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HOME AWAY FROM HOME: MIGRANT YUNNANESE CHINESE IN NORTHERN THAILAND

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In the face of a complex external situation, the migrant Yunnanese in northern Thailand have undergone repeated moves since the 1950s, and the narratives of their lived experiences disclose an ongoing negotiation of their inner self with the external social world across time and space. The feeling of "dwelling in displacement" is the fundamental basis of their narrated stories and this constructs particular discourses on "home away from home". The primary aim of this paper is to analyze their conceptualizations of home and the intertwining of their various migration patterns. It seeks to see how they are shaped by external structural forces on the one hand, and their reaction to them with their interstitial agency on the other. Moreover, by probing their diasporic consciousness linked to the longue durée of Yunnanese mobility, the paper attempts to accentuate the different layers of their perceptions of time and place, and to illuminate their interplay.

INTRODUCTION

> What is home? What is exile? Are there any essential elements of a national culture left intact? .... Can migrants ever call their places of settlement a home? Is "home" still one's natality or even one's parent's natality? Does one live in a perpetual state of liminality? Can one ... surmount the issue of placement and displacement by devising a new slogan: "It does not matter where you're from, or where you've come to, but where you're at"?[1]

Two earlier versions of this paper were presented at the 18th conference of the International Association of Historians of Asia (Taipei, 6–10 December 2004) and at the Myanmar Historical Commission Fiftieth Anniversary Conference (Yangon 12–14 January 2005). I would like to express my special gratitude to Meera Panampilly and Amy Crawshaw for reading and commenting on the paper. I am also indebted to the anonymous reviewers for their invaluable critiques. Any remaining errors, however, are my own responsibility.

I conducted intensive fieldwork among the Yunnanese in northern Thailand from November 1994 to August 1996. Subsequently, I did short-term fieldwork ranging from one to three months in northern Thailand and upper Burma in 1999, 2000, 2002 and 2004–2005 (totalling eight and a half months).

1 Cohen 1997, p. 134.

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With the magnitude of human mobility in the post-modern era, the so-called epoch of globalization, the issue of migration has gained a significant role in the political arena as well as in academic circles. It has drawn both politicians and scholars to try and unravel the intricate complexities related to different causes that result in varied forms of migration and problems of resettlement. The question of the Chinese diaspora has certainly gained prominence in this field of concern, due particularly to the salience of "modern Chinese transnationalism", distinguished by the "flexible accumulation of capital" and "deterritorialized business networks".[2] Terms such as "greater China",[3] "Chinese commonwealth"[4] and "the Bamboo network",[5] have been applied to highlight this phenomenon, and different theoretical orientations have been formulated to explain it.[6]

Because of pervasive Chinese economic power realized through worldwide webs of connections, overseas Chinese are essentially treated as a trade diaspora,[7] and numerous Chinese *guanxi* 関係 studies which look into their economic operations have been published in the last fifteen years. Is, however, this focus too "optimistic" and "class-based", as pointed out by Ty and Goellnicht?[8] Are there other types of diaspora, such as victim, labor and military, that are less visible and optimistic? Even if their numbers are comparatively smaller than those of the trade diaspora, are they still of historical significance, connecting contemporaneity with the long history of Chinese mobility?

The present case study examining the migration experiences of Yunnanese Chinese reflects on the above questions. The Yunnanese Chinese (Yunnanese Han or simply Yunnanese, from the province of Yunnan in southwestern China) who have settled in northern Thailand are a part of a Yunnanese diaspora that links them with their fellows over a broad span of space and time. Historically, the Yunnanese have been mobile over a large area of upper mainland Southeast Asia, and different modes of Yunnanese diasporas – military, trade, labor and victim – have been established in neighboring countries following the massive movement of Han Chinese to Yunnan from the fourteenth century. Their multiple diasporic modes and the fact they have traveled overland distinguish them from the more commonly known "overseas" Chinese. The Yunnanese in question, mostly those who fled from Yunnan to Burma and then to Thailand from the 1950s, have lived through these various modes of diaspora within a short period of time,

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2 Ong and Nonini 1997; Ong 1999.

3 Redding 1990.

4 Kao 1993.

5 Andrew 1994.

6 The success of transnational Chinese economic activities is often attributed to the formation of social connections, i.e. *guanxi* 関係 production and reproduction. Two main theoretical approaches have given rise to interesting debates. One tends to explain this aspect of social life from a cultural perspective, considering it a uniquely Chinese phenomenon and putting emphasis on the observance of the traditional Chinese values of familism, trust, loyalty, reciprocity and harmony. The grand terms referred to here – "greater China", "Chinese commonwealth" and "the Bamboo network" – fall in this direction. Representative works are Limlingan 1986, Redding 1990, Hamilton 1996 [1991], and Fukuyama 1995. Another approach, however, stresses structural contexts, looking into economic and political factors in network operation (e.g. Nonini and Ong 1997; Ong 1999; Chan Kwok Bun, ed. 2000; Gomez and Hsiao, eds., 2001; Wellman, *et al.* 2002).

7 For example, Pan 1994 [1990]; Cohen 1997; Ma 2003; Ong and Nonini, eds., 1997; Ong 1999.

8 Ty and Goellnicht 2004, p. 8.

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and have even extended their migration routes from overland (upper mainland Southeast Asia) to overseas (Taiwan, and even Japan). This unique reality derails the dominant picture of the Chinese trade diaspora.

Because of the complexity of their repeated movements, the narratives of the lived experiences of the migrant Yunnanese disclose an ongoing negotiation of their inner self with the external social world across time and space. The feeling of "dwelling in displacement"[9] underscores the fundamental basis of their narrated stories and constructs particular discourses on "home away from home". The narration of multi-sites of home reflects their "multiple positioning"[10] with reference to place, time, people and country. The primary aims of this paper are to analyze their conceptualizations of home and the intertwining of their various migration patterns, and to see how they are shaped by external structural forces on the one hand and react to them with their agency on the other. Furthermore, by delving into their diasporic consciousness, linked to the long history of Yunnanese mobility, this paper attempts to accentuate different layers in migrant Yunnanese perceptions of time and place, and illuminate their interplay.

FROM HILL'S MERCHANTS AND MIGRANTS

In contrast to voluminous works concerning overseas Chinese emanating from the coastal provinces of southeastern China, studies of the overland activities of diasporic Yunnanese are scanty.[11] Closely related to the present study, Hill's *Merchants and Migrants* provides an insightful case study of mercantile Yunnanese in upper mainland Southeast Asia. Hill's research focuses on the economic dimension of the diasporic Yunnanese and parallels the trend which looks at the Chinese trading diaspora. While discussing the economic agency of the Yunnanese carried out in the form of long-distance caravan trade, she refers to the antiquity of this overland pursuit and points out its long neglect by academic circles. Her work is of significance in the study of the Chinese diaspora in general, and of human and commodity traffic in upper mainland Southeast Asia in particular.

Hill's strongest point is her discerning interpretation of the interplay of trade and politics, configuring an interacting process between mobile Yunnanese identities and the changing circumstances of the larger social world. She elucidates the Yunnanese "penchant in commerce" with their knowledge of markets, credit arrangements and adaptation to local political structures alongside their risk-taking nature. Deviating from the common cultural explanation of Chinese entrepreneurship, her analysis is enlivened by historical contextualization and provides insight into the peripheral position of the

9 Clifford 1994.

10 Hall 1990.

11 In his doctoral dissertation on the overland interactions between the Chinese Ming court (1368–1644) and upper mainland Southeast Asia, Sun attributes this neglect to a "maritime mentality" connected to the western colonial legacy (Sun 2000). Other relevant and interesting studies include Kuo 1941, Xia 1948, Yegar 1966, Stargardt 1971, Soonthornpasuch 1977, Forbes 1986, 1987, Forbes and Henley 1997, Prasertkul 1990, Shen 1994, Sun 2000, Chang 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, and Wu 2002. Among them, Forbes examines Yunnanese Muslim caravan traders; Prasertkul reconstructs a socio-geographic entity based on the socio-economic ties between Yunnan and its surrounding area; Shen investigates cross-boundary interrelations between southwestern China and its neighboring countries; and Sun presents a detailed historical study on the vibrant overland interactions between Yunnan and neighboring political entities during the Ming period.

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Yunnanese from China proper on the one hand, and their association with this powerful central state when interacting with local polities on the other.

Nevertheless, while perceiving the Yunnanese continuity in mobility and long-distance trade, their contemporary experiences of repeated displacements associated with their refugee status (be it recognized or not) is not integrated into the discussion. Hill is aware of the people's migratory background and points out that their arrival in Thailand mostly from the 1950s was due to political changes, first in China and later in Burma.[12] As far as the background to their migration is concerned, she only mentions that informants are "reluctant to talk about their immediate past because of their often ambiguous legal status in Thailand today".[13] Failure to examine this aspect implies that an essential part of their contemporary context has been left out.

