

From War Refugees to Immigrants: The Case of the KMT Yunnanese Chinese in Northern Thailand¹

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The KMT (Kuomintang) Yunnanese Chinese in Northern Thailand have a complex migration history spread over different generations and places. It not only reflects political entanglements involving different power entities, but also illustrates the dynamic reaction of the people to the complications. The article focuses on the interactions between the political powers and the people. The process highlights that the Yunnanese are not mere objects controlled by external policies or conditions. After a few decades of hard life, they have been transforming themselves from refugee warriors to immigrants.

Malkki (1995) correctly points out that although the existence of refugees is a recurrent phenomenon in human history, the issue of refugee management only gained its global prominence after World War II because of a large scale of refugees that resulted from the war. International organizations were established to handle refugee resettlement and relevant questions. Standardizing and globalizing processes of pursuing the refugee issue began to take place. However, this development did not reflect in academic research immediately, though some historical records and books with reference to refugees did start to appear. The "systematization of the study of refugees" only founded its academic recognition in the 1980s (Malkki, 1995:507). The deepening of complex international scenarios and the rapid increase in the number of refugees each year stimulated this belated academic interest and concern. To give a brief picture, in the mid 1970s, wars spread in different corners of the world (*e.g.*, Latin America, Indochina and Africa), which subsequently caused refugees to throng into foreign countries. The concerned international organizations were confronted with great challenges to cope with refugee prob-

¹The fieldwork was conducted primarily in 25 Yunnanese refugee villages in Northern Thailand (among them, 22 are KMT villages, *i.e.*, founded by the KMT troops and were under their protection and control), secondarily in Chiang Mai, Bangkok and Taiwan, from November 1994 until August 1996, and a two-month visit in Northern Thailand and Taiwan in 1999. I am greatly indebted to Professor Johan Leman, the director of Migration and Ethnicity Research Institute, Brussels, for his patient and intellectual guidance of my research.

lems. This situation was not alleviated following the termination of the cold war period. On the contrary, there was creation of new waves of refugees in Eastern Europe in the wake of the collapse of the communist regimes and accompanying social, economic and political chaos, and also in the Middle East, Africa and South Asia, due to political struggles, religious conflicts, ethnic insurgencies and so forth (Loescher, 1992:9–27).

In response to the intensification of refugee problems, the issue of transnational migration and security concerns has emerged as an important subject in refugee studies. Myron Weiner (1985, 1993), Aristide R. Zolberg *et al.*, (1986; 1989) and Gil Loescher (1989), among others, have provided research insights. A common emphasis underlying their studies is that refugee problems should be located in dynamic contexts in order to explore the interactions between refugees, their native governments, the host governments, and international powers involved. This emphasis is comparable to systems approaches in migration studies, which purport to study the interrelations between migrants (at the micro-level), their migration networks (at the intermediate level) and complex international factors (at the macro-level).²

In the present case study of the KMT Yunnanese Chinese, who fled their homeland after the Communist takeover in China in 1949, I attempt to relocate their migration and resettlement in historical contexts and analyze the interaction process between the people and different political entities involved. The attempt is also a response to Malkki's suggestion to anthropologists that international relations should be incorporated into the research framework while viewing refugee movements (1995:505). By doing so, I hope to highlight the people's dynamics in different periods and to illustrate the transformation of migration pattern undertaken by the younger generation.³ With its complex migration history spread over different generations and places, the KMT case is of great significance in refugee studies as well as in (voluntary) migration studies.

WAR REFUGEES ON A POLITICAL CHESS BOARD (1949–1961)

The year 1949 is a landmark in modern Chinese history. The Nationalist (Kuomintang, or KMT) government led by Chiang Kai-Shek lost the civil war against the Chinese Communists led by Mao Zedong. The former then

² The concept of a migration systems approach was first proposed by Mabogunje (1970), and later developed by Fawcett and Arnold (1987), Portes and Borocz (1989), Boyd (1989) and Kritz, Zlotnik and Lim (1992).

³ Two excellent publications on the dynamics of refugees are *Involuntary Migration and Resettlement*, Hansen and Oliver-Smith, eds. (1982), and *Refugees*, Khan and Talal (1986).

withdrew to Taiwan with a number of his followers.⁴ Yunnan was the last province taken over by the Communist regime. Hundreds and thousands of refugees fled southwestward to Burma. They deemed the Chinese Communists as the devil who caused them to flee from their homeland and carried out persecutions against their near and dear ones left behind in the country. Among the refugees, there were remaining corps from the Nationalist army and local self-defense guards. Some of them quickly rallied together and organized themselves into KMT guerrilla forces. They managed to restore connection with the Nationalist government in Taiwan and consequently gained official recognition and obtained material supplies. The guerrillas were entitled "The Yunnan Anti-Communist Salvation Army" in January 1951. Military instructors were sent from Taiwan to organize training programs. Furthermore, the troops also sought support from the United States, which held the leadership of the alliance against the spread of communist power during the cold war period. On account of ideological solidarity of anti-communism, these KMT guerrillas were considered both by Taiwan and the United States as serving the strategic function of preventing Communist China's expansion to Southeast Asia. Chiang Kai-Shek even envisioned that some day these troops would help contain the Chinese Communists from the southwest of the mainland while the Nationalist army was advancing from Taiwan to the southeast coast of the mainland to recover the lost country.

