towards the end of Phaya Rat's reign that coincided with the administrative reform of Thai central authority, Lanna was consequently annexed as a part of Thai Siam. The new administrative subdivision system comprised a *changwat* (province), *amphoe* (district), *tambon* (sub-district) and *mu ban* (village). Central authority was designated to Chao Ratchabut Chiang Dao, (assumed to be a son of the governor of Chiang Dao) as the first district chief under the supervision of Chiang Mai.

The year 2010 marked the 100th anniversary of the official recognition of Chiang Dao as a *amphoe* (district). The *nai amphoe* (district governor) labelled the town a 'paradise on earth', stating that whoever comes to Chiang Mai must come to Chiang Dao' (Chiang Dao District Office 2010: 6). These early accounts indicate continual movement and conflict throughout the area, from present day northern Thailand to central Burma and northern Thailand into what is now regarded as the Shan State.

The specific sub-district of Muang Na, in which Jinghpaw Kahtawng is situated, has a similar history of conflict, rupture and reunification. The following is an account compiled by the Chiang Dao District government office. Muang Na is an ancient community. Due to wars and outbreaks of epidemic diseases the town was deserted several times. During the reign of

King Naresuan Maharaj, the king took his army to invade Burma. It is believed that they marched alongside the river, passing through Muang Na. Later, after he reached Muan Haeng King Naresuan passed away. His army returned to the city. Noi Jai, Noi Mao and Noi Panya decided to resettle in Muang Na as they saw that it was an old town with abundant water resources. Over a period of time, Noi Jai, Noi Mao, Noi Panya and their followers rebuilt the town.

The people of Muang Na, who were Buddhist, built a temple and installed a statue of Lord Buddha with a golden cherry plum in his hand. The town was secure until the era of ‘Phraya Kuan Muang’ or ‘Phraya Kin Muang’. He took the statue of Buddha, which was believed to be the palladium of the town, to Chiang Mai. Following the removal of the statue, the town descended into chaos. After the reign of Phraya Kuan Muang, due to lack of harmony among the townspeople and the onset of famine, many people emigrated from Muang Na. Several gangs of bandits had always robbed the townspeople. One of the gang leaders, ‘Khun Sua Pha’, robbed and killed many people; as a result Muang Na was abandoned once again.

After the gangs left the town, those townspeople who had previously fled came back to resettle. New groups of people, including Lisu, Karen, Akha, Chin Haw and some natives from *amphoe* Fang, also settled in the community. Today the population of Muang Na consists of various ethnic groups. The majority of people in Muang Na are Tai Yai (Shan), followed by northern Thai and people from different ethnic groups including Pa-O, Akha, Lisu, Lahu and Karen (Chiang Dao District Office 2010: 103-104).

Appendix 3

Historical Background of Wieng Jiang Dao (Chiang Dao city) and Wat Jai (Dong Thewi) Temple

By Luang Pho Suphakon⁸⁸.

The name Chiang Dao appeared in several historical records such as the Yonok Chronicle (Phongsawadan Yonok), the Legend of Fifteen Dynasties, and the Chronicle of Chiang Mai.

Amphur Chiang Dao or Muang Chiang Dao was mentioned in the Chronicle of Yonok as the city that King Mengrai (Phaya Mengrai), the first king of Lanna kingdom and the ruler of Chiang Mai city, gave to Khun Kram, his second son who was also the ruler of Chiang Rai, as a reward for his victory in the battle with King Boeg (Phaya Boeg) of Kelang Nakorn (Lampang) who tried to retake Hariphunchai kingdom back from King Mengrai in B.E.1838 (A.D.1295).

In this battle, King Mengrai told Khun Kram and his army to be in defense at Wiang Kum Kam where he defeated King Boek and his army. To celebrate his son's victory, King Mengrai threw a banquet for 7 days and 7 nights and promoted Khun Kram's title to "Chao Chaisongkram". The king also rewarded his son with royal goods and entrusted him to rule Chiang Rai city as well as 'Chiang Dao city'. As mentioned in the Chronicle that "after bidding farewell to King Mengrai and return[ing] to Chiang Rai city, Chao Chaisongkram sent his noblemen to develop Chiang Dao city and built a palace together with [a] military building, horse stable, elephant corral, rice barn and salt barn. A year later Chao Chaisongkram came to Chiang Dao city and since then he stayed in Chiang Dao from the fifth to eighth month every year then return to Chiang Rai. Whenever Chao Chaisongkram came to stay in Chiang Dao, he would also visit his father in Chiang Mai once a year."

The fact that King Mengrai gave Chiang Dao city to Chao Chaisongkram reflected that Chiang Dao city was an ancient community. However it was probably a small community so Chao Chaisongkram had to develop the city, built his palace as well as horse stable, elephant corral and rice barn. Moreover, from the examination of Wiang Chai Songkram area, behind Wat Jai Dong Dhevi, there was a discovery of ancient potsherds, especially potsherds from

⁸⁸ Luang Pho Suphakon. 2005. *prawatkhwambenmakhongwiangchiangdao (muangchiangdao) sukarnbenwatjai (dongthewi)*. Wat Jai Dong Thawi, Chiang Dao.

Hariphunchai era, which was the era 600 years prior to Lanna, around Wiang area (Muang/city). These are the evidence of Chiang Dao's antiquity.

Later the Chronicle mentioned the name of Muang Khong (Khong city, now a sub-district/tambon under Chiang Dao District/amphur) and Muang Chiang Dao during the era of King Saen Phu (Phaya Saen Phu), son of Chao Chaisongkram. Muang Khong was a vassal state under Muang Chaing Saen, which at that time had 65 small vassal states under their subordination, including Chiang Dao.