Furthermore, departing from her main theme on the interplay of trade and politics, Hill does not sufficiently examine this aspect among contemporary Yunnanese in Thailand. Modifying her earlier dissertation that sees the Kuomintang (KMT; Nationalist) Yunnanese (a former refugee-warrior group that fled to and gradually settled in northern Thailand from the 1950s onwards) as an isolated community separated from civilian Yunnanese,[14] she acknowledges in her 1998 book the close relationship between these two groups and points to the KMT armies as patrons providing protection and livelihood to fellow Yunnanese before the 1990s.[15] Nevertheless, she does not elaborate on the role of the KMT Yunnanese in border trade, interacting with different levels of political groups – varied ethnic militias, the Thai government and the Nationalist government in Taiwan.[16] From the 1960s to the late 1980s, on account of the Burmese government's implementation of a closed socialist economy,[17] Thai-Burmese border trade turned underground and the migrant Yunnanese traders dependent on the KMT armies were actively involved in it. Informants repeatedly related to me in the course of my fieldwork their mercantile ventures in connection with the KMT armies and other military and political groups, which points to a complex intertwining of trade and politics in the structural contexts they were confronted with.

The lack of discussion on the role of the KMT Yunnanese may be attributed to the fact that Hill carried out her fieldwork primarily in Chiang Mai (the capital of Chiang Mai province in Thailand).[18] The KMT posts were, however, located along the northern Thai border in Chiang Rai, Chiang Mai and Mae Hongson provinces (as well as in the Shan state of Burma). From the 1950s to the 1970s, the KMT armies played a significant role in the founding and development of many KMT villages in Thai border areas that accommodated

12 Most of their routes of flight were from Yunnan province to Burma and then Thailand. But there were also Yunnanese who fled first to Laos or Hong Kong or Taiwan before going to Thailand. (Where the destinations were Hong Kong and Taiwan, people traveled by plane or boat from the southeast coast of China.)

13 Hill 1998, p. 20.

14 Hill 1982.

15 Hill 1998, pp. 96, 130.

16 For research on this subject, see McCoy 1991, Lintner 1994 and my recent works (Chang 2001, 2002, 2004).

17 Silverstein 1977, Steinberg 1989; Smith 1993 [1991].

18 Hill 1998, pp. 13, 27, 95–120.

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a great number of troop dependents and fellow refugees.[19] A large proportion of urban Yunnanese in Thailand today (in Chiang Rai, Chiang Mai and Bangkok) are actually from KMT villages or had a close association in the past with the armies through border trade.

While I was working among migrant Yunnanese in northern Thailand, their narration frequently centered on their own migratory experiences, their ancestors' immigration into Yunnan, their feelings of repeated displacement in relation to the dispersal of other close kin in different places, and ventures in the caravan trade in connection with the KMT forces or other militias.[20] While on the one hand, their narratives clearly express their diasporic consciousness intertwined with the contemporary context, on the other, this consciousness points to a distanced time connecting them to their ancestors' migration to Yunnan and subsequent movements for military purposes or economic undertakings. Significantly there is a link between these people's movements and their social memory of their Han ancestors' migratory practices. Resonating with Rapport and Dawson's viewpoint on human movement,[21] contemporary Yunnanese fluidity encompasses both physical and cognitive migrancy that links up with the *longue durée*[22] of Yunnanese life trajectories, which involve traveling for different purposes.

The informants' narratives, emerging from their own repeated movements and from persistent Yunnanese mobility in history, reveal an ambivalent sense of where the "home/ homeland" (*jia/jiaxiang*, 家/家鄉) is. Is it their present location in northern Thai villages, Chiang Mai, Bangkok or, for some people, even Taiwan? Or is it the villages of Burma or Thailand where they grew up or once stayed, or their own or their parents' native places in Yunnan, or their Han ancestors' settlements prior to their migration to Yunnan a few centuries back? These are different places with different meanings, interlinked by traveling over long stretches of time and space. What does the contemporary diaspora mean to the people themselves and to the age-long tradition of Yunnanese movement over upper mainland Southeast Asia? What do their experiences of flight suggest beyond the mode of a trading diaspora? In addition, what differences do the people perceive between their overland movement and the overseas migration of the great majority of ethnic Chinese in Thailand?

In response to these questions, this paper explores the complex migration experiences of the diasporic Yunnanese that encompass different migration patterns and shape their

19 The number of Yunnanese refugees in Thailand in the 1950s was still small. Three Yunnanese villages were founded during this period with the help of KMT troops. Most arrivals came after the 1960s. Based on my field data and relevant records, there were at least 44 Yunnanese refugee villages in 1974. Among them, 29 can be classified as KMT villages, i.e. those under the protection and supervision of the KMT forces. A rough estimate of the population of the KMT Yunnanese in the mid-1970s was around 25,000 and of Yunnanese refugees as a whole around 30,000. The continuous inflow of Yunnanese refugees from Burma has ensured a steady increase in the Yunnanese population in Thailand. According to 1994 data released by the Free China Relief Association, a semi-official organization in Taiwan which established the Service Corps for Refugees in Northern Thailand in 1982, there were 77 villages inhabited by Yunnanese refugees. The total population in these villages was 89,018. Han Chinese accounted for about 60 per cent (around 54,000); the rest was made up of other ethnic minorities.

20 Their willingness to reveal these stories is greatly attributable to the fact I come from Taiwan, where they had a strong link with the former Nationalist government. Hence, there is a different positioning between Hill and me in relation to the research subjects.

21 Rapport and Dawson 1998.

22 Braudel 1972–3; 1981–84.

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conceptualizations of home. Most research subjects are located in northern Thailand. However, while some people have moved between several places for the sake of business, others have settled in Taiwan. This Taiwan settlement has often been the result of their arrival there for higher education, jobs or subsequent marriage. Japan has also been the destination for a few people who have gone there for jobs and later found marriage partners. In addition, there is a flow of youth from the north to Bangkok. The expansion of migration from overland to overseas, and the transformation of forced migration into voluntary migration have motivated me to seek an answer to the questions raised above.

Drawing on Berger, I suggest that the themes of home, movement and stories are closely interrelated. In the face of the magnitude of human migration in contemporary times, he perceptively states that home should not be seen as a thing or a dwelling; in reality people often live in movement, and it is that which opens up untold stories.[23] Corresponding to this stance, Rapport and Dawson elaborate the force of narrative: "Narrative mediates one's sense of movement through time," and "through narrative, human beings, individual men and women with agency, tell the world, and tell it anew, continuously reorganizing their 'habitation in reality'".[24] Being narrated, stories not only convey valuable data; they also reveal the informants' self-reflective commentaries on their experiences, and the underlying cultural meanings of the commentaries.[25] While relating their stories, the informants also articulate their self-identity(ies) against the processes and changes they have undergone. The genre of narratives, therefore, embraces a subjective truthfulness voiced by the informants themselves.[26] Based on these standpoints, I delve into the diasporic consciousness of the migrant Yunnanese by analyzing the varied forms of their narratives, to see how they talk about their lived experiences in relation to the external world they face, and how they have tried to deal with them. I will draw primarily on the informants' oral narratives of their migration history, feelings of displacement and state identification, and secondarily on the written narratives in clan genealogy books, personal correspondence, newspaper reports and other writings by Yunnanese. In order to distinguish generational differences in migration experiences over time and space, I will first classify generation categories based on the criteria of age distinction at the time of migration, and in relation to the places they have moved to.

CLASSIFICATION OF GENERATION CATEGORIES

With reference to socialization, I use the age of fifteen as the demarcation line for the generational classification of migration. At this age, one has pretty much absorbed and integrated social and cultural norms through formal education at school and informal learning from the family lifestyle, private and public ceremonies, the media, and so forth. Based on this criterion, a person who migrates to another country after the age of fifteen is considered a first generation immigrant in the host country. If the immigrant is under the

23 Berger 1984, p. 64.

24 Rapport and Dawson 1998, pp. 28, 29.

25 Marcus and Fischer 1986, pp. 54, 58.

26 Crapanzano 1980; Vandsemb 1995.

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age of fifteen, he/she is considered an in-between generation. His or her socialization takes place in both native and immigrant societies. A general phenomenon is that the younger a person is at the time of immigration, the stronger is the influence of socialization in the new society, be it provided by his/her own ethnic group or the host country. The children born to the first generation in the host country are considered as the second generation. Their children and also the children of the in-between generation are the third generation.