Beside Taiwan and the United States, Thailand also took part in facilitating the KMT guerrillas. Weapons and other goods were often transferred with the help of Thailand to their military bases in the Shan states in Burma. After World War II, Thailand sided with the anti-Communist bloc, the international alignment directed by the United States. Thailand was an important ally to the United States in Southeast Asia. They worked together closely to stem the infiltration by communists in the region (Girling, 1981:236).⁵

Against the harsh living conditions in Burma, anti-communism became the ideological means of survival for the KMT. Their hope of returning to Yunnan was strengthened by this ideology and ongoing military operations. A series of guerrilla wars were launched in Yunnan in the 1950s. Though unable to sustain themselves long in Yunnan each time, they succeeded in

⁴They included civilians and soldiers. The number of escapees from mainland China to Taiwan was about 1.5 million to 2 million between 1949 and 1950 (Zhang Maogui, 1993:241).

⁵From the 1950s through the mid 1970s, Thailand provided several military bases to the United States in order to prevent the influence of Communist China southward and to facilitate American participation in the Indochinese warfare. In return, Thailand received significant military and economic aid from the United States, e.g., between 1951 and 1971, the aid amounted to \$935.9 million (Girling, 1982:236).

inciting more fellowmen to follow them. In spite of the fact that not all KMT troops were equally well-organized (some were said to abuse their power and take advantage of local people and civilian refugees), the guerrilla forces as a whole represented the Yunnanese refugee warrior community, which provided the incentives of cohesion and economic rewards to many fellow nationals in the foreign land. Fellow refugees were welcomed to join the guerrilla troops. Those who came with a few men and weapons were entitled to be small troop leaders. The guerrilla forces expanded rapidly and became the core part of the Yunnanese military. Such a phenomenon confirms Zolberg's theory on the development of the refugee warrior community. He points out:

Once established, refugee-warrior communities tend to grow because they provide opportunities and even incentives for others to become politically active. Individuals in exile may find that the most socially meaningful and economically rewarding activity is to join the warriors, and consequently move from the category of mere displaced persons into that of politically active and conscious (Zolberg *et al.*, 1986:166).

By the end of 1951, the total number of soldiers had reached about 14,000 (Ministry of Defense, Taiwan, 1964:17). A great majority of them consisted of Yunnanese Han (Yunnanese Chinese); only about 30 percent were made up of other ethnic minorities from Yunnan or Burma.

However, newly independent Burma was not pleased with the existence of the KMT guerrillas. It was flanked by Communist China in the north and America-supported Thailand in the southeast. A neutral policy was considered the best strategy to cope with the two conflicting ideological blocs (Young, 1970; Taylor, 1973). The existence of the KMT forces was perceived as a threat to its territorial integrity as their presence could trigger a possible invasion by Communist China (Ministry of Information, the Union of Burma, 1953). The alignment between the KMT and some ethnic rebel groups especially irritated the Burmese regime, which had been trying to quell ethnic insurgencies in the country since its independence in 1948. The ethnic structure and politics in Burma are very complicated. Many ethnic minorities had never really conformed to external politics either before or during the British colonial period. With the establishment of Burma, ethnic insurgencies began to intensify. In short, the KMT was a menace to its national security (for further understanding of Burmese ethnic composition and riots, *see* Smith, 1991 and Lintner, 1994). Fighting between the KMT and the Burmese army thus took place frequently. Failing to drive out the KMT itself and not being able to persuade the United States to apply pres-

sure on Taiwan for the evacuation of the guerrillas, it finally filed an appeal in the UN on March 25, 1953, accusing the KMT armies of infiltration and subordination to the Nationalist government in Taiwan. Under international pressure, Taiwan was forced to evacuate these troops. The evacuation took place from November 7, 1953 to June 3, 1954. Prior to the evacuation, the number of guerrillas was 16,068 (Ministry of Defense, Taiwan, 1964:illustration 6). Yet, the number of evacuees totaled only 6,750, including both soldiers and civilians (Ministry of Defense, Taiwan, 1964:60–82, 364–371).

