Negotiating Community:
Local Adaptation Strategies in State Forest Policy in Northern Thailand

By

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Declaration

I, Masayuki Nishida, declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Resource Management in Asia Pacific Program, Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies, College of Asia and the Pacific, the Australian National University, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. This thesis has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institutions.

Masayuki Nishida

Abstract

Since the 1980s, local communities in northern Thailand have argued for community participation in forest management to secure communal use rights of natural resources. They eagerly sought the legalisation of participatory forest management in the constitution and its related laws sometimes by forming farmers' mass rallies in cities. Because most of the land in northern Thailand is covered by forest, state forest policy has a high impact on livelihoods in rural villages.

A lot of the literature analysing Thai forest management issues has focused on the aspect of confrontation between the state and villagers in claiming control of the natural resources. However, increasing opportunities for community participation in Thai forest management have gradually changed the socio-economic and political balance among state agencies, rural villagers, urban citizens and non-government organisations (NGOs). Based on this recent studies and observations from the field, this study proposes to change the analytical perspective from confrontation to negotiation of a flexible adaptation of state forest policy in village life. This study examines the practical and ideological negotiation of village leaders and villagers with state agencies, NGOs and neighbouring upland communities.

The study found that, in community participatory forest management in Thailand, villagers are strategically negotiating with stakeholders to secure their livelihoods and political advantage by adhering to the state nature conservation policy. The actual practice of participatory forest management is managed by compromises between villagers and local agencies at the local level. On one hand, state agencies allied with village leaders in an institution of participatory forest management to achieve territorialisation of the forest resources and monitor villagers' behaviours in the forest. Through the village leaders, the state agencies can utilise the village local system and gain legitimacy as governors of the forest in the eyes of local villagers and the

public.

On the other hand, villagers have already recognised the multiple values of forests in Thai environmental politics. They have also sought livelihood security and political advantage in exchange for their contribution to state forest conservation policy. Village leaders work as negotiators between the external agencies and local villagers, with their understanding of the political context in the local community. The village leaders make efforts to keep alliances with the state agencies as good partners of the state to gain support for things like securing forest use rights, and to gain an eco-friendly reputation, to show loyalty to the state or to ask for political support against the pressure of upland ethnic minorities. For these multiple purposes on forest conservation, village leaders demonstrate their contribution to the public by attending natural conservation events and organising their religious rituals to create eco-friendly images. Overall the study illustrates local villagers' flexible adaptation strategies in reorganising their livelihood styles and identities to fit the modern environmentalism the state promotes.

This research was carried out over one year and two months from May 2007 to June 2008 in a Thai lowlanders' village surrounded by conservation forest in Northern Thailand. My research site, Ban Mae Luang village, is located in a district in Chiang Mai Province. This village has practised a pilot participatory forest management system with the state agency for three decades. In 2007, Ban Mae Luang village had 302 households and 1,103 people, who mainly cultivated glutinous rice and cash crops, which were mostly maize and peanuts. This study employed participant observation techniques and interviews with the villagers.

Summary

TITLE:

Negotiating Community: Local Adaptation Strategies in State Forest Policy in Northern Thailand

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My study of participatory forest management in a village in northern Thailand during my doctoral thesis introduced me to a lot more new topics and perspectives than I had ever expected. For four and a half years, I wandered in the actual forest in northern Thailand, and in an ideological forest of knowledge in Canberra. My journey was not always easy, but it took me to a new field. In this initially unknown field, I could not have continued the journey if I had not had the kind support of a lot of people.

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that my study provides new insights on village studies on natural resources and contributes to growing a forest of knowledge in this area.

Masayuki Nishida

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Table of Contents

List of Figures

Transliteration

The transliteration of the Thai characters used is based on the Royal Institute's (1999) 'General Rule for Phonetic Translation from Thai Characters to Roman Characters' (*Ratchabandittayasathan (B.E. 2542) 'Lakken Kan Thot Akson Thai Pen Akson Roman Baep Thai Siang'*). However, in the case of Thai words that are in general usage, this thesis does not follow the rule, but accepts customary use. For example, this thesis uses *baht* (the currency in Thailand), not *bat*.