Based on the above criterion, we can roughly derive six generation categories among the Yunnanese. Category one is the first-generation in Burma and then the first generation in Thailand. This category includes two genealogical generations – the parents and their children above the age of fifteen at the time of flight from Yunnan. Most of the parents have already died in Burma or northern Thailand. Category two constitutes the in-between generation in Burma and then the first generation in Thailand. Category three is the second generation in Burma and then the first generation in Thailand. Category four is the second generation in Burma and then the in-between generation in Thailand. Category five is the second-generation in Thailand. Category six is the third generation in Thailand. Taiwan and Thai cities are appealing places for further migration for those first settled in rural villages (mostly from category three onwards). The following table is derived from the above-mentioned criterion. In the course of the main discussion, I will use "C1" to stand for "category one" and "C2" for "category two," and so forth.

FLIGHT FROM YUNNAN TO BURMA

In early 1995, when I first entered the major KMT village Ban Mai Nongbua[27] (an essentially Yunnanese Han village in Chaiprakan district, Chiang Mai province) where many former KMT officers still lived, I was immediately drawn by its distinctive Chinese characteristics that are reflected in the people's language, food, dwelling arrangements, and the existence of the Guanyin (God of Mercy) temple, the Chinese school and the cemetery. In the course of making this village my main research site and of visits to other Yunnanese villages, I was struck by the retention of traditional religious performances in daily life

Table 1. The six generation categories of the Yunnanese in Thailand

Category	Burma	Thailand
1	1st	1st
2	in-between	1st
3	2nd	1st
4	2nd	in-between
5		2nd
6		3rd

27 In northern Thailand, I have visited 25 Yunnanese villages in total, with the village Ban Mai Nongbua as the major site for anthropological participant observation (for the classification of Yunnanese villages, see Chang 1999, pp. 92–104). In addition, I frequently visited Yunnanese in Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, and Bangkok. Informants comprise different age groups, occupational backgrounds and both genders.

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and on special occasions, especially in the rites performed to the ancestors.[28] With their cultural organization of the village landscape and daily practices that are basically Yunnanese, informants proudly refer to their villages as "little Chinese societies". Apparently, one may point to these characteristics as proof of their Yunnanese Chinese ethnicity; but a deeper question is: How do the people themselves speak about their present life trajectories in connection with their repeated experiences of flight?

In the 1950s, due to fear of Chinese Communist persecution, unprecedented waves of Yunnanese refugees flooded into Burma. Historically, Burma has been a main "back door" for Yunnan, functioning as an asylum when political unrest took place and conferring opportunities for economic ventures in ordinary times. The close interaction between Yunnan and Burma is constantly shaped and reshaped by external socio-political forces in each period on account of their topographical connection.

During the initial stages of the waves of flight in the 1950s, most refugees were males; among them were stragglers from the Nationalist troops and local self-defense guards, who organized themselves as KMT guerrillas, entrenched in various bases in the Shan state of Burma. These forces were active during the 1950s; they accepted material supplies from both the Nationalist government in Taiwan and the United States, and soon grew to over ten thousand troops mostly through the recruitment of fellow refugees.[29] Elderly informants who had been guerrillas often said that joining the army was a means of survival – it gave them the basic means to live and also the hope of fighting to regain their homeland. They launched attacks on Yunnan from time to time and frequently were in conflict with the Burmese army. The guerrilla organization, however, was disbanded under international pressure in 1961.[30] During the 1950s, these forces played a leading role in the lives of a large number of helpless Yunnanese refugees, facilitating resettlement and providing protection from the assaults of the Burmese army, although exploitation by the guerrillas sometimes occurred. United by the same fate in flight, the guerrilla troops and the civilian followers together constituted what Zolberg *et al.* call a "refugee-warrior community".[31]

Looking back to his guerrilla days in Burma, a former KMT officer related:

> We were a refugee corps, kept on fighting all the time. We knew every road in [the Shan state of] Burma, small and big. I had been to many places – I was in Ponpakyin for one year, Mong Hsat more than half a year, Mong Bunong more

28 For detailed ethnography on this part, see Chang 1999, chs. 8, 10 and 11.

29 Informants pointed out that the Yunnanese Chinese were the core group, constituting over 70 per cent; the rest were minority ethnic groups, among whom the Yunnanese Muslims were distinctive, in terms of their religion and wealth of their traders. The close relationship between the Yunnanese Chinese and the Yunnanese Muslims and their mutual distinction is an interesting subject for investigation; yet, due to space limitation, I only focus on the migrant Yunnanese Chinese in this paper.

30 There were two separate evacuations of disbanded KMT troops to Taiwan – the first in 1953–54, and the second in 1961. However, the numbers evacuated were comparatively small compared to the number of stragglers and civilian refugees left behind in Burma. The support from the United States derived from its anti-communist ideology during the cold war period. More significantly, the Korean War in 1950 pushed the Truman government to finance the KMT guerrillas in order to restrain the Chinese Communist forces from the south. For a detailed history of the KMT guerrilla forces in Burma, see Union of Burma, Ministry of Information 1953; Republic of China, Ministry of Defense 1964; Young 1970, Taylor 1973, Chang 2001, Qin 2002.

31 Zolberg *et al.* 1986.

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> than one year, Lailang more than three years, Kenglap more than half a year.... (Division Commander Wang,[32] C1)

This narrative tells of the instability of the troops' lives, especially of their frequent movement, which contributed to their familiarity with a large area of the Shan state. Apart from frequent movement, the soldiers often suffered from material scarcities. Chen *dadie*[33] (C1) related:

> It happened from time to time that we didn't have food. The troops had to find wild vegetables, but sometimes there had been other troops who had passed the place before us, and we could hardly even find wild vegetables.... Some plants made you feel sick after eating, but when your stomach is empty, you just eat. Once we did not have rice for seven days. We could only get a kind of water plant along a river.... There was no salt either. After eating the plants for seven days, we became very feeble and could not see things clearly. We finally received a telegram saying that rice had been delivered at a certain place. We had to walk for another three days to reach it.

Other traumatic accounts were centered on fear, blood, death, diseases, etc. Many *dadie* who survived the wars in Burma (and/or later in Thailand) have bitter memories of fighting inflicted on their bodies – loss of limbs or other body parts and paralysis. Their physical deformities are a vivid reminder of the hardships they have undergone.

As far as the civilian refugees were concerned, they too experienced great pain in the course of their flight. Du *dama*[34] (C1) told her story:

> It was harsh in the past, very, very harsh. Whenever I think of it I feel pain. I didn't bring anything but [my daughter] Fen. Fen's father and the other men [of a local self-defense guard] were fighting against the Communists behind us. The dependents were ahead.... I carried Fen ... very tired ... had to climb mountains and walk in the river. My back was aching from carrying my daughter.... We had to climb mountains and walk in the river. No road, even if there was a road, we dared not take it. We were afraid of meeting the Communists. We had to climb mountains ... very, very harsh.

Settling within the power domain of the KMT guerrillas, the civilian Yunnanese had to endure the same instability as experienced by the troops. Chen *dajie*[35] (C2) fled with her

32 The former KMT officers are still addressed according to their former military ranks by villagers, which suggests a military legacy.

33 Apart from calling former officers by their former military ranks, Yunnanese address each other with affiliated terms based on the kinship principle. In this paper I adopt this custom, referring to my informants as I did during my fieldwork. *Dadie* (大爹), senior uncle, is a form of address for male adults who are older than one's father.

34 *Dama* (大媽), senior aunt, is a form of address for female adults whose husbands are older than one's father.

35 *Dajie*, (大姊), senior sister, is a form of address for senior females of one's generation. According to age, Chen *dajie* is my mother's generation, but I follow another villager of my age in referring to her as Chen *dajie*. The Chinese kinship system is complex and flexible. Learning how to address villagers correctly was a significant part of my efforts to integrate myself into their community.

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mother and other siblings to Burma a few years after the flight of her father. She said they first arrived in a place called Hei Monglong. They stayed there with relatives for about half a year. She related:

> In the beginning we slept in a cattle shed. We got fleas. My brother had malaria. He almost died. After he recovered, we moved to Mong Wang in Mt. Nankan. We stayed in the village for about two years. It was very cold there. Mother found a teacher to teach us. There was no textbook. The teacher recited passages of classic texts from his memory and wrote them on the blackboard. We copied them in the notebooks we made ourselves. [After Mong Wang], we moved to another village in the mountains. We were there for four or five years. There was a school. We could go to school. But there was warfare. We then moved to Nana. It was also a mountain village. We were there for another four or five years until fighting started again....

How was it that there was schooling in spite of material scarcity, frequent movement and numerous other adversities? Why does Chen *dajie* remember the details of learning under such unstable conditions? What is the meaning of this period of life to her and the other Yunnanese children? Zhang *dage*[36] (C3) described his childhood recollections of the lives of the women in Burma.