After the evacuation, the Nationalist government announced that it had tried its best in the evacuation effort; it had nothing to do with those who stayed behind and would cease all assistance to the remaining troops (Ministry of Defense, Taiwan, 1964:372, 373). Nevertheless, three months later it regained command over the remnant forces, renewed supplies and appointed another chief commander to lead the guerrillas. Conflicts between the Burmese army and the guerrillas ensued. In November of 1960, the Burmese government allied with the Chinese Communist army to fight against the KMT. They achieved their mission and successfully compelled Taiwan to carry out the second evacuation which took place from March 17, 1961, until April 30, 1961. Evacuated to Taiwan were 4,406 people consisting of soldiers and civilians (Ministry of Defense, Taiwan, 1964:100–101). Prior to the evacuation, the number of the KMT guerrillas had reached nearly 10,000 (Ministry of Defense, Taiwan, 1964:91, 97, 229). Though this evacuation had ended the organization of the KMT guerrillas in Burma, the majority of the troops were not willing to be evacuated. Many soldiers either remained in Burma or gradually entered Laos or Northern Thailand. Some were absorbed by other rebel forces.

Examining the activities of the KMT guerrillas in Burma during the 1950s reveals involvement of several political entities: China, Taiwan, Burma, Thailand and the United States. They all acted on the basis of national security or power concerns. For China and Burma, the existence of the KMT guerrillas posed a dangerous threat that needed to be removed. Yet for Taiwan and the United States, these troops meant extension of their powers and a strategic means to contain China's development southward. The international relations (Weiner, 1985; Loescher, 1992) between these two opposing sides were thus strained. With regard to Thailand, from the late 1940s to the early 1970s, the successive governments under the leadership of Phibun, Sarit and Thanom maintained a radical anti-Communist stance. The primary concern of the governments was to guard the country against external communist

invasion and to suppress internal development of communism. The stationing of the KMT in Burma was seen as serving the function of curbing the Chinese Communist infiltration through Burma into its country. Moreover, there was a "common interest" between the KMT guerrillas and the Thai ruling class. Several high-ranking Thai officers and generals were said to have been involved in the contraband of drug trafficking (McCoy, 1991:361). Judging from appearance, the KMT guerrillas seemed to be an unimportant pawn on a chess board, its movement decided by other major pieces. However, if we look into the interaction, we see that besides the external push and pull factors induced by the political entities concerned, the KMT guerrillas as a warrior community played an active role in its development. In contrast to Kunz's theory (1973), which emphasizes the overwhelming push factor in involuntary migration and asserts refugees' movement as "kinetic," the case of the KMT guerrillas attests that they were political actors who mobilized available resources for their survival in the face of complex circumstances (*see* Allen and Hiller, 1985:448). The following three points further explain this fact.

First, the establishment of the KMT and their connections with Taiwan, the United States and Thailand indicate their application of strategies of empowerment. They exploited the ethnic divisions in Burma and allied with some local ethnic groups in order to gain a foothold. Besides obtaining supplies from Taiwan and the United States, they also received aid from Chinese immigrants in Burma and Thailand. The chief commander of the guerrilla forces, General Li Mi, and several other guerrilla leaders maintained good relationships with Thai generals (*e.g.*, the Thai Police Commander, General Prao) so as to facilitate the transference of supplies through Thailand (McCoy, 1991:361). Moreover, they engaged in narcotics trade and extorted taxes from other drug traffickers and local people to supplement their incomes. Regarding human resources, they recruited fellow refugees and local people. Accordingly, the KMT guerrillas exercised network functions and extended ties and association in two directions, *i.e.*, the fellow refugees (at the micro-level) and external powers (at the macro-level). In the face of complex situations, they strove to provide the sense of belonging and basic material needs.

Second, while coping with orders from Taiwan to launch guerrilla wars in Yunnan, guerrilla leaders tried to expand their individual corps. Some even exploited their military strength for personal aggrandizement. Not all troops had faith in the officers who were sent from Taiwan. Factions and struggles existed among the KMT guerrillas, especially after the first evacuation. Although internal divisions affected the unity of the KMT guerrillas as a whole, this phenomenon was a demonstration of empowerment at the lower

level. These divisions also reflected the different responses of refugees as actors to external conditions.

Third, the guerrillas did not totally comply with the requests of any of the political powers. Their development was a direct challenge to the Burmese regime. Their internal divisions showed defiance of the leadership of officers sent from Taiwan. Despite the decision regarding the first evacuation reached in the discussions among Taiwan, the United States, Thailand and Burma, there was strong disagreement on the part of the guerrillas. The number of soldiers evacuated was actually very small. The same result occurred again in the second evacuation. Informants recalled that most people were unwilling to take part in the evacuations. Taiwan was a poor and strange island for them at that time. They could hardly imagine living there. Burma was next to their homeland, Yunnan. It would be more convenient for them to return to Yunnan from Burma or other neighboring countries than from Taiwan. A former military instructor analyzed the situation: "Taiwan is a small island. There is no place to run. Here [Southeast Asia] is a big land. People can stay in Burma, or go to Laos or Thailand, if a situation becomes bad." Their refusal to be part of the evacuations *manifests the dynamics of their transnational involuntary migration*. There was an ongoing interaction between the policy-making of the international forces and the decision-making on the part of these refugee warriors (Zolberg *et al.*, 1989:277–278).