Abbreviations

ANU	Australian National University
CMU	Chiang Mai University
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
MOI	Ministry of Interior
NESDB	National Economic and Social Development Board of Thailand
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
OTOP	One Sub-district (*Tambon*) One Product Program
RCSD	Regional Centre for Social Science and Sustainable Development, Faculty of Social Sciences, Chiang Mai University
RFD	Royal Forest Department in Thailand
RMAP	Resource Management in Asia and the Pacific
RSPAS	Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies
SAO	Sub-district (Tambon) Administrative Organisation
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
WMU	Watershed Management Unit

Measurements

rai	1 *rai*= 0.16 hectare （1hectare = 6.25 *rai*）
thang	1 *thang* ≈ 20 litre
baht	1 *baht* ≈ 0.0309 US Dollars (December, 2007)

Pseudonyms

The names of persons, locations and some institutions I used in this dissertation were replaced by pseudonyms to protect the privacy of informants. However, the other information and data from the field have not been changed from the original.

Chapter 1 Introduction

Increasing political and economic interaction between rural and urban areas in northern Thai society has started to open up opportunities for local village communities to be involved in state forest conservation policy. However, it has also led to northern Thai people being involved in a considerable number of conflicts regarding the claiming of land rights, the distribution of natural resources and citizenship issues of residents in forests all over northern Thailand (Anan 2000; Sato 2002; Forsyth and Walker 2008:335). To solve these problems, participatory forest management, which is a topic of this thesis, has been discussed as a promising alternative method for achieving appropriate management in harmony with all stakeholders. The Thai state has stepped forward in involving local communities in state forest management by stipulating community rights in conserving natural resources under the state law in the 1997 of the Thai Constitution.[1] Furthermore, they established the Ministry of Natural Resource and Environment in 2002 to transform the state's business oriented forest management to an environmental conservation oriented management with local community. Along with these paradigm changes in Thai forestry, political power relationships on forest management are also gradually shifting from confrontation to negotiation among stakeholders.

The influence of modern environmentalism and community participation in state environmental policy nowadays can be seen everywhere in Northern Thailand, even in remote villages. One day in March 2007, I was riding a 125cc Honda motorcycle just

[1] In the 1997 constitution, section 46 admits people have 'the right to conserve or restore their customs, local knowledge, arts or good culture of their community and of the nation and participate in the management, maintenance, preservation and exploitation of natural resources and the environment in a balanced fashion and persistently as provided by law'. Section 69 stated the peoples' duty 'to protect and pass on to conserve the national arts and culture and local knowledge and conserve natural resources and the environment, as provided by law'. Moreover, Section 79 states the roles of the state for environmental conservation and its promotion. Section 46 and 69 in the 1997 constitution on community rights and duty on nature conservation and local knowledge have been succeeded by Section 66 and Section 73 in the new 2007 constitution.

like a local young villager along the road to my research site, Ban Mae Luang village. On the side of the road, I saw many message boards, which had statements about nature conservation such as 'do not cut trees', 'do not set fire to forest', 'keep river clear' or 'protect forest' with the name of state agencies, village councils or sub-district administrative authorities on them. The message boards continuously appeared and disappeared along the road. In Ban Mae Luang village, forest conservation was welcomed by most villagers. The village chief kindly explained to me how villagers made an effort to protect their forest from bushfire or illegal logging, and to practise tree planting with the assistance of the state agencies. He confirmed that their efforts in nature conservation activities had succeeded in reviving the condition of the village forest in this decade. Other villagers also agreed on the importance of nature conservation with community participation. It was very rare for the villagers to directly express disagreement against state forest conservation policy. Environmentalism and the environmental policy which the state promoted seemed to be well supported by all villagers.