> During the period in Burma, Yunnanese women were very busy throughout the whole year, because they had to do everything themselves, including making clothes, pickling vegetables, making bean curd, sausages, hams, *zongzi*[37] (粽子), *baba*[38] (粑粑), fermenting soybeans, etc.

An interesting message underlying the above two accounts discloses the people's efforts to maintain normality in everyday life regardless of their mobility and very difficult living conditions. Informants said that they tried to organize their daily lives as normally as possible. They cultivated rice, maize and poppies on the farms and grew vegetables in the kitchen gardens when the situation allowed. Produce from the farm was usually for sale, and that from the kitchen garden was for self-consumption. Most men were absent because of military duties or trading activities. Women spent most of their time in cooking, taking care of children, washing clothes, feeding animals and working on the farms. The refugees also celebrated Chinese festivals if possible. Their efforts pointed to their agency in counterbalancing the external instability by retaining a basically Yunnanese lifestyle.

Burma has therefore multiple meanings for the Yunnanese refugees. It is a place with memories of wars and flight, especially for those belonging to the first category. It is also a place with which they feel a sense of attachment due to memories of childhood or

36 *Dage* (大哥), senior brother, a form of address for senior males of one's generation.

37 Glutinous rice dumpling, especially prepared for the *Duanwu* Festival during the fifth month of the lunar calendar.

38 A local food, made from rice, especially prepared during festivals.

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adolescence for those of categories two to four. In conversations, Zhang *dage* often expresses nostalgia for the villages in upper Burma where he spent his childhood. Poppy farms, trade caravans, Chinese story books (brought in from Thailand), and the Yunnanese food named in his narrative above are recurring themes in his stories. On his former website, he posted a series of articles about his childhood in Burma.[39]

> Last night, I dreamed about poppy farms; the whole field was full of blooming poppies.... I told myself repeatedly ... not to wake up, if I still wanted to look at the flowers.[40]
>
> [My] village was a post for the trade caravans. It was also responsible for communication work for the [KMT troops].... The whole surrounding mountain area was arable for poppies.[41]
>
> The dawn was tinged with morning light. Father was clad in an army uniform.... [He and other village men] were setting off to the north [for war].... The villagers bid goodbye to them and wished them a safe return.[42]

Now settled in Taiwan as a physician, Zhang *dage* still keeps some of his primary school textbooks used in Burma. Many times he mentioned to me that some day he would like to visit Mong Hsat, the headquarters of the KMT guerrillas. Though he never lived there, the place is inscribed with significant historical meaning for him, representing how the Yunnanese refugees of his parents' and grandparents' generations fought for survival in the 1950s. Most Yunnanese in northern Thailand today still have relatives in upper Burma and maintain contacts with them.

RESETTLEMENT IN THAILAND

After the disbanding of the guerrilla forces, two KMT armies survived. They were the Third and Fifth Armies, under the charismatic leadership of Generals Li Wenhuan (李文煥) and Duan Xiwen (段希文). In the 1960s, they moved the essential part of their troops to northern Thailand and helped with the resettlement of a large number of Yunnanese refugees. Their military background and involvement in illegal border trade, especially the drug trafficking between Burma and Thailand, however, incurred international criticism and also resentment from the Thai public. From the late 1960s to the early 1980s, the armies were recruited in part by the Thai army to fight against the Communist forces in Thailand. As a reward for their victories, they were awarded legal status, and remained in force until the late 1980s.

Some *dama* described their entry into Thailand:

39 The website especially related to Yunnanese villages in northern Thailand. Articles, relevant news and studies were posted, and the site was open for communication among diasporic Yunnanese. However, it is currently closed.

40 http://www.2008online.org/diary/09.htm

41 http://www.2008online.org/diary/05.htm

42 http://www.2008online.org/diary/02.htm

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> We followed a troop of the Third Army to Thailand in the year of the horse [1966]. There were over a thousand people in the group. My husband had arrived in Thailand a few years prior to me and the family.... After arriving in Thailand, we first stayed in Tham Ngob [the headquarters of the Third Army, Chaiprakan district, Chiang Mai province] for three years and then moved to Ban Mai. (Lin *dama*, C1)
>
> We came to Thailand in the year of the cow [1973].... There were hundreds of dependents of the Third Army from different villages in Burma. We first gathered at a military post in Mt. Laiji. There were four or five groups.... My group walked for about one month before reaching Thailand. We had to hide ourselves on the way from the Burmese forces and other rebel groups.... My family and some other fellow refugees were taken to Ban Mai and stayed there for about ten days. Afterwards, we moved to a nearby village – Sanmakawan [Fang district, Chiang Mai]. (Huang *dama*, C2)
>
> My family came with [a troop of the Third Army] in [1973]. There were about 120 families on that journey. We first arrived in a mountain village near the Burmese-Thai border, but could not enter Thailand without a permit.... General Li had to negotiate with the Thai government, and about a year later, we were finally allowed to enter the country. We were divided into several groups and assigned to different [KMT] villages. (Luo *dama*, C2)

The above accounts demonstrate the dependence of the civilian refugees on the KMT armies, and their repeated movements in the initial years of their settlement in Thailand. Having been to many Yunnanese villages, I discovered that most villages have their own structure regardless of their size. Though there has been a continuous stream of newcomers, houses are mapped out in order. At the beginning, a rough scheme of dividing the village into a few wards was usually drawn up. The main road was determined, and the early arrivals built their houses along it. Small lanes were gradually added to demarcate different sections and also to connect them as an organic whole. The early residents occupied the two sides of the main road and nearby areas, and the later arrivals settled around them.

Several KMT villages started to organize Chinese lessons soon after they were established. The textbooks were brought in from Taiwan. Other public facilities were gradually constructed, such as the Guanyin temple, the cemetery, shrines for other Yunnanese/Chinese gods and the market place. In addition, each village set up its own self-governing committee, processing orders from its patron KMT army,[43] keeping contact with local Thai authorities, organizing public ceremonies, and taking care of other village affairs.

Accordingly, from the days in Burma and later on in Thailand, the Yunnanese refugees were constantly trying to maintain a normal and familiar lifestyle in order to allow them to connect their past with the present. Later on (for some in the 1960s, for others into the 1970s) as they realized how slim the chances of "fighting back to Yunnan" were, their

43 Generally speaking, the Yunnanese villages of the Chiang Mai and Mae Hongson provinces were in the power domain of the Third Army and those of the Chiang Rai province in the power domain of the Fifth Army.

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village settlement enabled them to plan for a future, and build up a feeling of continuity in a foreign land. Their efforts in relocating the familiar cultural sites mentioned above effectively helped them to transform a "non-subject-position of space" into "the subject-position of place".[44] It was a process of emplacement and home-making, and resulted in the reorganization of conventional notions of home, confined to "a private domestic space", to "a larger geographic place", embracing village and community.[45] Each Yunnanese village became a small Chinese society, and the villagers' new home. It helped them to locate their transient status and to cultivate a new sense of belonging. However, as their efforts originated in their nostalgia for their former homes, memories of uprooting continued to haunt them. Their diasporic consciousness was, as a result, inscribed with a paradoxical doubling of displacement and emplacement.

Generally speaking, most people of the first three categories see Thailand as their second homeland, where they have carved a life with their bare hands for themselves and their families in the refugee villages. They consequently have a strong tie with the villages. A *dadie* of category one once pointed to the direction of the village cemetery and said to me: "That will be our final home (*laojia*, 老家)." The words strongly indicate his (and also others of his generation) recognition of his (their) final settlement in Thailand. This is very different from the earlier overseas Chinese who wished to be buried in their home villages in China. The elder generation in general praises Thailand as a fertile and free land and expresses special appreciation towards the royal family, for their genial consideration for non-Thai ethnic groups. However, in a political sense, the central government is remote to them, and local authorities are regarded as corrupt.

The effort of maintaining a trajectory with the former life is seen often too in other refugee cases. In his thesis on Vietnamese refugees in Denmark, Knudsen explains the importance of the linkage of past, present and future:

> ... if the refugees were to survive as social persons, they had to establish some continuity, tying together past, present and future. This was not only true of their attempts to reestablish meaning in their life courses, it was also a key feature of daily life, expressed when refugees talked about dilemmas concerning the present and the future.[46]

The linkage entails the recovery of meaning and cultural continuity, which then helps the refugee to reconstruct his self-identity and a basis for trust.[47] Scudder and Colson call this way of "clinging to the familiar and changing no more than is necessary" in a strange environment "conservative strategy".[48] Many studies on refugee resettlement also substantiate the use of the same strategy.[49] Within each KMT Yunnanese village, life is

44 Hirsch 1995, p. 9.

45 Espiritu 2003, p. 2.

46 Knudsen 1988, p.12.

47 Daniel and Knudsen 1995, p. 4.

48 Scudder and Colson 1982, p. 272.

49 For example, Hansen and Oliver-Smith, eds., 1982; Shami 1993; Gold 1992; Daniel and Knudsen, eds., 1995; Malkki 1995.

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familiar. Things are Yunnanese. Villagers know each other. Many people share kinship ties (authentic or affiliated) or territorial links. Furthermore, they have undergone similar experiences of flight from Yunnan to Burma and then to northern Thailand. By contrast, outside the village is associated with strangeness, danger and mistrust.