The Chronicle continued to mention the name of Muang Chiang Dao again from time to time, for example, in the incident before Lanna became Burmese's tributary state in B.E.2109 (A.D.1566). It mentioned that Prachao Bayinnuang (King Bayinnuang), the king of Burma and his army were staying in Chiang Dao while waiting for his diplomats to return from negotiation with Prachao Makuti (King Mekuti), the king of Chiang Mai. However Burma eventually ruled over Chiang Mai.

Later the history mentioned Chiang Dao's name again during the time that Somdet Phra Naresuan Maharaj (King Naresuan) and Somdet Phra Ekathotsarot (Prince Ekathotsarot) led their armies passed Chiang Dao to Muang Hang (Hang city) on their way to invade Muang Inwa (Inwa/Ava city). However King Naresuan passed away in Muang Hang (Hang city) while Prince Ekathotsarot continued his way to Muang Fang (Fang city) and later to Tai Yai area.

The Chronicle occasionally mentioned Chiang Dao city; however, it was not continuous nor in chronological order so we do not know who were the rulers of Chiang Dao after Chao Chaisongkram. Nevertheless the legend of Tham Luang Chiang Dao (the Legend of Chiang Dao Cave) mentioned that the ruler of Chiang Dao, King Anandaraja was among the first who had strong faith in the sacred cave though he didn't construct any buildings, therefore didn't leave any evidence of which year he ruled Chiang Dao.

From the historical evidence, we can infer that Chiang Dao is one of the ancient cities, aged at least 173 years till present (B.E.2553/A.D.2010). There was an assumption that during those hundreds years, Chiang Dao city probably went through wars, got deserted and rebuilt for several times, similar with Chiang Mai and other cities in Lanna.

During the time of Phra Bat Somdet Phra Chunla Chom Klao Chao Yu Hua (King Chulalongkorn/King Rama V), between B.E.2442-2476 (A.D.1899-1933) there was a major political reform and beginning of 'Monthon Thesaphiban System' (administrative divisions) where Chiang Dao became part of Monthon Phayap (Northwestern Monthon) ruled by the

governor-general sent by the central government (Bangkok). Later in the era of King Rama VII, since B.E.2469 (A.D.1926) whenever the city governor's posts fell vacant, the king did not find new persons to fill the posts, though he continued to pay the wage for the city governors who were still alive at that time.

The Monthon Thesaphiban System was abolished after the Siamese Revolution in B.E.2475 (A.D. 1932). Muang Chiang Dao became Amphur Chiang Dao and Chao Rajaputra (son of the former Chiang Dao governor) became the first sheriff of Chiang Dao.

Due to lack of historical records and invasions to seize the land, some historical evidences were lost. However an ancient ruin of a city (muang/wiang) was found in the area behind Wat Jai (Wat Dong Dhevi/Dong Dhevi Temple), which is presently located in Baan Tongpakam/Dong Dhevi (Tongpakam Villlage), Tambon Chiang Dao, on the Chotana-Fang-Chiang Mai road. This Wiang (city) was surrounded by two layers of oval-shaped earthen ridges, which served as the city walls. The inner ridge was higher than the outer one, with a moat between the two ridges. This was the popular model of Lanna city planning. The locals called this city ruin "Wiang Hor" and later called it by the name "Wiang Chaisongkram", to honor Phaya Chaisongkram, son of King Mengrai who founded Chiang Dao.

The villagers believed that this ancient wiang in Dong Dhevi village was Wiang Chaisongkram because it had a surrounding moat just like Chiang Mai. Moreover the city planning was also similar to Chiang Mai, with the wiang built higher on the west side while slanting towards the east and a high mountain (Chiang Dao Mountain) in the background just like Chiang Mai and Doi Suthep (Suthep Mountain). Also it had Ping River flowing in front of the wiang on the west side.

The villagers found a lot of potsherds in the Wiang. They also found many antique objects such as some Buddhist clay amulets made of coarse materials that were similar to Phra Kru Wat Doi Kham (Buddha amulet from Doi Kham Temple) in Chiang Mai, some rough-surface vases, and water pots, including some Chinaware that were popular in Chiang Mai and some Haripunchai-styled clay jars.

Appendix 4

Chronology of Implementation of Identification Cards and Coins for Non-Thai Citizens in Thailand

Table 5: Chronology of implementation of identification cards and coins for non-Thai citizens in Thailand

Year	ID category	Status	Use and Issues
1967	Vietnamese Refugee ID Cards White card with blue border	Children of Vietnamese refugees who entered Thailand between 1945 and 1946 were eligible for Thai citizenship. Vietnamese refugees who have not acquired Thai citizenship must ask permission from governors before travelling out of their province of residence. Issued by the Police Department.	Batch 1 issued: 24/08/1967 expired: 23/08/1973 Batch 2 issued: 02/08/1980 expired: 01/08/1982 Batch 3 extended expiry date of batch 2 to: 03/12/1988 Batch 4 issued: 19/07/1990 expired: 18/07/1995 Batch 5 expired: 26/08/1997
1969–1970	Hill Tribe Coins	No longer in use. Issued by Department of Administration.	Used as verification of settlement in Thai kingdom between 1969 and 1970. Widespread selling of coins and difficulty in establishing proof of ownership.
1970	Former Kuomintang Soldier ID Cards White card	Cabinet Resolution on 06/10/1970 assigned Immigrant status to former KMT soldiers. Cabinet Resolution on 30/05/1978 allowed legal naturalisation of former KMT soldiers for their contribution to the Thai nation in fighting the communists. Cabinet Resolution on 12/06/1984 allowed children of former KMT soldiers to acquire Thai citizenship. Those who have not yet acquired Thai citizenship must ask permission from governors before travelling out of their province of residence.	Three batches of cards have been issued.
1976	Immigrants with Thai race from Ko Kong, Cambodia Green card	Issued to former Thai citizens and their children whose citizenship was removed when Ko Kong was returned to Cambodia.	Three batches were issued between 1976 and 1989.