RESETTLEMENT IN NORTHERN THAILAND SINCE THE 1960s

Among the remnant forces after the second evacuation, General Li and General Duan were able to maintain their troops, code-named the Third and Fifth Armies, respectively, numbering about 3,200 in total according to informants and relevant data. They brought about 2,600 soldiers to Northern Thailand in 1961 (Development Center of Civil Servants in Chiang Mai Province, 1994) and gradually established their military posts along the northern Thai-Burmese border areas.⁶ In order to maintain their troops, Li and Duan stationed a part of their armies in Burma to facilitate the caravan trade back and forth between Thailand and Burma. Drug trafficking and trade in precious stones were the two major sources of income (Lamour, 1982 [1975]:173–203; McCoy, 1991:349–355; Lintner, 1994:239–271).

⁶After the first evacuation, there had been about 2,000 refugees, who were led by KMT officers appointed by the headquarters, and entered Northern Thailand and resettled in three villages.

The Thai government was aware of the entry of these KMT troops, but it was sympathetic towards these anti-Communist forces and, in fact, it had no thorough effective control over its border in the north at that time. There were also other Burmese rebel groups and Thai and Miao Communists scattered along the border areas. In addition, several Thai generals and officers had maintained a good relationship since the days when the latter were stationed in Burma, owing to their "common interests" as mentioned above. The Thai government tacitly permitted temporary stay to the forces of General Li and General Duan along the border areas. The conditions were that the troops would not bring in any weapons or engage in military activities within the country. The Thai government later informed Li and Duan that it would negotiate with the Taiwanese government on the issue of their evacuation.

Several negotiations between the Taiwanese and Thai governments, General Li and General Duan took place in the 1960s. However, they proved to be nugatory. In the last meeting in 1970, the Nationalist government proposed that Thailand and Taiwan cooperate for intelligence work and that Li and Duan should go to Taiwan and let other officers from Taiwan take over their armies (Prakatwutthisan, 1995:53–55). But the proposal was rejected by Li and Duan. They were unwilling to give up their forces with whom they had undergone many hardships. Furthermore, they did not envision a future in Taiwan where they had no networks. These negotiations and the negative result consequently engendered an ambivalent relationship between Taiwan and Li and Duan in the 1960s and 1970s. The latter were perceived as disobedient by the Taiwanese government.

In order to establish their footholds in Thailand, General Li and General Duan requested the Thai government to allow them to stay in Thailand as refugees. They submitted a five-point letter to the government. First, they pleaded with the Thai government to grant legal status and to allow them to bring their troops stationed in Burma along with their dependents to Thailand. Second, they promised to observe Thai laws and customs. Third, they agreed to surrender their arms to the government. They requested permission to keep a few weapons for the purpose of self-defense. Fourth, they requested the government to grant them land for resettlement and to help them develop living skills. Fifth, they expressed willingness to help the government combat the Thai Communists (Prakatwutthisan, 1995:56–57).

In response to their request, the Thai government asked the KMT forces to help suppress the Communists inside its country and promised to provide partial supplies to their armies. Perceiving this request as an opportunity to

establish legal resettlement in Thailand, Li and Duan accepted it. In the 1970s and the early 1980s, they won several important battles that not only enabled them to get legal status for the troops, but also assisted the resettlement of a great number of Yunnanese refugees (Bo, 1982:143–178; Prakatwutthisan, 1995:35–37, 67, 94, 110, 147–162).

In the early 1960s, most dependents of the troops and other Yunnanese refugees still stayed in Burma but, following the aggravation of the sociopolitical situation in Burma on account of the military coup in 1962 and a series of economic reforms thereafter, many were compelled to flee to Northern Thailand. According to *ex-officers* of the KMT armies, during the 1960s and 1970s the troops of Li and Duan escorted an estimated number of 10,000 refugees from Burma to Northern Thailand. They consisted primarily of dependents of the troops and secondarily of civilian followers. The troops helped to found villages to accommodate the refugees. Due to their victories in the mission of fighting against communist forces, the Thai government conferred on them places for the resettlement of the inflow of Yunnanese refugees and also recognized many other Yunnanese villages which had been founded earlier. Meanwhile, a complicated procedure of granting legal status was undertaken.