However, despite this feeling of familiarity in the villages and distrust with respect to the outside world, most young people leave the villages to improve their lot and afterwards organize their own families outside them. This leads us to wonder how they decide to migrate in view of their parents' experiences, and how their migration is different from that of their parents. Many informants belonging to categories three, four and five, whom I interviewed in Thai cities, Taiwan or whom I met in the villages when they returned for family reunions during major Chinese festivals, such as the lunar New Year and Qingming, expressed equivocal feelings towards the villages where they grew up. On the one hand, they have strong subjective feelings of attachment to these villages and identify them as their home villages rather than the Yunnanese home villages of their parents where they have never lived. They have poignant memories of their fathers' frequent absences for military duties or trading activities in the past and of the poverty which they and their mothers experienced. Those whose villages were near the troops' posts grew up with vivid memories of seeing uniformed soldiers engaging in training exercises and they were accustomed to the arrival and departure of trade caravans. Their childhood experiences made them conscious from a young age of their identity as KMT Yunnanese. It is, nevertheless, this identity that gives them a feeling of inferiority. They are aware of the Thai public's contempt for the KMT due to its association with drug trafficking, and this is implied in the stigmatized appellation "Jin ho".[50] In contrast to their parents who stressed the armies' assistance in the establishment of their villages, they criticized the military operation of village affairs in the past and even its legacy today. Yin *dajie* (C4) said: "[In the past] if you had cars, mules, [extra] people at your disposal, the *guanjia* (官家, the families with authority, meaning the army leaders) would demand a share of the resources under your control, and you had to comply." Teacher Li (C5) said: "Since I was small I felt a kind of dilemma.... My father was a soldier. He was often absent.... My elder brother was also recruited into the army. He then became drug addicted. I hate this recruitment system. Some young people died in fighting...."

Clearly, there are mixed feelings of intimacy and alienation. I was often drawn by the informants' accounts of their childhood. They described the games they played after school, the chores they helped each other to do, the occasional Yunnanese delicacies they ate at festivals, and so on. When narrating these stories, they had a sweet smile on their faces. Yet when they talked about the armies, many informants expressed their discontent with the hierarchical military culture, and the army leaders' use of the troops to gain personal wealth through drug trafficking. Informants estimate that over eighty per cent of the young people belonging to the earlier migration waves (before 1980) have moved out of the villages, but the population has been replenished by a constant flow of Yunnanese migrants from Burma due to instability there. Consequently, they have instilled a new

50 "Jin" is the standard term for "Chinese" in the Thai language, but the origin of "Ho" is no longer clear (Mote 1967, pp. 492–93; Hill 1998, pp. 68–73). The present usage of the appellation denotes a strong negative perception of the Yunnanese, especially of the KMT Yunnanese, referring to them as a backward and violent hill tribe involved in illegal business.

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spirit into the Yunnanese lifestyle, together with the penetration of some Thai influences from outside, reflected in the use of the Thai speech among youngsters of earlier settlers and the rebuilding of houses in the modern Thai style among the better-off in recent years.[51]

FATHERLAND VERSUS MOTHERLAND

Regardless of an undeniable Yunnanese identity, discursive liminality frequently appears in the migrant Yunnanese narration centered on home/homeland. Teacher Shi (C1) expresses his feelings:

> Who wants to leave his own homeland? Who wants to desert his own parents? My heart broke a long time ago.... I have no heart to go back to the homeland. My parents are no longer alive.... I don't want to step into the land of sadness (*shangxindi*, 傷心地). My parents were tortured by the Communists.... They burned them with hot pincers, used needles to jab their fingernails.... The Communists are not human. I don't want to go back to the homeland....

This narrative strongly reveals feelings of uprooting and devastation. In the villages, I have heard many accounts of persecution by the Chinese Communists. Some people learned about the atrocities suffered by their loved ones from relatives; others escaping the country after the Communists had taken over experienced atrocities themselves. Gao *dama* (C1) who managed to flee Yunnan in 1957 recounted her nightmarish experiences. She said she not only belonged to a family of landowners, but she had also married into such a family. All property was taken away. She was imprisoned in a pigpen, and was tortured every day. Once in December, some Communists dragged her to a yard and poured seven buckets of cold water on her head. They hung her and beat her. She was shivering.... Her one-year-old child came to her for milk. The Communists snatched the child from her.... They tied her hands and put fire underneath.... Her elder son came to see her every day, but later died of an illness. The younger son survived. All the other family members were persecuted and suffered from being tortured.

Such memories haunted most of the members of the first two categories. They express ambivalent feelings that combine hatred of the Communists and nostalgia for their home village in Yunnan. These two emotions sometimes seem to overlap each other, and at other times one seems to displace the other. This "overlap and displacement of domains of differences"[52] has generated an interstitial subjectivity, constantly making them live in

51 Given the fact of cultural hybridity, I am not suggesting there is an assimilating trend in identity among the migrant Yunnanese. Changes always occur in an ongoing tradition. While most villagers choose the modern Thai style when rebuilding their houses, they maintain the family altar in the living room to continue their religious practices, especially ancestor worship. The new housing style stands more for economic upgrading than identity shifting. With respect to the Thai speech, youngsters (C5 and 6) simply see it as a convenience for communication, and retain their allochthonous Yunnanese identity *vis-à-vis* the autochthonous Thai. Furthermore, the question of identity cannot be evaluated simply from cultural traits, but rather from a group's subjective interpretation of its history in relation to the external socio-political context.

52 Bhabha 1994, p. 2.

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an in-between liminality in the foreign land. For them, Yunnan is forever their homeland, but it is already a broken homeland (*posui de jiayuan*, 破碎的家園). Their relatives who had stayed behind had been persecuted, and some beloved family members had died after being tortured. Since the late 1980s, many diasporic Yunnanese have returned to Yunnan for visits, but no one I know is willing to stay for good. Some admit that their ambivalence towards the homeland is compounded by a feeling of guilt about not having taken care of their loved ones over the previous fifty years.

Besides these multiple strands of feelings towards Yunnan, Burma, and Thailand, Taiwan, in addition, serves as another source of affiliation – their political fatherland, despite the fact that most of them have never been there. "My head is always supporting the blue sky and the white sun," a *dadie* of category one stressed to me after learning that I am from Taiwan on my first trip to his village.[53] This political identity is strengthened by the ideology of anti-communism prevalent since the guerrilla days in Burma, in addition to the continuous flow of material assistance provided by the Taiwanese government, especially prior to the 1990s. Major aid from Taiwan covers agricultural development, medical services, handicraft training, infrastructure construction and the development of Chinese education.[54] This last project in particular is of significance. The Taiwanese government has offered a great deal of financial support for the establishment of Chinese schools in the Yunnanese villages (mostly up to the primary level, some up to the junior-high level).[55] Chinese education is given before and after the Thai schooling. The ideology of patriotism to "our fatherland Taiwan" (*women de zuguo taiwan*, 我們的祖國台灣) was greatly stressed in the education prior to the 1990s. Patriotic songs from Taiwan were repeatedly taught[56] and competitions to make patriotic posters and write patriotic compositions were organized for major political festivals, such as the National Day of Double Ten on 10 October and the Youth Festival on 29 March. Here are two extracts from the compositions of students written in the mid-1980s that illustrate their political sentiments.

> With the Three Principles (*sanmin zhuyi*, 三民主義, the official political ideology) as the national reconstruction philosophy, you [Taiwanese compatriots] enjoy social development and political stability. We are proud of your progress.... Our objective in studying Chinese is to glorify and preserve our Chinese culture for endless generations. This is the greatest mission of every Chinese. (Caritas, Taipei 1988: 207)
>
> Though we are living on foreign soil, because of the concern and help from the compatriots of our fatherland ... our Chinese roots are growing.... (ibid. 220)

53 His words in Chinese are: "*wo de tou yongyuan shi dingzhe qingtian bairi*" (我的頭永遠是頂著青天白日). "The blue sky and white sun" is the emblem of the Nationalist Party in retreat from mainland China to Taiwan, whose regime lasted from 1949 to 2000.