However, as several months of my stay in Ban Mae Luang village passed, I observed that the everyday life of villagers seemed to waver between the ideal eco-friendly life and their real life in the utilisation of the forest resources for their livelihood. Most villagers subscribe to the legitimacy of appropriate forest management following modern environmentalism. At the same time, they still have difficulty in applying some points of the policy into their livelihood practices. In the village, villagers still continued their customary use of the forest: logging, hunting or cultivating upland fields in the forest, while they participated in forest conservation activities: planting seedlings, building firebreaks or joining forest conservation ceremonies. Their livelihood activities sometimes conflicted with forest conservation policy. Therefore, various compromises were negotiated among villagers and public officials in village

politics. Under state environmental management, local villagers were struggling between securing their livelihood in the village and following state forest policy in their everyday village life.

This study examines these local villagers' ideological and practical negotiations with stakeholders to decide actual forest management in village life. The situation in my research field was different from other reports or news telling of sensational conflicts to do with natural resources. Ban Mae Luang villagers usually lived peaceful lives, but they still experienced hidden struggles and tensions regarding forest management as shown in their behaviour and consciousness. It was very rare that the state agency employed their absolute power through the military or the police to intimidate villagers into submission in the village. The tension on forest resources mostly appeared in the context of the face-to-face communications in the small village. The local officers of the state agencies were sometimes well known among Ban Mae Luang villagers or had close relationships with the village leaders. In a small local society, villagers have to achieve mutual cooperation by using formal or informal negotiations among the socio-political stakeholders. Before exploring the strategic negotiations of this small village, this chapter will examine three important concepts for the discussion: participatory forest management, negotiation and local knowledge.

Participatory Forest Management

Participatory forest management is a forestry framework which allows village communities to participate in sharing benefits from the forest, making decisions about the forest, and joining in forest management activities (Brendler and Carey 1998). Participatory forest management drew attention from international society as an alternative forest management in the 1970s. At that time, state forest management in Asian countries faced serious forest deterioration because of insufficient control of commercial forestry or illegal logging. Therefore, the state agencies made an effort to

strengthen their control of the forests by designating the forests as national conservation areas. However, their forest conservation policy caused other conflicts with local villagers who live in the forest. International society sought participatory forestry as an alternative forestry to allow local people both to utilise the forest and to manage the forest to protect them from serious degradation of forest resources. Especially after the Food and Agriculture Organisation's (FAO) international conference, the 8th World Forestry Congress in 1978, titled 'Forest for People', the concept of participatory forest management by the community had been promulgated to governments and international organisations (Colchester, Apte et al. 2003).[2] In Thailand, the term for forest management is generally translated as community forestry or *pa chumchon*.

The use of term 'community forestry' in Thailand needs some explanation. Community forestry means forest management in which a local community plays a significant role. Thai state agencies and aid agencies are now promoting civil involvement in the management of forest resources under the control of a forest authority. However, in the majority of cases, the agencies mainly control or regulate the forest resources and the community has a minor role in the management of them: this should be categorised as a type of participatory forestry even though it is called community forestry. In addition, the civil movement is using the term community forestry when refering to its ideal forest management goal in its political negotiations. This study uses the term 'participatory forest management' as a precise term to express the present situation of Thai forest management mobilising community involvement in it. The term 'community forestry' is used only for describing the forest management plan that the civil movement seeks and the experimental forest management entitled community forestry.

[2] Each country has a different name for participatory forest management: 'Joint Forest Management' in India, 'Community Forest' in Nepal, Vietnam and Cambodia, and 'Village Forestry' in Lao PDR (Colchester, Apte et al. 2003).