Most of these Yunnanese refugee villages are in Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai provinces. They formed two *de facto* sociopolitical groupings, belonging to the power domains of Li or Duan. These villages have been commonly known as the KMT villages. The majority population in these villages is Yunnanese Han. They have not only accommodated the refugees brought in by the troops of Li and Duan, but have also functioned as havens for other Yunnanese who arrived themselves, especially since the 1980s.⁷ The establishment of the villages, on the one hand, has mitigated the trauma of flight experienced by the refugees and, on the other hand, enabled the continuity of Yunnanese traditions in the immigrant society. The KMT armies thus played a crucial role with respect to the migration and resettlement of most Yunnanese refugees in Northern Thailand, either directly or indirectly. In practice, they

⁷ Based on my field research and data released by the FCRA Service Group in Northern Thailand (a semi-official organization sent from Taiwan in 1982, see the following section), there had been more than 40 Yunnanese refugee villages in the early 1970s. Among them, 29 could be classified as KMT villages. The number of villages continued to increase following repeated inflows of Yunnanese refugees from Burma. In 1994, the FCRA Service Group counted 77 villages inhabited by Yunnanese. The total population in these villages was 89,018. The Yunnanese Han accounted for about 60 percent (around 54,000); the rest was accounted for by other ethnic minorities from Yunnan or Burma. A rough estimation of the number of KMT villages is around 35. In other villages, many Yunnanese inhabitants were not directly related to the armies of Li and Duan, but were stragglers from other guerrilla groups or their relatives.

continued the network functions of the KMT guerrillas during the 1950s. They strove to provide stability and cohesion to the fellowmen in the host society. Seen from migration systems approaches, the migration of the people was institutionalized (Boyd, 1989:645). It consisted of a dynamic process initiated by the KMT armies. Informants often emphasize the significance of the armies. An elderly Yunnanese informant pointed out: "Without the troops, we Yunnanese would have all become Kuolo."⁸ Another one asserted: "It would have been impossible to live without the troops. It was because of their protection that there have been [Yunnanese] Chinese villages." In short, the troops had helped to galvanize the community force. In comparison, their migration experiences and process of resettlement are very different from those of the earlier Chinese immigrants, who in most cases came to Thailand alone or in small groups by sea and dispersed mainly into urban areas (Skinner, 1957).⁹

Looking into the interaction between the Thai government and the armies of Li and Duan, we find that the pattern is rather dissimilar to that between the Burmese government and the KMT guerrillas. The Thai government was aware of the entry of these refugee warriors. Though they might be an uncertain factor affecting its national stability, they were also perceived as a potential force to bolster security in Northern Thailand, since both sides shared the same anti-Communist stance. In addition, the government apprehended that they could not be easily expelled. Instead of having conflicts with them, the government integrated the troops and stationed them in the

In Chiang Mai, there are also many Yunnanese settlers; most of them are traders. While the armies of Li and Duan engaged actively in caravan trade back and forth between Burma and Thailand, these traders had close trading connections with the armies (Chang, 1999b:92-104).

⁸"Kuolo" is a pejorative term used by the Yunnanese Han for northern Thai people.

⁹The major influxes of Chinese immigrants from the southeast coastal provinces to Thailand by sea took place between the second half of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century. Main groups included Teochiu, Hokkiens, Hakka, and Hainanese. The immigrants either undertook trade or labor work. Their economic contribution has been prominently recognized (Skinner, 1957:4). Their descendants have integrated very well into Thai society. They have become a very significant ethnic group in the country, and are often known as Sino-Thai. Nevertheless, during the period when anti-communism was the supreme ideological order enforced by the government, ethnic Chinese were subjected to restrictions with respect to Chinese education, press, economic engagement and Chinese associations. This was due to the fact that after the Second World War, the political affiliation of the people was split into pro-Communist and pro-Nationalist. The bulk of the Communist Party of Thailand consisted of ethnic Chinese. The implementation of laws imposing restrictions on ethnic Chinese was done to dampen the pro-Communist activities among the members (Coughlin 1960; Wyatt 1984:266-275).

northern border areas to prevent infiltration of the communist forces from the neighboring countries. As a result, this integration policy assured a positive interrelationship.¹⁰

NEW CHANGES AND MIGRATIONS SINCE THE 1980s

As time passed, the KMT armies gradually entered their late stage in the 1980s. Many soldiers had retired, and it became more and more difficult to recruit young people. The earlier ideological means of survival, anti-communism, was weakening. The goal of recovering their homeland had become remote and had been replaced by the objective of resettlement in Thailand. Fragmentation slowly stalked the armies (Chang, 2002). Furthermore, the communist forces had gradually been subdued, and the Thai government was able to control the border areas more efficiently. Naturally, it would have liked to disarm these foreign troops. The financial supply to the armies was annually curtailed from 1984 and finally terminated in 1989 (Prakatwutthisan, 1995:32). The Fifth Army was disbanded in 1987 and the Third Army in 1989. The military period of the KMT came to an end.

Looking at the village life, it becomes evident that the Yunnanese have been working hard to rebuild their home in this immigrant country. The Thai government allows them to lead their own lifestyle. Each village has a self-governing committee, responsible for the care of communal affairs, such as the construction of the infrastructure system, communication with relevant Thai authorities, the mediation of disputes between villagers, and the organization of communal rituals. It is the locus of sociopolitical power in the village and was the extension of the power of the army (Li's or Duan's) in the village during the military period.