54 For details, see Chang 1999, pp. 130–36.

55 Annual teachers' training workshops are still organized and sponsored by Taiwan in northern Thailand.

56 Whenever visitors from Taiwan came, these songs were a necessary performance.

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Moreover, the Taiwanese government offered full scholarships for further studies in Taiwan from 1979 to 1991.[57] Many young people from categories three to five have gone to Taiwan for higher education and then settled there afterwards.

Interestingly, whereas Yunnan or China remains as the native motherland (but a broken or changed motherland) for those of the first two categories, Taiwan has been the political fatherland for them and also their offspring in Thailand. For many young people, going to Taiwan not only means seeking a better education and career development, it is also a way to discard their refugee status in Thailand and to return to their political fatherland – to be more completely Chinese. Distinguished from the former age-long Yunnanese overland movement, they have undertaken a new migration route by sea and upgraded from their parents' forced migration to voluntary migration. Although after the 1990s, this politicized attachment has become much diluted, following the disbandment of the KMT armies, more contacts with the larger Thai society and the political changes in Taiwan,[58] Taiwan still appeals to many young people on account of its economic power and it continues to attract them for indentured labor.[59]

The Yunnanese case here thus corresponds to many other case studies on exile and homeland which show that when a place is seen as home, the affiliation can extend to embrace one's country, and one needs not to be present or ever present in the homeland, for emotion is powerful enough to uphold the ties. What makes the Yunnanese case particular lies in their ambivalent doubling of affiliation towards a motherland and a fatherland. The respective attachments are real and strong; yet, in a way, they contradict each other, and split the completeness of home. Such ambivalent devotion is especially apparent among those of the first category.

ANCESTRAL LOCALITY

While the narratives and analysis in the above sections illustrate the inner feelings of the migrant Yunnanese in relation to their mobility, the recounting of their ancestors' migration to Yunnan and subsequent economic ventures in long-distance trade further reveals their consciousness of the Yunnanese diaspora beyond the present. The following is an extract from a clan genealogy book provided by Chief Huang (C1), a former KMT officer in Burma.

> This *Huang shi yuan liu* (黃氏源流, Genealogy of Clan Huang) is recompiled from earlier copies of the clan genealogy and historical archives. It records the deeds of our ancestors of the first six generations in Tengchong. [Our ancestors] assisted [General] Mu Ying (沐英) in the conquest of Yunnan and Pingmian,

57 Between 1968 and 1978, Taiwan offered irregular grants to a small number of students. Since 1979, full grants were given annually. The number of students receiving the grants ranged from around fifty to more than one hundred each year.

58 Since the late 1980s, Taiwan has been experiencing political changes and further democratization, and has discarded the former ideology of anti-communism. The previous emphasis on propagating outdated political beliefs among overseas Chinese has been weakening.

59 Chang 2001.

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> and followed [General] Wang Ji to defeat Luchuan three times. Subsequent descendants were stationed in Tengchong for agricultural cultivation, military encampment, pacification of conditions in the frontiers and promulgation of [Han] civilization. The achievements of our ancestors are meant to educate the offspring to retain [Han] history and civilization (*cunshi jiaohua*, 存史教化). (*Huang shi yuan liu*, recompiled in 1990, p. 1).[60]

Chief Huang is one of my key informants, often recounting to me the Yunnanese migration history to northern Thailand. I did not pay much attention when he told me the first time from where and when the first ancestor of his clan moved to Yunnan. Later on, I heard time and again from other informants belonging to the first two categories (in some cases also from informants of categories three and four) about their original ancestral locality (*zuji*, 祖籍) prior to settling in Yunnan, though I had only checked with them regarding their *laojia* (老家, home place) in Yunnan. I was then intrigued by their social memory of a distanced history of the Han Chinese migration to the province.

While referring to their respective original ancestral localities, a few informants took out their clan genealogy books and pointed out to me the name of their first ancestor in Yunnan and the names of their present families in the books and to which generation they themselves belong. The books and their gestures not only suggest confirmation of the information they had provided but also signify links between the distanced ancestors' migration and their own contemporary movement. What exactly is this significance?

During the course of fieldwork, I made a copy of nine clan genealogy books. None of them had been carried with the refugees during their flight, informants telling me they were in too much of a hurry to think of taking them. Moreover, genealogy books were not widely distributed in the past; normally a clan only had a few manuscript copies kept in different places. During the Cultural Revolution in China, most were destroyed. The new copies I saw in the field were reproduced in Yunnan after the 1980s based on copies that had survived destruction. Many diasporic Yunnanese families in Burma and Thailand have supported the recompilation financially (or even initiated it).

From the narrated stories about their first ancestor's movement to Yunnan, military service was the primary reason pointed out for migration, especially during the reign of the Hongwu (洪武) Emperor (second half of the fourteenth century). As indicated in the above extract, many informants specifically related with which general their ancestor had come to this wild land. Nanjing (南京), Jiangxi (江西), Hunan (湖南), Hubei (湖北), Zhejiang (浙江) and Sichuan (四川) are the places most frequently referred to as their distanced ancestors' original home places. (In addition, the ancestral locality can also be found recorded on some epitaphs in the cemeteries of the KMT villages.) Among these places, Nanjing is often orally quoted, especially prefixed with a specific place – Nanjing Yingtianfu Liushuwan (南京應天府柳樹灣, Liushuwan in Nanjing Yingtianfu). Only later I realized this was the place where large numbers of Ming troops were gathered before they set off to

60 Original text:
本《黄氏源流》以征集原存譜牒，並參閱有關史料，編[纂]到騰始祖中的六世將軍，鐵馬金戈佐沐英定雲南、靖平緬、隨王驥三征麓川。嗣后留鎮騰衝，墾田屯兵，安撫邊陲，宣教王化等軍功政績的史實為主旨，以期對后世子孫「存史，教化」的作用。

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Yunnan.[61] In fact, the soldiers recruited were not necessarily from this place or Nanjing, but from the neighboring provinces in the Yangtze delta area named above.[62]

In terms of Fox's theory on the poetic power of place, Nanjing as a specific place constitutes "a critical component of a social knowledge that links the past to the present";[63] and from Stewart and Strathern's metaphorical suggestion, the affiliation tied to Nanjing projects the historical significance of the place that has served as a peg "on which people hang memories [and] construct meanings from events".[64] In short, Nanjing has become the representative locality for the anchoring of Han identity.

Starting from the Ming dynasty (1368–1644 CE), massive Chinese resettlement in Yunnan was carried out to consolidate the central government's rule, and by the end of the dynasty, the consequent rapid increase of the Han population led to their emergence as the largest ethnic group in this originally non-Han frontier area. Apart from huge waves of military relocation (*juntun*, 軍屯), the Ming government also removed there considerable numbers of exiles (*zuixiyimin*, 罪徙移民), civilians (*mintun*, 民屯) and merchants (*shangtun*, 商屯).[65] In addition, many Han people arrived in Yunnan from the mid-Ming period to undertake mining activities.[66] The Han influx was accompanied by Chinese colonial rule and the expansion of arable land, the introduction of new agricultural techniques, the establishment of new urban centers, and the construction of irrigation systems, new roads, schools, and so forth.[67] The succeeding Qing court (1644–1911 CE) by and large followed Ming policies in Yunnan.

Although influences between the Han and non-Han may often have been mutual as Giersch points out in his study,[68] in Han-controlled areas (especially towns and trading or military posts), the Han were by and large politically, economically and culturally more powerful. The rhetoric of imperial historiography highlighting Sinocentrism underlines the official records,[69] and in practice the Chinese expansion in Yunnan through "successive stages of conquest, occupation and assimilation"[70] has essentially been remembered by the Han population as civilizing (*jiaohua*, 教化) native barbarians (*manyi*, 蠻夷). This Han chauvinism has commonly been integrated into the Han genealogy books for both justification and glorification of their ancestors' resettlement and military action in this borderland. All the genealogy books that I have collected contain this Sinocentric ideology.

