

Title : The Education of Yunnannese: A Case Study of Ban Tham,
Amphor Mae Sai, Changwad Chiangrai

Rescarcher : Assistant Professor Kanniga Sachakul, Ph. D.

Year 1988

ABSTRACT

The objective of this study on the education of Yunnanese (Chinese nationalists) at Ban Tam village, Mae Sai district, Chiang Rai province is to survey the conditions as well as problems of their education prevailing both inside and outside schools. The village was settled by a group of Yunnanese (Chinese nationalists) who are regarded as illegal immigrants, unable to return to their own country because of political reasons.

A study of documents and field surveys show that Yunnanese (Chinese nationalists) living at Ban Tham are both civilians and ex-KMT having immigrated from the Chinese Province of Yunnan, the People's Republic of China after Chiang Kai-shek Government had lost in the fight with the Communist Liberation Army. The migration route passed through Shan, Wa and Chiangtung states of Burma and entered the Thai border, beginning from 1950 and ending in 1961. These Yunnanese (Chinese nationalists) generally settled in the areas assigned by the government in Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, and Mae Hong Sorn provinces. Those who are ex-KMT are under supervision of volunteers and Self-Defense Center 25, Supreme Command Headquarters; civilians and Chinese nationalists at Ban Tham are

under supervision of the Ministry of Interior that conducts head-counting and registering Yunnanese (Chinese nationalist) immigrants as well as strictly controls entering and leaving the controlled areas. In the early period of the immigration, many children of Yunnanese (Chinese nationalists) were given the Thai nationality in accordance with the Nationality Act of 1965 which was later revoked by the 337th Announcement of the Revolutionary Council of 1972. In 1984 the government set policy guidelines and guidelines for solving educational problems, giving the Thai nationality and immigrant status to Chinese nationalist immigrants.

With regard to education policy, the Ministry of Interior made certain allowance for children of Chinese nationalists to study with Thai students at primary, secondary and vocational levels. A record of individuals living in a Yunnanese (Chinese nationalists) family must be shown to school authorities. Schools, however, cannot give a certificate after completion of the curriculum. For college-level education, the Ministry of University Affairs set up the requirements that applicants "have permission to reside in Thailand lawfully." Children of Chinese nationalist immigrants who entered Thailand illegally cannot then study at a college level.

Seeing the importance of education, Yunnanese (Chinese nationalists) send their children to public primary school and to study Chinese at the Chinese school in the village. Even though Chinese schools were already closed by the end of 1987, there are still special tutoring day and night at teachers' houses, and the children have to work very hard in their study. The purposes of

studying Chinese are to preserve their cultural heritage and to have language skills for further education in Taiwan.

Chinese students and Thai students at Ban Tham School study according to the primary school curriculum prescribed by the Ministry of Education in 1978. The school adapted the curriculum to suit the local environment, via a special project for small children to promote education in the area where another language is used more than Thai so as to prepare them in the Thai language before entering the 1st grade.

Approximately 80 percent of the Chinese students at Ban Tham School speak Chinese with friends in school. The achievement of their Thai language skills is lower than that of the Thai students, but the achievement of their mathematics skills is much higher than that of the Thai students. Studying, teaching and evaluation of performance of Thai and Chinese students are not different. The Chinese students adapt themselves and get along well with teachers and friends at schools, but having to attend both schools makes them concentrate less in the public school.

As for learning outside school, some Chinese students participate in the project of the Non-Formal Education Department. Other important sources of learning in the village are the Chinese school, family, and Chinese Wat. In this environment, the Chinese students are closely tied to the Chinese society atmosphere and customs, always speaking Chinese even though there are plenty of opportunities to learn the Thai language from radios and televisions.

This type of educational atmosphere, together with the tendency that descendants of these Chinese nationalists will be given the Thai nationality, necessitates a government policy to "dissolve the habits" in order to make them conscious of their being Thai citizens and being loyal to the country, religion and the monarchy. The issues worth of reconsideration are: providing an opportunity for Chinese students to study at a level higher than primary school, arranging appropriate education that suits local situations and needs; giving permission to teach Chinese so long as studying Chinese is much favored by Chinese nationalists and is conducted in such a way that does not conflict with national security; parents, teachers and community leaders see the importance of getting the Thai nationality and the lack of it poses many problems and is the major obstruction for the development of the village in every way.