Generally speaking, General Li and General Duan oversaw the villages in an indirect way. They appointed or acknowledged the chairmen of the self-governing committees, but they seldom intervened in village affairs. Local Thai government officials also respected General Li's and General Duan's power domains and only came to KMT villages when necessary. Therefore, each village enjoyed autonomy. Following the disbandment of the armies, the KMT villages have been gradually integrated into the local Thai administrative system, but villagers still retain the freedom to organize their daily lives

¹⁰The factor of "common interest" may have continued to play a role. It was estimated that by 1970, Li's and Duan's armies had controlled 90 percent of Burma's opium trade (McCoy 1991:349). Informants acknowledged that their engagement had been facilitated by the Thai authorities.

based on their own traditions. In most KMT villages, distinctive Yunnanese Han traditions persist, although the fact of cultural transformation cannot be denied. After entering any of the villages, an outsider can quickly observe various Yunnanese Han characteristics, reflected in the language, food, dwelling arrangement, and existence of the Chinese school, the Guanyin temple and the cemetery. Informants often mention that their villages are like small Chinese societies. At the early stage of their stay, a return to the familiar lifestyle enabled the refugees to connect their past with the present and to plan for a better future. After undergoing frequent interruptions from previous flights, there emerged a new sense of continuity, which facilitated their resettlement. Such a process corresponds to Knudsen's resettlement theory which emphasizes the continuity of refugees' lives based on the tying together of past, present and future (Knudsen, 1988; *see also* Chang, 1999b).

For the older generation, these villages are their final resting places. Such a mentality is distinctively different from that of the earlier Chinese immigrants who came by sea and wished to be buried in the mainland. (Concerning the issue of ethnic identification with reference to the continuous migrations of the KMT Yunnanese Chinese over different generation categories and places, *see* Chang, 1999a.) They have built their homes with bare hands and raised their children here. Though the interaction with Thai people is not devoid of conflicts, the Yunnanese in general appreciate the Thai government's acceptance of their stay. They often remark that Thailand is a fertile country and its Buddhist belief, which they consider very similar to Chinese Buddhism, has facilitated their resettlement.

Regarding the younger generation, a better future prospect does not exist in the villages for most of the members. Like many rural Thai youngsters, they see cities as more promising. Migration to cities (mostly to Bangkok and Chiang Mai) offers the possibilities to pursue better lives and also to discard their refugee status. The outflow of youth population has taken place from the 1980s onward. In many KMT villages, about 90 percent of the young people belonging to families of early settlers (*i.e.*, arriving in the villages before 1980) have left the villages. Therefore, many houses only have the old parent(s), or the old parent(s) with one or more grandchildren whose parents are working in Thai cities (or Taiwan), or the parent(s) and one married son, his wife, and a few grandchildren. The aging phenomenon in the villages is obvious.

The majority of young Yunnanese, migrating from villages to Thai cities, work in factories, especially in Bangkok. But those with some capital mostly

engage in buying and selling farm produce or in jade stone business. The latter is a unique trade especially among Yunnanese in Chiang Mai (Hill, 1998). Urban Yunnanese in general adapt well to the Thai way of life in the public sphere, but most try to maintain some essential Yunnanese Chinese traditions at home, especially with respect to food, language and ancestor worship, and transmit them to the next generation. In order to strengthen the knowledge of Chinese culture in the next generation, many parents who can afford it send their children to learn Chinese during the weekends. Nevertheless, Yunnanese Chinese normally do not reveal their Yunnanese origin in public and prefer to be seen as descendants of earlier Chinese immigrants who came by sea. Their concealment of Yunnanese background is attributed to a prevalent negative Thai perception of the KMT Yunnanese in association with their former military activities and drug trafficking. This negative perception is reflected in the term *Jin-ho*, used by the Thai people when referring to the KMT Yunnanese Chinese. *Jin* means Chinese in Thai language, but the origin of *ho* is no longer certain (Mote, 1967:492–493; Hill, 1998:68–73).¹¹ With regard to its present usage, the term *Jin-ho* contains pejorative meanings, ascribing the KMT Yunnanese to being violent and backward and engaging in illegal trade (Hill, 1998:18). By moving away from the KMT villages, the younger generation transform themselves from the status of refugees and *ho* to that of migrants or ethnic Chinese in general. Their movement can be seen as spiralism for upward social mobility and also as escape from village life and resistance to refugee status and being *ho* (see Boyle, Halfacree and Robinson, 1998:208–216).