In consequence, the Han people in Yunnan are allochthonous *vis-à-vis* the autochthonous non-Han. This differentiation in origin forms the basis of their structural opposition and

61 Hao Zhengzi 1998, pp. 157–58.

62 Wiens 1954, p. 185; FitzGerald 1972, p. 67.

63 Fox 1997, p. 6.

64 Stewart and Strathern 2003, p. 3.

65 You 1994, pp. 352–59; Lu 2001.

66 Liu 1991, p. 248.

67 You 1994, pp. 359–68; Hao 1998, pp. 205–77.

68 Giersch 2001.

69 Wade 2000.

70 FitzGerald 1972, p. 77.

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serves as the ethnic criterion for contrasting identity and alterity. The most popular social memory pointing to ancestral immigration in the form of organized armies led by Ming generals from Nanjing (the capital of the Ming till 1419) preponderates over any actuality. The significance of "troops" and "Nanjing" in the social memory suggests conquest, power orthodoxy and indisputable Han origin, which in effect constitute a kind of socio-cultural capital for a superior position in the ethnic spectrum. In other words, "Nanjing" and "troops" have been transformed into tropes of identity. By appropriating this capital, one holds the status of conqueror and civilizer. As Keyes points out, genealogy has often been derived from a social and cultural interpretation of descent more than generic authenticity.[71] Combined with an unequal power structure, this capital has retained its value among the (self-claiming) Han population in Yunnan for justification of their better position in politics, economy and culture.[72]

As far as the migrant Yunnanese in Thailand are concerned, the Han genealogy serves also as a system of cultural signification that exerts an important socio-psychological function to uphold their self-perception of ethnic superiority as Han Chinese (and not a backward hill tribe associated with the term "Ho") *vis-à-vis* the majority Thai and the many other hill tribes with whom they are in contact.[73] Accordingly, the distanced ancestral localities remain meaningful apart from their physical native places, whether in Yunnan, the Shan state of Burma or northern Thailand, and the ideological fatherland in Taiwan. However, in relation to their distanced ancestors' military action, the warrior migrant Yunnanese are aware of their status as refugees, not conquerors. This embarrassing fact is sometimes counterbalanced by their stress on their many victories in the battles they fought in Burma and Thailand; and at other times it is highlighted by the adversities they suffered in the series of movement and displacement. The often-quoted expression "we Chinese are plagued by frequent ills" (*duozai duonan*, 多災多難) discloses a feeling of belonging and continuity among the migrant Yunnanese as a displaced people sharing the same fate in the foreign land.

CONTINUITY IN LONG-DISTANCE CARAVAN TRADE

A final significant dimension of migrant Yunnanese identity relates to the informants' narration about their engagement in transnational caravan trade. The analysis will also sum up their undertaking of multiple diasporic patterns. The following interview by General Li, the leader of the KMT Third Army, in regard to his troops' involvement in drug trafficking, was often quoted by media reports to illustrate the unruly KMT armies.

> We have to continue to fight the evil of communism and to fight you need an army, and an army must have guns, and to buy guns you must have money.... In these mountains the only money is opium.[74]

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71 Keyes 1981, p. 5.

72 Harrell 1995; Hao 1998, pp. 104, 158; Blum 2001.

73 The subject of intergroup relations will be dealt in another paper.

74 Requoted from the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 6 September 1984, p. 31.

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The interview was originally reported by the London *Sunday Telegraph* in March 1967. Clearly Li was defending his engagement in illegal drug trafficking, in the face of severe media criticism inside Thailand and abroad. The narcotic trade was common among the Yunnanese. "You had big money, you did big; you had small money, you did small," informants often said. In Burma, growing poppies was a means for survival. "I've done different things, all for living. In those mountainous areas, what could you grow? The land wasn't fertile enough for growing rice. If you didn't grow opium, you couldn't make a living," Hong *dadie* said.[75] The trade was organized by the KMT armies in the form of mule caravans.[76] They helped traders in Thailand purchase opium from Burma.[77] "At the beginning, the gold bars [for purchasing opium] were carried by porters. One person carried 32 gold bars. Each bar weighed five *liang*.... [which could be] exchanged for five *zuai* of opium. A mule could carry 40 *zuai* of opium. An organized armed caravan was often composed of two to three hundred mules or more; every two to three mules required a muleteer," recounted a *dadie* who used to follow the caravans organized by the Third Army.[78]

In addition to opium (until the 1980s), jade from the Kachin state of Burma has been another precious commodity traded among the Yunnanese. Both commodities correspond to what the Yunnanese describe as "big gambles" for the high risks and grand profits involved. Apart from drug and jade traders, many Yunnanese were hired as muleteers and jade miners. However, there was no absolute division between the traders and laborers, for the latter could also engage in small trade with limited capital, and the former could suddenly lose all their profits and become muleteers or jade miners. Besides buying goods from Burma, Yunnanese traders transported all kinds of consumer merchandise to Burma during the Ne Win regime. These products were eventually sold in the flourishing black markets that characterized the Burmese economy during this socialist period. The KMT armies developed into powerful forces in the 1960s and 1970s among the various ethnic militias in the region, and actively engaged in this military-cum-economic enterprise. Their success was distinguished under the charismatic leadership of Generals Li and Duan and assured by their strategic alliances with alternating political configurations to suppress other local powers.[79] Their skillful trading operation thus corresponded to

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75 The Yunnanese are conscious of the damage caused by drugs to human life. They keep silent on this undignified past to outsiders. I must say I feel very ambivalent in telling this part of their past history, as they have trusted me and related the hardships they underwent before. While acknowledging his former involvement in opium, Hong *dadie* commented on the origin of the problem to mitigate his sense of guilt. He said: "It was originally the Englishmen who sold the opium to China. If we could still make a lawsuit, this origin to the problem would have to be traced."

76 McCoy 1991, pp. 349–63, 409–23; Chang 2002, pp. 135–39.

77 Those traders included not only Yunnanese, but also other Sino-Thai traders, offspring of ethnic Chinese who had migrated by sea routes. However, public criticism was aimed only at the former group.

78 One *liang* equals about 37.5 g; one *zuai* equals about 1.5 kg.

79 For an elaboration of the contemporary Yunnanese border trade and leadership, see Chang 2002, 2003, 2004. In the paper of 2002 in particular, I analyze the leader-follower relationship among the KMT Yunnanese in northern Thailand through the application of patron-client theories. It is argued that the relationship has been embedded in a particular socio-cultural context, which incorporates both Han Chinese culture and the native ethos of long-distance caravan trade, and that it is characterized by both instrumental and emotional forms.

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the persisting Yunnanese commercial tradition shown in the intertwining of trade and politics.

Accordingly, the warrior Yunnanese continued their ancestors' mercantile tradition in this traveling trade, which was a distinctive local lifestyle, tied to different underlying forces – economic, political, social and geographic. For centuries, transnational economic undertakings have played a major role in the support of Yunnanese livelihood.[80] Many Yunnanese border towns in particular have witnessed its persistence. This traveling trend is reflected in a common Yunnanese proverb: *qiong zou yifang ji zou chang* (窮走夷方急走廠), meaning when one was in need of money, one joined the caravan trade and traveled to places inhabited by "barbarians" (other ethnic groups), or went to seek fortunes in (jade or other mineral) mines (in Burma). Those who were hesitant to take up such ventures were considered timid and often teased by fellow Yunnanese.[81] Drawing on the interpretation of migration culture given by Massey *et al.*, we may suggest that transborder movement has been "deeply ingrained into the repertoire of people's behaviors" in many border areas of Yunnan and even developed to be "a rite of passage" for adult men.[82] Seen from a long historical perspective, the continuous influx of Han Chinese to Yunnan and the engagement in long-distance trade have formed an essential part of the *longue durée* of Yunnanese mobility.

Many of the migrant Yunnanese in question had in fact been moving back and forth between Yunnan and Burma for trade before their flight, which had in fact been assisted by their familiarity with the region and its trading routes. Their diasporic movement was characterized not only as one of refugees, but also of traders, laborers, and soldiers. Consequently the migrant Yunnanese in modern times have experienced victim, trade, labor and military diasporas simultaneously. This interesting phenomenon distinguishes the group from the earlier overseas Chinese in Thailand who basically came as traders and laborers, and also differentiates them from the uni-dimensional Chinese trading diaspora depicted in recent publications. This reality of multiple diasporic modes is on the one hand related to complex political scenarios involving China, Burma, Taiwan, Thailand and United States from the 1950s to the 1980s,[83] and on the other hand to persistent close interactions between Yunnan and upper mainland Southeast Asia throughout history.

After the 1990s, following the opening of the Burmese border and the growing business opportunities in Burma and Yunnan, the migrant Yunnanese in Thailand and Burma, on the basis of their existent transnational networks, quickly transformed their former illegal undertakings to legal investments, especially in the fields of tourism and border trade. By upgrading old-fashioned means of conveyance by mules, many Yunnanese merchants have increased their movement in this area with the help of up-to-date transportation and communications, and consequently have modernized the age-old Yunnanese commercial traveling culture. In short, routes of travel over this wide stretch of land and nexuses of human ties have long existed and facilitated the circulation of people, goods, information

80 Wang and Zhang 1993; Hill 1998; Sun 2000.

81 Heshun (和順) in Tengchong county is a prominent example of a famous township with a distinctive migration culture (Yin 1984; Chang 2003; Fang 2003).