The official and legal situation of participatory forest management in Thailand is still a weak framework that is not supported by legal bases even now. However, participatory forest management is practised in Thailand as a customary practice or as pilot development projects with special recognition from state agencies.[3] Customary forest management is exemplified by the management of sacred forests which are forest areas used for spirit worship or Buddhist meditation practice (Janesak 2005) and headwater forests (Anan 2000:67-8, 204-5). This participatory forest management has been customarily practised on the basis of non-legal agreements with local officers of state agencies. These forests cover only small areas usually less than 100 *rai*. They are thought to be managed according to strict local customs using rituals and local spiritual sanctions (Tambiah 1970; Kitahara 1987; Anan 2000). Furthermore, there are several cases of official participatory forestry projects that are referred to as community forestry. They can be seen in public forests, sub-district public forests, and the various reforestation projects of state agencies, foreign aid agencies or the royal family (Sato 2002). For example, the Forest Conservation Volunteer Training Project and its unit was organised by the army as one of Queen Sirikit's projects. In the project, local villagers undertake forest management and are mobilised by the local community (Poffenberger and McGean 1993). However, these official experimental participatory forest programs provide no communal land title and insufficient decision making processes to the villagers. Forest management involving the local community in conservation activities is still controlled by the state agencies in exchange for allowing limited use of the forest by local villagers. As these participatory forest managements are supported by a weak legal base, the managements tend to be a product of multiple power balances between multiple political initiatives including that by state agencies, NGOs, royal institutions or local politicians.

[3] The Community Forest Division has registered community forests in Thailand since 2000. In 2006, they accepted 5,369 plans involving 5,936 villages and 1,718,781 *rai* in Thailand (Community Forest Division 2006).

The history of the Thai environmental movement made the participatory forest management issue political. In the movement, 'community forest' became a symbol of conflicts between rural villages and the state. During the period between the 1960s and the 1980s, Thai forest declined from fifty per cent of the total land to less than thirty per cent (Royal Forestry Department 2008). Responding to this situation, Thai state agencies enlarged the areas of national parks and conservation forests as other Asian countries did. Meanwhile, local communities located in the forest faced serious threats of being evicted from the forest after the state's declaration of certain conservation areas or tree planting areas. Local communities, NGOs and academics finally developed mass demonstration campaigns to seek security for their livelihoods and land rights for their residences and upland fields in the conservation forests during the 1990s. Around 1995, several mass movements of Thai farmers involving urban people, academics and NGOs started to seek farmers' rights regarding state forest management. The grass-root protests around Chiang Mai about community forestry broadly attracted support from NGO networks like the Assembly of the Poor, academics especially from Chiang Mai University and journalists (Forsyth and Walker 2008:51). After this, the 1997 Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand allowed local communities to have broader rights to manage natural resources. The community forest movement seemingly succeeded in integrating stakeholders and moving the state toward a legalisation process of the Community Forest Bill.

However, this legalisation discussion on community forestry created ideological conflicts on who was to and how to manage the community forest among the various stakeholders such as local villagers, urban citizens, NGOs, and the state officials (Anan 2000; Sato 2002; Walker 2004). The draft of the Community Forest Bill was revised several times reflecting the various interests of stakeholders. Kurashima (2010) analysed the delay in legalisation from the aspect of the development of the democratic

conflict resolution in Thailand. As various interests such as land rights issues, urban environmentalism, the security of political benefits and loyalty to the king caused political conflicts among various civil stakeholders like NGOs or local communities, the drafts were changed many times following democratic procedures even though there was mostly a consensus on the idea of the community forest itself (Kurashima 2010:247-249). The Bill has actually not yet been settled even now. The latest version in 2007 was created by environmental conservation orientated groups in the Ministry of Natural Resource and Environment. On November 11, 2007, the National Legislative Assembly of Surayut Chulanont, just after the military coup in 2006 passed the Community Forest Bill (Apinya 2007). However, the constitutional court voided the Community Forest Bill in November 2008 on the grounds that the National Legislative Assembly did not have a quorum on the day of the vote to approve the Bill (King-oua 2008). The Community Forest Bill is still in discussion.

In the legalisation process of the Community Forest Bill, various concepts of 'appropriate community' for community forestry were discussed by government, NGOs and local communities (Pearmsak 2000; Sato 2002; Walker 2004; Forsyth and Walker 2008; Fujita 2008). In the drafts of the Bill, a community, which resides in a certain place and has had nature conservation customs for a long time, should be a proper body to care for community forest. All stakeholders have are consistent in the image of community in the general points of the Community Forest Bill draft. However the opinions about the suitable characteristics of the community selected for being a community forest are diverse at several detailed points; such as on how to prove long-term customs and practices for forest conservation or the way of monitoring the community. Pearmasak (2000) and Fujita (2008) summarised the different views on what community would be appropriate for managing a community forest from the point of view of three stances; (a) a government-centred stance, (b) a conservation-centred

stance, and (c) a community-centred stance:

(a) A government-centred stance was proposed in the Royal Forest Department (RFD) version of the Bill. The drafts which the RFD and the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB) proposed in 1997 and 1999 deemed that an appropriate community was a weak entity under the strong control of the state agencies. The community is allowed to have little participation in forest management which is controlled by the RFD and provincial government (Sato 2002:70; Forsyth and Walker 2008:52). The RFD did not seem to deny the importance of localised management. The community was defined as a group including fifty members who reside in the area and it also allows outsiders to join the membership (Fujita 2008:455). Only if the provincial committee admits there is a necessity, is the village community allowed to stay in the conservation area. However, the Ministry has the right to cancel this permission at any time.[4]

(b) A conservation-centred stance was proposed by environmental conservation NGOs, other parts of RFD and the urban middle classes. Fujita (2008) focused on the proposals of the three main influential conservation NGOs: Green Earth Foundation, Sueb Nakhasathian Foundation and Thammanat Foundation. The concept of their appropriate community is a community including outside agencies as third agencies. They believed that village communities could not keep harmony with nature following the old customs anymore because the rural villagers have been influenced by changes in modern society. Therefore, the forest issue is a problem that needs to be solved at the national level. They were also afraid that the Community Forest Bill would give local residents the opportunity to encroach on the conservation forest, and convert the forest to *de facto* agricultural land. Therefore, they required that community forest decision-making committees should include those who live outside the village and NGOs as well

[4] The 1997 draft of the Community Forest Bill faced severe criticism from NGO networkings such as the Assembly of the Poor, and it was revised a lot in the 1999 version which was submitted to Parliament.

as the local residents.

(c) A community-centred stance was proposed in the 'people's version' draft submitted to Parliament after a mass movement development in 1997.[5] In 2000 the 'people version' draft with the support of over 50,000 Thai citizens and development NGOs was submitted to Parliament. They sought more restriction on state intervention in the local community than there had been in the previous two approaches. The necessity of a permit from the RFD to establish a community forest was omitted. They also sought for a certain number of seats for local representatives and academics interested in the establishment of community forests to be provided in provincial and national committees. After the approval of a community forest, local villagers should be given autonomy in management, decision making and policing matters. The stance promotes the images of forest-friendly communities with a 'culture of coexistence that favours forest protection' (Walker 2004:315). Walker argued that the promotion of forest-friendly images of communities through the community forest legislation was a response to the state denial of the livelihood rights of the local upland communities (Walker 2004:321). However, this stance also caused conservation-centred and governmental groups' suspicion that this bill might result in a loophole allowing cash crop cultivation in the upland agricultural cultivation areas in the community forest. So this bill was rejected by the Senate. In response to the reaction by the Senate, local NGOs clarified that agriculture should not be allowed in the community forest. In order to defend the legitimacy of the bill for resource management rights, local communities had to sacrifice some part of their upland livelihoods.

Depending on the political positions of stakeholders, there are these three concepts of which communities are appropriate to manage community forests. Thai

[5] In 1997, villagers, NGOs and universities started a 'community forest movement' to claim the customary rights to resources of communities. The community forest movement developed into a mass-movement network including the Assembly of the Poor and some other organisations. They marched in Bangkok.

state forest policy also does not have a clear answer for the question as to who should govern the forest in the community forest and what sort of relationship there should be between the local community and outside agencies. In participatory forest management in northern Thailand the community is still in an ambiguous position in a negotiation arena of politics, economic interests, and ideologies among stakeholders. Because of this, local communities struggle to get recognition of them as being an 'appropriate community' to be allowed to join in forest management.