Year	ID category	Status	Use and Issues
1977	Illegal immigrants with Thai race from Cambodia White card with red border	No official status has yet been assigned.	Immigrants with Thai race from Cambodia who entered Thailand after 15/11/1977. Thai government has used this date to separate legal from illegal immigrants from Cambodia. Most of this group resides in Trat Province.
1978	Displaced Person with Burmese Nationality ID Cards Yellow card	Cabinet Resolution on 29/08/2000 assigned alien status to pink card holders. Children of this group born between 24/12/1972 and 25/02/1976 were eligible for Thai citizenship.	Three batches were issued between 1976 and 1993 for ethnic groups from Burma who entered Thailand before 09/03/1976.
1984	Haw Chinese Immigrant ID Cards Yellow card	Cabinet Resolution on 21/06/1984 assigned the status of legal immigrants to those who entered Thailand between 1950 and 1961. Children of Haw Chinese immigrants whose citizenship was removed are eligible to regain their citizenship.	Four batches were issued. This card is applied to former soldiers of KMT and their families who entered Thailand between 1950 and 1961 and could not return to their home country for political reasons. These immigrants resided mainly in Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, and Mae Hong Son provinces.
1987	Nepalese immigrant ID Cards Green card	Formerly classified as Displaced Person with Burmese Nationality. Cabinet Resolution on 29/08/2000 assigned the status of legal immigrant, and children who were born between 24/12/1972 and 25/02/1992 were eligible for Thai citizenship.	Entered into Thailand at Thong Pha Phum, Kanchanaburi Province.
1988	Independent Haw Chinese ID Cards Orange card	Cabinet Resolution on 27/12/1988 assigned temporary residential status. Cabinet Resolution on 29/08/2000 assigned legal immigrant status for those who entered the country before 03/10/1985, and illegal status for those who entered afterwards. Children who were born between 14/12/1972 and 25/02/1992 are eligible for Thai citizenship.	Entered Thailand between 1962 and 1978. This card applies to relatives of former soldiers of KMT who migrated into Thailand between 1962 and 1978.

Year	ID category	Status	Use and Issues
1990–1991	Highlander ID Cards Blue card	Approved by Cabinet Resolution on 05/06/1999. Highlanders are classified into two types: Nine groups of Hill Tribes; and non-Hill Tribes, e.g., Shan, Mon, Burmese, etc. Legal status is granted to those who entered Thailand before 03/10/1985 and are eligible for Thai citizenship. Children of those who entered before 03/10/1985 and born between 14/12/1972 and 25/02/1985 are also eligible for Thai citizenship.	Surveyed and registered by district and Dept. of Administration.
1991	Malbri ID Cards Blue card	Classified as “highlanders,” considered as indigenous people of Phrae and Nan provinces. Entitled to Thai citizenship.	
1991	Displaced person with Thai race and Burmese nationality Yellow card with blue border	Thai who resided on the borders between Siam and Burma before boundary demarcation in the reign of King Rama V and refused to move across the border afterwards. Political tension between SLORC and ethnic insurgency along the borders resulted in the movement of these Thai into Prachuap Khiri Khan, Chumphon, Ranong, and Tak provinces. Cabinet Resolution approved the naturalisation of people who entered Thailand before 10/03/1976.	First batch used the same card as displaced persons with Burmese nationality, but added a stamp stating “with Thai race.”
1991	Lao Immigrant ID Cards Blue card	Lao who moved to live with relatives in Nong Khai, Ubon Ratchathani, Loei, Nakhon Phanom, Mukdahan, Uttaradit, Chiang Rai, and Nan provinces (not in refugee camps). No official status has been assigned. Children are not eligible for Thai citizenship. Issued according to policies by the National Security Council and Second Regional Army.	First batch used the Highlander ID Cards (crossing out “Highlander” and adding “Laotian Immigrant”, due to limited budget).
1994	Thai Lue ID Cards Orange card	Considered as Thai race originally resided in Sipsongpanna, Yunnan, China. Cabinet Resolution on 17/03/1992 assigned legal immigrant status. Children born in Thailand are eligible for Thai citizenship.	Two batches were issued. Formerly classified in the same group as displaced persons with Burmese nationality (pink or blue card).