82 Massey *et al.* 1993, p. 453.

83 See Chang 2001.

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and capital during both peace and war throughout history. In Clifford's words, it is "a region in historical relations of travel – involving conquest, curing, commerce, and mutual ideological appropriation".[84]

With regard to their dynamic in movement and long-distance trade, informants commonly refer to their audacity in risk-taking (*danzida*, 膽子大; *aimaoxian*, 愛冒險), and often describe it in relation to their quick temper and even reckless nature expressed in the local term *menglang* (猛浪). They also like to contrast their dashing temperament with the conservative and prudent characteristics of the Teochiu, Hakka, Hokkien, Hainanese and Cantonese, the descendants of the earlier ethnic Chinese migrants, to mark their overland differentiation from the latter.[85] In sum, their military, commercial, labor and flight experiences have highlighted this "overland spirit".

CONCLUSION: WHERE IS HOME?

> I am Yunnanese, born in Burma [in 1962], and growing up in Thailand. I **returned** to Taiwan in 1980, and now live in Tainan [a southern city of Taiwan]. My mind stays in northern Thailand, and I dream about Yunnan. (Zhang *dage*, C3, emphasis added)[86]

These words were posted by Zhang *dage* on his former website. His migration experiences and attachment to different places where he had lived are largely shared by many members of his generation. He finished medical education in Taiwan and is a physician in southern Taiwan. Every lunar New Year he takes his Taiwanese wife and three children back to Ban Mai Nongbua where his parents and a younger brother and the rest of his family still live. In mid-April 1997, Zhang *dage* returned to Yunnan (for the Qingming Festival) to visit his 94-year-old grandmother and his eldest sister who remained in Yunnan, and to worship at the ancestors' graves. His parents returned from northern Thailand, he from Taiwan, and an uncle came from Burma. He wrote to me after the trip (on 27 May):

> In the middle of April I finally returned to Yunnan, which I had long missed, to my old home (*guxiang*, 故鄉).... My home village (*jiaxiang*, 家鄉) is located in Yunnan [province] Longling [county] Pingda township Damai village (雲南龍陵平達鄉大麥寨).... Due to its remoteness and inconvenience for transportation, the living conditions of all villagers are harsh. Nevertheless, it has retained its simplicity. Our old home still keeps its original look.... Seeing the land of my ancestors and thinking of them leading their lives [there] generation by generation, I was extremely enchanted. The Zhangs have lived in Damaizhai for seventeen generations. The founding ancestor's grave is located in the mountain behind. It has been renovated....

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84 Clifford 1992, p. 102.

85 See also Hill 1998, p. 109.

86 我是雲南人，在緬甸出生，在泰國長大，1980年回台灣，現住台南，心在泰北，夢迴雲南。http://home.pchome.com.tw/discover/cloudstar/me.html

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With the letter, there was a newly compiled genealogy book of Zhang *dage*'s clan, recording the Zhangs' origin in Jiangxi.[87] Zhang *dage* expressed his pride in the book, compiled by one of his uncles in Yunnan. He was especially excited that his first boy had been recorded in the book. (At that time Zhang *dage* only had one child.) The genealogy book has thus linked up the clan members spatially in Jiangxi, Yunnan, Burma, Thailand and Taiwan. Then where is home? This seemingly simple question remains without an explicit answer for the contemporary migrant Yunnanese dispersed in different places. The slogan quoted by Cohen – "It does not matter where you're from, or where you've come to, but where you're at" – obviously does not suit the people, and it may not suit other migrant groups, for the past hardly dies in one's mind, be it a lived past or an imagined past.

In this paper I have tried to analyze the very complex picture of the contemporary migrant Yunnanese, and their different diasporic modes of experience. It illustrates the multiple attachments of the people to different places for multiple reasons, and these places are all homes to them, connected by repeated movement. Irrespective of involuntary migration in the earlier period or voluntary migration later on, the result has been the leaving behind of home(s) and some family members, relatives, close friends, or things dear to them. Each migration is like losing a part of themselves. Many people in categories one and two have left their parents and siblings in Yunnan and Burma, and have their children dispersed in different places. They feel especially guilty about leaving family members behind in Yunnan, as the latter suffered greatly from a series of political movements carried out there. Moreover, they worry about their children being scattered in different places. It is very common that a family has members spread over three or more countries. Many *dadie* and *dama* have confided to me their feelings of loneliness and distress.

Where the home place in Yunnan and the social memory of ancestral locality are concerned, the first two categories have the strongest attachment. The last two categories in contrast only share a weak link with their grandparents' native place; those under the age of thirty are mostly unaware of the distanced ancestral locality. At present they seem to orient their future in Thai cities, Taiwan or other advanced countries; yet it is too early to give a definite picture, for most of them are still (very) young. It will be interesting to follow up the maintenance and transformation of the meanings of home/homes among the later generations.

In contrast to the earlier Chinese immigrants who came to Thailand by sea and settled mostly in urban areas, the majority of migrant Yunnanese are located in individual villages, which have yielded an environment more conducive to the maintenance of the Yunnanese lifestyle. These villages have been havens for the Yunnanese who continue to arrive from Burma. Most of them were laborers at the beginning; but those who have accumulated some capital often try to engage in petty trade alone or with friends. Although many new immigrants are highly mobile, there have been a large number of them settling in the villages, especially in lowland areas. They have infused a new strength to counterbalance the impact of the outward migration of youth from these villages, and

87 Despite my Taiwanese background, I share the same family name with Zhang *dage*, and have been affably treated as a member of the same genealogy (*tong jiamen*, 同家門). In the letter, Zhang *dage* requested me to put a Belgian stamp with the postmark of Leuven, the ancient university town in Europe where I was then studying, on the title page of the genealogy book in order to add historical meaning. Zhang *dage* said to me later that the stamp symbolizes an imaginary journey for his clan.

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have in consequence played a significant role in the retention of Yunnanese traditions despite the penetration of Thai influences. It is therefore important to keep trace of the development of the villages and the cultural meanings they provide to the youngsters who are moving out and to their future offspring in Thailand.

By way of conclusion, I would like to reiterate that conceptualizations of home have been flexible, but also ambivalent. They have embraced different extents of geography (from one's house(s), to one's village(s), community[ies], and country[ies]), and different points of time (the time of the founding ancestor in Yunnan, the time of their flight and resettlement, and the time of the very present). "Home" to the diasporic Yunnanese hence subsumes the two-fold nature of the domestic sphere and the public sphere, the actual geography and the imagined geography, the ties of biology and the ties of geography,[88] and the near time and the distanced time. Following Rapport and Dawson's interpretation, the trope of "home" has served to encapsulate, to link and to transcend conventional classifications, and compels us to explore the insights into "mobile habitat".[89] For the Yunnanese, the spread of homes has resulted in circuits and networks for connectivity that facilitate further movement.[90] Nevertheless, migrancy is both "spatially mobile" and "spatially bounded".[91] While undertaking movement for pursuing a better life, the Yunnanese have been confronted with numerous external forces as portrayed in the paper. The interactions between them and the larger contexts distinguish their dynamism.

The analysis of the varied forms of narratives among the migrant Yunnanese has illustrated the interplay of different layers of time and place in their diasporic consciousness linked to the *longue durée* of Yunnanese mobility. Drawing on this case study, we may point to the insufficiency of the popular academic trend to emphasize only the economic agency of the transnational Chinese and overlook other aspects in the contemporary Chinese diaspora. Only with a wider horizon for inclusion of multiple facets, be they central or marginal, can we avoid biased view points and obtain a better view of reality in order to have further dialogue with diasporic studies on other groups of people. In the face of globalization, we need to pay attention not only to the privileged class of migrants, but also to the larger number of disadvantaged groups, especially refugees and migrant workers. Moreover, with the issue of international violence becoming increasingly alarming, academic attention (not just political) should be given to the phenomenon of the military diaspora. The present case interestingly intertwines all these varied diasporic modes. Today, most Yunnanese (who migrated to Thailand prior to the 1980s) have improved their living conditions; many of them, and the next generation, have become successful traders or businessmen, or are engaged in farming cash crops or in other fields of work, although negative remarks from the Thai public employing the stigmatized appellation "Jin-ho" still linger. Their successful transformation is critically related to their migration culture, trading tradition and the former military organization as analyzed in the paper. These cultural, economic and political insights with a long historical perspective are intrinsic to understanding the migrant Yunnanese.

88 Espiritu 2003.

89 Rapport and Dawson 1998, pp. 8, 27.

90 Espiritu 2003, p. 3. My field research in Thailand, Burma and Taiwan has also resorted to the Yunnanese webs of connections.

91 Espiritu 2003, p. 22.

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