Apart from migration to Thai cities, Taiwan is another desired destination for migration because of the people's political affiliation with the Nationalist government in Taiwan since the 1950s and Taiwan's rapid economic development in the last two decades. After the first evacuation undertaken in 1953–1954, the Free China Relief Association (FCRA),¹² a semi-official organization that works closely with the Nationalist party in Taiwan, started to

¹¹With respect to the origin of *ho* (or *haw*), Hill has made a summary of different speculations (Hill, 1998:68–73). Among them, the speculation by Li Fuyi, a Chinese scholar on Tai studies, appears more convincing to me. He advocates that *ho* was the term used by the Baiyi (the Tai people in Sipsongpanna, Yunnan) to address the ruling group of Nanzhao (AD 741–902) and their offspring in Yunnan. The meaning of *ho* is “grant” or “heaven” in the Baiyi language. The capital of Nanzhao was called *Tai ho* (grand town), and Nanzhao was referred to as *Mong ho* (the grand kingdom). But following the influx of Han Chinese into Yunnan since the 14th century and the accompanying process of sinicization, *ho* was used by different Tai peoples to refer to Yunnanese Chinese both in Yunnan and its neighboring countries (Li, 1976:31–32).

deliver small amounts of relief to Yunnanese refugees in Northern Thailand. Though the relationship between the KMT troops and Taiwan in the 1960s and the 1970s was ambivalent, irregular aid from the FCRA to Yunnanese refugee villages continued. But, in 1975, Thailand severed its diplomatic relations with Taiwan and established new ties with Communist China. The bilateral relationship between Taiwan and Thailand became strained, and aid from Taiwan to Yunnanese Chinese refugees in Northern Thailand stopped. This situation did not improve until the late 1970s.¹³ Following the amelioration of the bilateral relationship, FCRA set up a service group in Chiang Mai in 1982 in order to provide aid programs to the Yunnanese Chinese (Free China Relief Association, 1984, 1988). The group consisted of a number of experts in agriculture, education, medical care and handicrafts. Its relief work has greatly improved the living conditions of the people.

Among the aid projects, assistance in Chinese education has particular importance. Many KMT villages established a Chinese school a few years after their founding. The schools are not officially recognized by the Thai government. The lessons can only be taught before and after the hours of study at the Thai school. In other words, students receive Chinese lessons in the early morning and evening in the Chinese schools, but go to Thai schools during the day. In most villages, the Chinese lessons are only up to the primary level, but a few provide learning until the junior high level. They use the curricula followed in Taiwan and receive shipments of textbooks from there. After the arrival of the service group, more funds have been given for promotion of Chinese education. More Chinese schools have been established, and scholarships for further studies in Taiwan were offered each year until 1991.¹⁴ In their learning, the political idea of Taiwan as the fatherland has been emphasized, especially prior to the 1990s. Going to Taiwan for further studies is considered as returning to their fatherland by the students. By doing so, they would become full Chinese and would no longer be refugees. Moreover, the economic development in Taiwan holds a strong appeal. Apart from studying in Taiwan, a great number of youngsters have gone there for work. Taiwan has had a shortage of labor due to its

¹²FCRA was set up to provide aid to Chinese refugees in different parts of the world soon after the Nationalist government retreated to Taiwan. Besides humanitarian considerations, the assistance was intended to garner political support of Chinese refugees abroad and overseas Chinese in general.

¹³Thailand has still retained diplomatic relations with China, but communication with Taiwan in non-political areas has been normalized.

¹⁴From 1968 onwards, the FCRA had started to offer grants, but only to a very small number of students and not every year. Regular scholarship began in 1979. The number of students granted scholarships was different each year. It ranged from around 50 to more than 100.

rapid industrial development since the 1980s.¹⁵

Many Yunnanese who have been to Taiwan for study or work have applied for permanent stay in the country. The applications were granted easily prior to 1994; but since then, applications have been reviewed strictly.¹⁶ Many of those who have succeeded in obtaining permanent residential status have also submitted applications in order to bring in other family members. There is no census showing the total number of Yunnanese Chinese from Northern Thailand in Taiwan, but in several KMT villages almost every family has at least one member who is in Taiwan or has been there. Following in the footsteps of their grandparents and parents, the Yunnanese youngsters in Taiwan have undertaken a new transnational migration. But in contrast to the involuntary migrations of the older generations, the migration being carried out by the younger generation is voluntary. Furthermore, the former's migrations were a series of flights away from their homeland, but the latter's is a return to their political fatherland for both emotional and economic reasons. The repeated transnational migration experiences undertaken by the different generations have formed an interesting pattern: from involuntary migrations by land to voluntary migration by sea, and from physical homeland to ideological fatherland.

With regard to the Yunnanese from Northern Thailand in Taiwan, they have been quickly assimilated into this industrialized society. Like the urban Yunnanese in Thailand who have merged with descendants of the earlier Chinese immigrants, the Yunnanese from Thailand in Taiwan have merged with the "multiprovincial mainlanders," *i.e.*, those who came to Taiwan with Chiang Kai-Shek from different provinces of the mainland and their offspring who were born in Taiwan. There is no well-functioning over-arching Yunnanese organization, but networks based on kinship are maintained for communication among relatives and friends in Taiwan and with those in Thailand.

There have also been some young people who went to Japan as guest-workers. This labor migration route is not as popular as the one to Taiwan, for Japan is more difficult to enter and, besides economic attraction, the country does not induce any emotional attachment among the Yunnanese. A few informants who have returned from Japan related that most people apply for tourist visas to go to Japan. After arriving in the country, they work illegally. In most

¹⁵Though the Taiwanese government only passed a law in 1992 allowing foreign guest workers from Southeast Asian countries to enter Taiwan to work for a fixed term, illegal guest workers have existed since the 1980s.