Year	ID category	Status	Use and Issues
1996	Hill Tribe outside Residential Area ID Cards (Hmong refugees in Tham Kabok, Sara Buri Provinces)	Deported to third countries.	Two batches were issued. Population: 14,602
1999	Highlander's Survey Cards Green card with red border	Issued according to the Master Plan for Development of Communities, Environment and Opium Control. Started in Tak Province in 1998. Cabinet Resolution on 29/08/2000 required that card-holders verify their status within one year.	Surveyed and registered in order to determine appropriate statuses according to nationality law.
1992–2004	Alien Labour Cards	Cabinet Resolution on 17/03/1992 allowed temporary residency for illegal migrant workers in four commercial provinces: Chiang Rai, Tak, Kanchanaburi, and Ranong. Workers must have work permits. Cabinet Resolution on 25/06/1996 extended residency for illegal migrant workers for two years. This applied to workers of Burmese, Cambodian, and Lao nationalities who work in eleven industries in forty-three provinces. Workers must register and acquire work permits. Subsequent cabinet resolutions extended periods of stay for these workers every year.	Nine batches (nine extensions) were issued between 1992 and 2004
2007	Highland ID Cards Pink card electronic with thirteen digits and a magnetic stripe		First batch started in 2007. They replace the former highland ID cards (for Hill Tribes and non-Hill Tribes)

Source: Pinkaew Laungaramsri, 2014, Contested Citizenship: Cards, Colors, and the Culture of Identification, in Marston, John (eds) *Ethnicity, Borders, and the Grassroots Interface with the State*, Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, pp. 143-164.

Appendix 5

“a logger, a miner, a merchant, an office worker, a pastor”

Movement from Northern Burma to Northern Thailand

A Rawang Pastor’s Story

“I have been waiting four years to have enough Rawang⁸⁹ come and help build my house. They are very skilled in building with bamboo,” Jon Man said as he oversaw the construction of his new house.

I was born in northern Burma near Putao. My grandparents worshipped spirits, but my father was the first person in our village to convert at the local Baptist Church, he brought our whole family to convert, “to be reborn to Christ”. In Putao there were Baptists, Church of Christ and Pentecostals; even more but I can’t remember all their names. Around the 1950s the Morse⁹⁰ family moved to Putao. They had come from China. Most Lisu stayed in their compound and went to their Church. My father would go and see them often, you know, just to look and see what they were doing. The Morse family gave him seeds, fruit trees, mostly grapefruit. Now grapefruit grow all over Putao. My parents never said they wanted me to be a pastor: they wanted me to get a job and help support our family.

I moved around a lot for school. I went to primary school in Nam Kham village 14 miles from Putao town centre and my middle school was in Machyang Baw village. After finishing middle school I moved back to Putao town for high school. I failed my high school exams in year 10. I had no choice but to go back to my home village. I got a job teaching at the village school for two and a half years. After that I moved to Myitkyina [the capital of Kachin State] and worked in a jade store. One of my relatives got me the job, my second cousin’s husband. But I drank too much and got very sick so I returned home to Putao. I lost all my money when I got sick. I was still in my early 20s. I also tried collecting agarwood⁹¹ in the forest but could not find any. I also tried gold mining but was also unsuccessful. So I decided to travel to

⁸⁹ Rawang is considered one of the six-sub groups of Kachin in Burma; Jinghpaw, Rawang, Zaiwa (Azi), Lashi (Lachid), Lisu and Maru (Lawngwaw).

⁹⁰ A Christian evangelical family moved to northern Burma in 1949/50 from Yunnan China. They firmly established their mission between 1950–1965 converting thousands of local Lisu and Rawang through their Church of Christ mission.

⁹¹ A fragrant wood that is extremely valuable and highly sought after in China and other Southeast Asian countries for medicinal purposes.

Karen State where I had a relative working in a government job. I disliked government work so my father said to me: “Why not go to Thailand?”

In February 1982 I left my village and arrived in Yangon. I remember it was Union Day holiday so it must have been on the 12th. From there I travelled to the Karen State to Myawadi opposite Mae Sot in Thailand. I decided to cross to Thailand after two sleepless nights of thinking. My only other choice was to go back to Putao. I failed as a jade merchant; I failed as a gold miner, a logger and an office worker. So, maybe I would be more successful in Thailand.

Through my father I had contacts with a Rawang Pastor Daniel Cannon Lataw in Chiang Mai. From Mae Sot I was met by Pastor Daniel, director of the Frontier Labour for Christ Mission (FLCM), and along with three friends travelling with me, he took us to Chiang Mai. I stayed at Pastor Daniel’s house in Chiang Mai for 3 weeks before he took me to Nong Kheow Lahu⁹² village to work for his mission. At that time there was only one church in Nong Kheow Lahu. Now there are 10. Soon after I arrived in Nong Kheow, Kachin started to arrive in Jinghpaw Kahtawng and build houses. I lived with Rawang relatives and two bodyguards of General Zau Seng who had escaped after his assassination.⁹³

While I was with the FLCM in Nong Kheow we had basic medical training by an international group calling themselves the “barefoot doctors”. They invited four Rawang pastors from Putao to come to the village at the beginning of 1983. At the time, Pastor Daniel Cannon and the village headman of Nong Kheow had conflict because the Lahu man had two wives. He also wanted to report Pastor Daniel Cannon to the police for building houses with wood from the forest. In 1983, other groups of Kachin from a Palaung village in Fang district were invited to come and settle here. I lived in the FLCM church in Nong Kheow. Pastor Daniel Cannon passed away in 2008. He lived in Chiang Mai and knew the old KIA soldiers living in Pang Mae Yao village in Chiang Dao. They could not live well in Pang Mae Yao (Thai, Lahu and Palaung village). People knew that they were illegal and they were reported to the local authorities often. They could not even go to the fields, and then they were taken to the Nong Uk border check point. Once they were processed on the Thai side, had their names recorded and their fingerprints taken, they had to walk to the Burmese side. On the Burmese side they had to pay a bribe, wait until night fall and walk back to the Thai side.

At the end of the 1980s I went to study religion in Singapore with the Church of Christ, I was able to do this through my connections with people in Chiang Mai, Pastor Daniel and the

⁹² This village is situated one kilometre from Jinghpaw Kahtawng.

⁹³ This event will be analysed in Chapters 3 and 4.

Morse family. I could also speak some English and Chinese. I studied religion in Singapore on and off for 4 years. I married a Singaporean woman and moved back to Chiang Mai. With a budget from the home Singaporean Church I started a small church in Chiang Mai city. My first sermon was June 2 1991. The congregation was only 4 people; myself, my wife, my son (three) and my daughter (two). The following week it was 6 people. Today there are 70 members mostly from different ethnic groups. In 1999 I received an additional 4 million baht from our Church in Singapore to buy land in Chiang Mai. We initially built a small building and started a nursery school and church and it has slowly expanded.

Appendix 6

“A short story of how I have come from China to this place”

Zau Hkam’s Story

I belong to a clan of Kachin called Lungjun Lahpai. I was born in a place named Lungjun in China. I moved from there when I was very young, so I can’t tell you exactly where Lungjun is. The name Lungjun Lahpai was derived from the fact that we placed stones to mark the boundaries of the land we owned. So when people saw the stones, they said, “Oh, they are Lungjun Du (stone planting rulers).” We Lahpai had four different names. First, Jinghpaw people called us Lungjun for placing stones at the borders of our land. Second, some called us Zi Lahpai because we are Zi. They would say, “Those Zi, or Zi Lahpai people.” There was also one name given to us by other Zi people. They called us Lusu. Lusu and Lungjun mean the same thing, “placing stones”. Placing stones is called Lusu in Zi language. Also, some called us Lukmyan, meaning high stones because the stones marking our territory were placed very high. So they decided to call us Lukmyan [high stones] instead of Lungjun [stone placing]. All these names have one common thing, “stones”. All these names refer to one single clan. In our case, a single clan is referred to as if it is four different or separate clans. It does not matter if you call us Lungjun or Lusu or Zi Lahpai. We are one family.

My father passed away when I was very young, so I grew up with my mother’s family in Lungjun, China. My father had two wives the other wife also had a child. So I have a brother, but I am the eldest. I don’t know if he is still alive or not. I still remember the time when Mao’s people came to our village. It was about 1956 or 1957 I think. Their numbers grew slowly; over time, it became an army of people in our village. Our clan members were the local leaders of the area, so they approached us and persuaded us to be on their side. They took many of our relatives away and they never came back. My mother was a widow, so, when her relatives were running away from the communists, she also went with them to start a new life in Burma.

Growing up in Burma I mostly lived with my mother and her relatives and went to a place called Hukawng with her [western Kachin State]. We lived there from 1959 to 1963. My parents were animist. When I was 10 years old my mother became Christian. We became believers. When we moved from China to a town in Hukawng region, my mother became

very ill. It must have been because of the climate differences of the two places. She was extremely ill and didn't get better even though we tried everything we could. Thus, we felt that we had to believe in God and become Christian. It was difficult to worship *nats* [spirits] because we no longer had any animals such as cows, pigs and chickens to make sacrifices as we were on the move and were fleeing from place to place because of fighting. Most of the people from the area were Christians. Almost none of the Kachin from China were Christians, but most of them converted to Christianity when they arrived in Burma. People who were able to perform spirit-worshipping ceremonies could not be found anymore. There was nothing else we could do. So we converted to Christianity. That's how we became Christians in Burma.

We had a Burmese military base in our town, and the Kachin Army [KIA] was also in the forest nearby. We had to live in the jungle from 1963 to 1966. We were staying in the jungle with KIA soldiers. We lived deep in the jungle, so we couldn't see Burmese soldiers, and they couldn't see us. We would shoot each other if we did. The KIA soldiers and us were not really different from each other. We lived in the same place and ate the same food. We were all living in the barracks, so the army received a lot of new soldiers.

In early 1966, I took some military training and in February I passed. Not all the training, though. I took training for fighting skills. We weren't taught in Jinghpaw language like today. The training was in English because the officers in the Kachin Army were former British allies. Therefore, everything such as commands, drills, regulations and military law was in English. Medical staff and military trainers also used English. We had to speak only English. Starting from 1966, I jumped into the army and served as a full time soldier. I was stationed in the place where I grew up. I was assigned to be an assistant in the kitchen first. I cooked meals for the soldiers. In the camp, there were about 300 soldiers: sometimes it was 200 and sometimes 100. A cooking team included about 12 people. My friend Ma Tu and I were the only kids there. It was very busy because the adults didn't really work. They just asked us to do things for them.

Rice was hidden in the jungle where mice could find it. There was always a lot of mouse shit in the rice sacks, even more than the rice itself! The two of us, Ma Tu and me, were the only ones cooking the rice brought by the soldiers from the jungle. We had to do all the chores. We could barely lift the rice pot filled with water onto the fireplace. We made fire with bamboo collected by the soldiers to cook and we collected water from a nearby spring. We made the fire and after that, dragged out another big rice cooking pot, poured out the rice into it and separated the mouse shit, which was much more than the rice. We threw out the black pieces. No matter how much we threw out, a lot remained. Despite the mouse shit, we

had to cook what we had, and the water even turned green! We were in the kitchen cooking a mixture of mouse shit and rice for about a year.