¹⁶This is essentially due to the sociopolitical changes in Taiwan from the second half of the 1980s onward, which have resulted in the change in its policies concerning overseas Chinese. The major political concern of Taiwan has shifted from anti-communism and recovery of China to winning international recognition of its *de facto* independent status. This prosperous and overcrowded island still welcomes outstanding overseas Chinese in different fields to return to Taiwan and contribute to the society, but not so much overseas Chinese in general.

cases, those who go earlier help the newcomers (usually their friends or relatives) find accommodations and jobs. Most people work in Chinese restaurants. Their intention is to stay temporarily in order to make money. They work 12 hours a day and six to seven days a week. Most people work for three to five years and then report at the immigration office in order to return to Thailand. There are also Yunnanese who went to Taiwan first, and from Taiwan to Japan. Two informants related that they applied for further studies in Japan with Taiwanese passports. They said that the number of Yunnanese who have resorted to this indirect migration route is small. A few did complete a couple of years of study in Japan, but more seem to have dropped out and worked illegally. Further research is required to learn about the migration network and the living conditions of the Yunnanese who have migrated from Thailand to Japan. What is noteworthy from the present information is that there is a strong migration motivation among Yunnanese youngsters to undertake whatever strategies they can in order to realize their goal of social mobility through migration.

Given the above analysis, the new trend in migration undertaken by young Yunnanese people has further complicated the phenomenon of the very dispersed location of family members in various places/countries. The old parents who stay in the villages of Northern Thailand may have their parents, siblings and some of their children left behind in Yunnan and/or Burma, and the children they raised in the villages may be dispersed in Thai cities, Taiwan and Japan. Several cases I happened to know in my recent trip to Thailand (2000) indicate that some families even have members who migrated to the west. Mostly, they achieved this goal via migrating to Taiwan first. The new migration can be seen as part of the international trend of labor migration. As a result, this outward migration from the villages has affected their social structure, the maintenance, transmission and transformation of Yunnanese traditions, and the people's sense of identification.

In contrast to the outflow of youth migration from the KMT villages, there have been continuous inflows of Yunnanese refugees from Burma since the 1980s. The arrival of the new immigrants is attributed to the sociopolitical instability in Burma, especially in the late 1980s and the early 1990s, and the industrialization in Thailand which has created many job opportunities.¹⁷ The KMT villages have functioned as havens to these new immigrants. Though

¹⁷Even the Thai economic crisis, starting in July 1997, has not affected the inflow of refugees from Burma. The number of illegal migrants from Burma increased from 733,640 in February 1996 to 943,745 in October 1997. Chalamwong gives five reasons as explanation: better pay in Thailand than its neighboring countries, the lack of work opportunities in these countries, organized network for the arrangement of illegal migrant employment, the difficulty in controlling illegal entry along the very long Thai border, and the inefficiency of the Thai government and the corruption of the local authorities (Chalamwong 1998:17).

most are very mobile, especially those who have arrived since the late 1980s, they have compensated for the outflow of the youth population to a great extent. In many villages, the new immigrants account for one third to one half or even more of the total population of the villages. In practice, they have exerted a conservative influence in the continuity of Yunnanese lifestyle in these villages.

CONCLUSION

In retrospect, the migration experiences of the KMT Yunnanese Chinese in Northern Thailand spread over different generations and places are complex. Irrespective of voluntary or involuntary migrations, we constantly see interactions between the subjects concerned and the external conditions they confront. In the process, migration networks have played the fundamental role. From the 1950s to 1970s, the KMT guerrillas and the armies of Li and Duan served their network functions as analyzed in the text. After that, networks based on families and relatives have gradually replaced those of the armies. Though on a much smaller scale, these new networks have continued to facilitate migration flows by application of different strategies to cope with new constraints laid by external conditions.

Following the disbandment of the armies, the KMT villages have slowly cast off their military legacies. In comparison with neighboring Thai villages, many KMT villages even look more prosperous. The aid projects initiated by the service group have provided significant assistance in the construction of the infrastructure system. The former refugee warriors have been transforming into immigrants.

In conclusion, the KMT case provides us a temporal dimension to study the dynamics of its migration history over different generations. The case confirms the emphasis given by Zolberg, Weiner, Loescher and others and those advocating migration systems approaches that both internal and external forces and the global political and economic trends have to be incorporated into the research framework. The transformation of the migration pattern of the KMT case is closely linked to the change of international scenarios from the cold war confrontation between the communist and democratic blocs to the global trend of labor migration. Instead of being led by the global trends, the people exert themselves while participating in the process. As the migration of the Yunnanese Chinese is still continuing – from Thailand to other countries and from Burma to Thailand – the dynamics of the people deserve further study.

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