After serving in the kitchen, I was given work in the army hospital. They called my role a medical runner. I was in charge of the hot water supply for the sick. Regarding the medical treatment, it wasn't like today back then. We used traditional medicines made of leaves and plant roots. Leaves and plants roots were put in alcohol to be used as medicine. All different wounds and diseases such as malaria, rashes and bullet wounds were treated with the same traditional medicines. We didn't have English medicines. I only assisted in providing a supply of hot water. The medication for those who were infected with rashes was applying a mixture of water and bark from certain trees. I did this job for about two years. After serving in the army kitchen and hospital, I was finally old enough to serve on the front lines.

I started serving on the front line in 1969 and lived mostly in war areas after that. Since there weren't a lot of educated people in the army, those who had a little bit of education and were able to read and write like me were ordered to be part of rice tax collecting projects. I was mostly assigned to collect rice and opium taxes. After serving on the front line for two years, I was mostly working as a rice collector. I was honest, I was later assigned to collect money from opium tax.

I went to Thailand in 1972 to carry artillery: our battalion had 300 soldiers and many horses. Along the way we first went to Nam Sai, which is perhaps in Danai area I remember in western Kachin State. We came down to Thailand from there through Shan State in January 1972 in small groups. It took us four months in total to walk. Actually, it was five months. We walked through areas controlled by Shan, Chinese [KMT], Wa, Burmese and finally Thai soldiers.

Kachin soldiers could cross the border with guns. We had our own guns, army base, and uniforms. We lived together. By together I mean the place where we had our military base on the border was part of Thailand. There were some Thai military camps around us, teaching Thai language. We lived together. We could even bring our pistols with us to Chiang Mai. They didn't ask about identification cards in Chiang Mai.

I have been living here in Thailand from May 1972. I was on the list of people going back to Kachin State in 1975, and I had packed all my belongings and all the artillery. But I had boils on my feet and legs that became infected. I couldn't even sleep at night. The day to go back came closer. I was still suffering from boils: I couldn't move, it was so painful. The medical officer from our group came and looked at me and preformed some minor operations. He said, "It has to be operated on in hospital. We can't take him. We have to leave him here."

So I was left in the army camp. All of my battalion, except me, went back to Kachin State. After they were gone, I was taken to hospital in Chiang Mai.

I lived in a KIA house in Chiang Mai after the surgery, and while I healed, I studied Thai language. After living in Chiang Mai for two or three years, I was able to pick up the language, in part because I was still quite young. I was able to read and write some Thai as well. After that, I came back to the camp. The soldiers who came here with me were all gone. Soldiers from other battalions were residing in the camp. As I was able to communicate in Thai, it soon became my job to take sick people to the hospital in Chiang Mai and to accompany other soldiers to the town to go to the market. I assisted them as an interpreter. They couldn't understand Thai, as they were newcomers, so it was my job to help them.

I lived in Karen State for over a year after the breakup of the camp. I came back to Chiang Mai because the political situation in Burma was not good. We could not stay in Burma any longer. I left the army and was living in Chiang Mai. It wasn't that I formally left or resigned: I didn't have proper documents stating that I was discharged. Some Kachin soldiers had left Thailand already and some who remained were scattering across the country, working for survival. Also, it was getting more difficult to go back to my original home in Burma, so I continued living here in Thailand. I was living for a long time both in the Karen State and Chiang Mai, doing any jobs available for me. There was already a village where I knew many people near our old army base on the border, so I thought I would come live here and I did. A lot of people were already living here when I came, over 10 households, around 1984 I think.

I was living here in the village for about one or two years when I met a Lahu woman. We got married and have been living here since with our children. The whole village was filled with Lahu women when I got married. There was not a single Kachin woman in this village. So, all Kachin men who wanted to get married had to marry a Lahu woman. Some married Shan women, and there were some who married Akha women. We were marrying women from other ethnic groups. As a result, our children spoke Lahu, Akha or Shan. Most of the children of Kachin who arrived here first spoke Lahu. This is a short story of how I have come from China to this place.

Appendix 7

“a Burmese soldier, a prisoner, a factory worker, a pastor”

Kachin Evangelicalism in a Shan Village

Sometimes I still think about my life in Burma before I came to Thailand. I am 48 now. I was born in Sinlum village about 9 miles from Bhamo in Kachin State. My father was a soldier in the 2nd Kachin Rifles, a Kachin Battalion in the British Army fighting alongside the British to push the Japanese out of Kachin and Shan states. He retired in 1965. While my father was in the army, my mother was a nurse in Nam Kham village Shan State. I grew up in Nam Kham with my mother and sisters. After my father left the army he became a driver on the Nam Kham to Mandalay route. He did this for a few years and then changed to be a driver in Lashio. My mother quit her job as a nurse and our family moved to Lashio. I remember that the Kachin Army was very active in the area: there was always fighting between the KIA and Burmese soldiers in the jungle. Wounded KIA soldiers would come to our house late at night to be treated by my mother; they could not go to the hospital in town.

My father died a few years before I finished eighth grade. One day, he came home from work early because he was dizzy. He was healthy but died later in hospital. After I finished eighth grade I went to live with my sister. She was married and worked in a silver factory. It was a government factory controlled by the Burmese Army. I stayed there for 4 years and worked a little in the factory with my sister and her husband. I tried to leave but the Burmese soldiers wouldn't let me. That's how I became a soldier in the Burmese Army. I had no choice. I was a soldier for 10 years in Shan State. I started as a radio operator and then moved to become an information recorder and finally I was involved with sending codes to other battalions in the area. I was never in combat, just following generals and sending messages.

During the 1988 democracy uprising I was in charge of receiving and sending transmissions for the warrants to arrest democracy activists in the Shan State. I knew many of these people, so I informed them first that the army was after them, I told them to run and hide in the jungle so they could be safe. If they were caught they would be arrested and killed. My superior found out what I was doing. I was put in prison and interrogated for 6 days straight. Initially, they reduced my rank from Sergeant to Corporal, but I didn't care. I knew everything, all the bad things that the generals had done in the past. They told me that I would be in jail for 20 years. I told them that I would tell all of the general's secrets and all the

information I had. They finally released me after I signed a letter that I would not tell the secrets.

Within a year of leaving the army I was married and moved to Maymeo near Mandalay to live with my sister and mother. My wife is Shan. I didn't stay long in Maymeo. Soldiers came to our house looking for me. They wanted me to be local village leader, to be connected with the army again, but I refused and ran away. I left my wife with my mother and sister and tried to make some money in Mogok ruby and gold mines. I worked very hard but only got a little money. I stayed there for 3 years travelling back and forth to Maymeo to see my wife. The soldiers continued to hassle my family in Maymeo while I was away: they always wanted to know where I was and what I was doing. I heard that there was a new mine opened in an area called Mineshu I thought that I would have more luck but after 2 years I had almost nothing. I met people in Mineshu that had been to Thailand. They told me that it was easier to find work and there is more freedom. In Burma, the army followed me and my family everywhere. We had no freedom. I knew they would not follow me to Thailand. My wife and I packed our belongings and gathered our children. In 1995 we first walked across the border into Thailand and we have never been back.

How did I become a pastor? That's a long story, the best place for me to start is when we all came to Thailand.

I was the last child born in my family. I have three older sisters. My mother told me since I was young that I was a special child, the only son. After having three daughters my father was upset. It is important in Kachin culture to have a son, clans follow the male line. My father told my mother that if she didn't have a boy he would leave her. My mother prayed and prayed. In her prayers she would ask God to give her a son and promised that he would grow up and become a servant of the Lord, a pastor. After seven years I was born. This is a story my mother would tell me often. She wanted me to become a pastor for as long as I can remember but I was never interested. She would tell me over and over that one day I would be a pastor. I never listened and would always run away and hide. It wasn't until I came to Thailand with my family that I finally decided to follow my mother's wishes.

The border [Burma and Thailand] was open and we walked across. It was in 1995 at the end of November. At the time my wife and I already had three children; the eldest was 4, the second was 2 and the youngest my wife carried in her arms she was only nine months old. After paying the truck driver the fare, I can't remember how much it was but it didn't leave us with very much left, we crossed the border and walked one kilometre to the nearest village. There were some Thai Army at the checkpoint but they didn't stop us or ask us any questions.

Many people were crossing the border mainly Chinese and Shan. I never knew that there was a Kachin village here in Thailand. It was getting late in the afternoon and we were all very tired. We had no place to sleep. My wife had some relatives in the area but she had no idea where they lived. We were walking around the market when we saw my wife's relatives. We were all very happy. She had fled Burma the previous year after her village was burnt down by the Burmese Army. We stayed with her and her family for one year I worked on a piece of land owned by a Chinese man for 60 baht a day. I had to be careful not to be caught by local police or army because I didn't have any documents and was afraid that I would be sent back to Burma.

I was surprised to learn that there was a Kachin village nearby so after one year we decided to settle there. We all stayed at a villager's home. He was one of the village founders. He was not there at the time. I think he was in Chiang Mai. We paid a little rent when we could but after a while the owner of the house let us stay for free as long as we took care of his home. Some days I could make a little money working on other peoples' land, but not every day. Many days we only had enough food for our children. We could not live in the village any longer, no money and not enough food to eat. So after one year in the Kachin village my wife and I decided to try and find work in Chiang Mai. We packed our belongings and took our children with us.

Although there were more and more army and police in the area at that time checking identification cards of villagers, we were lucky. We caught a truck and then a bus all the way to Chiang Mai without being stopped. We heard that some Shan were working in a pottery factory in a small district 20 minutes outside of Chiang Mai. I was making 150 baht per day and my wife was earning 100 baht per day ... It was very difficult with 3 small children. Altogether we worked there for 2 years. Our eldest son was school age, but we couldn't afford to send him to school in Chiang Mai and none of us had any Thai documents, so how could we do it?

Things just were not working out. My wife could not work every day because she was caring for our children. Things had to be better back in the village; at least we could grow some rice and maybe send our children to school. So we packed up everything again and left to go back to the village. We stayed with one family for 10 days. They were very kind to let us stay with them because our family was 5 people. With some of the money we had from working in Chiang Mai we bought a small piece of land for 8,000 baht, this land, were we are now. We had no farmland so I had to borrow and rent enough land to grow some rice and a little corn.

After returning to the village and building this house I was in debt 20,000 baht. The RDP was already working here. They were always doing development work; clearing land, constructing their houses, planting trees and digging ponds. It was not really difficult, just all day. All the labour came from Kachin, very few Akha or Lahu helped. We had to work every day for free. If we did not work they would fine us, I had no choice, I could not work to get any money for our family. Because of this I had to borrow more money to send our children to school. I drank a lot then, I would drink when I came back from the fields, local rice liquor. It is very strong. We had small children at home but I did not care. I would drink and then sleep. Now I don't drink anymore, things are better. I almost forgot, by that time we had another son, that made four.

I do not really know why, but I started helping out at the Church [Church of Christ]. The pastor was very kind to my family. I was becoming more interested in religion. Many people especially Shan villagers would ask me about my life as a Christian but I did not know how to answer. I went to Church, sang hymns and prayed before meals, but I was never really interested. Some Shan would come to the Kachin Church. They could not understand and because I spoke Shan they would also ask me to explain to them what was going on.

Things were not going well for me and my family. No land, large debt and 2 more children to begin school soon. I guess the decision to become a pastor happened quickly, but if you look at it another way my mother wanted me to be a pastor since I was a baby, so it also happened slowly. It was 2005. I finished helping at the church and was walking back home when I knew that I wanted to be a pastor. When I got home I told my wife about my decision. She was so angry with me. She told me: "we are 20,000 baht in debt, children at school, no land, no rice and our house is falling apart, and you want to study at Bible school for 3 years!"

I was determined. I would go to the forest and pray many hours a day, some days I would fast to try to reach a solution, I did this for about a month. My wife began to see how much I wanted this. Finally she agreed: "If you can pay off our debt and grow one year supply of rice then you can go." I prayed and prayed. A short time later a friend came to me and told me that an Akha man wanted wood for his new house. He did not want to cut the wood himself because the trees are in a National Park and people caught cutting trees will be arrested and put in jail. He did not want to risk this himself. He had Thai citizenship already but he knew that Kachin did not, and that many Kachin villagers needed money. I agreed on the spot. I spent 20 days in the forest. One day, late in the afternoon, forestry staff found our camp. When we saw them, we left everything and ran. They shot at us but luckily no one was hit. They took all the wood, our bags and tools. But we already had enough wood at another

place. I didn't want to stay any longer so we took the wood to the Akha village. I made 30,000 baht, 10,000 baht more than my promise.

I was so happy and began preparing to go to Chiang Mai Bible School. But my wife reminded me of the second part of our agreement: "grow one year's supply of rice". I didn't know how I would do this, from the time I spent praying and then living in the forest to cut wood I missed planting season and we did not have any land. I ended up borrowing 2 rai of unused land. The grass was 5 feet high! Villagers laughed at me when they heard I was trying to plant rice on this plot: "You will not eat any rice from that land this year." I prayed, cut the grass, burnt it and then planted rice. The rains came later that year, the rice grew, and I was ready to leave.

Early 2005 I was ready to start studying in Chiang Mai. My wife had seen how much I wanted to become a pastor and how everything was achieved through hard work and prayer so she also decided to study with me. Our children stayed in the village with friends while we studied in Chiang Mai. My wife and I had to plead with the school administration to allow us to study. We had no Thai documents, and these were required for admission. After several long talks with school staff they allowed us to stay and study. We were the first people permitted to study at the school without Thai identification. After one year the missionaries heard that we had 4 small children living in the village and they allowed us to bring them to the school and stay with us in the dormitory.

In our final year of study we would travel to villages near the Thai-Burma border and spread the word of God. Several villages that we visited already had an established Church, so my wife and I decided to work in a Shan Buddhist community. We were encouraged to do this by a Rawang pastor. He thought that it would be a good opportunity to spread the word of God to Shan people in the area. We agreed. We started by preaching on the side of the road, handing out pamphlets and talking to villagers about God.

When my wife and I first arrived in the Shan village we had only one member, our church was at his house. Every Wednesday and Saturday we would sing and play hymns and have service on Sunday morning. Not long after starting our work in the village, a Singaporean businessman came to the village. He was selling fertilizer I think. Anyway, he saw us worshipping in a small house, there were about eighty other people standing around outside. They were not members but wanted to come and listen to our songs. Many were just curious or did not have any work that day. I spoke briefly with the Singaporean man: he was with a Thai man so we could communicate. He said he was interested in helping us build a church, but we did not think much about it after he left.

Four months later he came back. He had some money to help build a church, but we also needed to help with some of the money to buy land. We started to raise money in the village to buy land but the village committee and leader would not permit any one to sell land to us. They did not want a church in their village. They even said that any one that converted to Christianity would not be welcome in the village and would have to leave. We tried for a long time to convince them that all we wanted to do was have a small church where we could pray, sing and teach English. Still he would not allow us to buy land. Finally, we made an agreement with the village leader that we would buy the old cemetery land. The community had a belief that this area had strong spirits and villagers were afraid to go near the area. We did not care because we did not believe in the local spirits. Because the area was abandoned, the village leader agreed we could buy it. Actually, the land is very beautiful. It is next to a stream and a waterfall: we were lucky that the other villagers were afraid of the area. I spoke with my teachers at the Bible School in Chiang Mai about the situation and they informed me that the Singaporean man, the man I spoke about earlier, had left a donation of 90,000 baht for the land and church construction in the village. We finally started construction of the church in 2007. When we got the land, we had a blessing ceremony and sent all the spirits away. Villagers are no longer afraid.

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19 February 2016

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Reference No: HE31JUL2009-D00067

Title: *Politics of Difference: State and Community Relations of the Kachin (Jinghpaw) in Thailand*

This letter is to confirm that the ethics application cited above met the requirements set out in the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (2007 – Updated May 2015) (the *National Statement*).

The application received approval from the Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee on 21 August 2009.

The above project was conducted by Mr. Joseph Rickson, PhD candidate, under the supervision of Associate Professor Chris Lyttleton and Associate Professor Paul Cohen.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K White'.

Dr Karolyn White
Director, Research Ethics & Integrity
Chair, Macquarie University Human Research Ethics Committee

This HREC is constituted and operates in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council's (NHMRC) *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (2007) and the *CPMP/ICH Note for Guidance on Good Clinical Practice*.