Toward Strategic Negotiations

Considering the dynamics of interaction between the stakeholders, it is unavoidable to think about the asymmetric power balance among stakeholders and this influence on forest management because local villagers are always having to face the staff of the state agency, NGOs workers or foreign aid workers who have stronger powers in controlling forest management. A lot of scholars have focused on the political economy to explore the asymmetric power balance in forest resource management (Scott 1985; Agrawal 2001b; Sato 2002; Walker 2004). This power balance naturally affects the villagers' behaviour and thoughts in their every day practices of participatory forest management. Therefore, there are two polarised perspectives from which to view participatory forest management. Firstly, there is the perspective used of participatory forest management as a vehicle of state forest management used to subordinate communities to external modern environmentalism. Secondly, there is another perspective where it is viewed as an arena where local people resist the local elites. Both perspectives are now discussed.

In the first perspective, the state has the hegemonic power to control the behaviour and minds of local communities. The state introduces a certain knowledge set into a community using regulatory institutions. The selected knowledge set guides the people's minds and behaviours in a certain direction. Agrawal argues that the villagers'

attitudes and practices towards natural conservation in the forest council in Kumaon, India, are guided by the state (Agrawal 2001a, 2001b, 2005a, 2005b). He views the forest council of villagers as a state apparatus to guide peoples' behaviour on environmental conservation, like schools, hospitals and prisons, as measures of 'governmentality' (Foucault 1982). In exchange for the democratic decision-making process in the council, the local villagers agreed to forest conservation management by the forest council (Agrawal 2001a, 2001b, 2005a).[6] The state implicitly succeeded in guiding local leaders and local people to participate in natural conservation autonomously through the forest council. A set of legitimatised means of forest management such as delineation and measurement of boundaries, enumeration and counting of residents, a distribution and monitoring system, and validation of books and registers were implemented by the forest council. These implemented methods gave legitimacy on the control of forest to the council and a consciousness of environmental conservation among the local villagers was formed through the forest council. He called this phenomenon that guided people's consciousness and behaviours towards natural conservation 'environmentality' (Agrawal 2005b). Agrawal's environmentality model was an example of one of the most successful models of state control of local communities' environmental conservation using knowledge and power.

In the second aspect, participatory forest management is viewed as an arena where the local villagers struggle against the power of the state or local elites. Hegemonic harmony of environmentality may not dominate the minds and behaviours of villagers completely. James Scott (1985) was an American political scientist studying peasant's ideological resistance against village elites in Malaysia. In the changing agrarian economy introduced by the elites, such as the introduction of mechanised

[6] The villages in Kumaon had resisted the coercive control of their forest by the colonial government during the period of 1910-16 (Agrawal 2001a, 2001b, 2005a, 2005b). After the colonial period, the state introduced participatory forestry and forest councils run by local villagers in those areas.

harvesting and increased rents in the Malaysian village, large elite farmers caused a loss of customary resource distribution and a lowering in the social standing of peasants. In increasing unequal socio-economic structures in the village, peasants resisted utilising traditions as 'ideological weapons' through 'boycotts, quiet strikes, theft, and malicious gossip' in everyday village life rather than open resistance against the social system (Scott 1985:304, 338). They attempted to undermine the hegemonic structure of the village elites using local custom, which the rich find hard to ignore because of its importance in village everyday life. The subordinate peasants, for example, use the values and rationale of that early social order of the elite class such as generosity, noble obligation or kindness for the poor to press their claims and disparage the claims of their opponents, otherwise 'they stigmatise the rich as stingy and hardhearted' (Scott 1985:336). Peasants utilise the asymmetric power structure itself and make counter-power plays to penetrate into the heterogeneous social structure of the local elites.

Although Scott's work does not directly mention natural resource management, his insight has influenced studies on local people's resistance against the state and local elites' forest management (See Li 1996; Bryant 1997; Pinkaew 2002). Ordinary villagers seek generosity on forest use from the elite by using their old customs. By contrast, the elite acquire legitimacy as virtuous governors to protect the environment and their village. Scott's concept of day-to-day resistance developed the view of resilience and negotiation of the stakeholders using the everyday practices of local custom.

There is a large difference between Agrawal's and Scott's models of local community. Agrawal's showed a subordinate community model where the local villager is subordinate in mind and behaviour to the hegemonic environmentalism in exchange for the community's autonomy over natural resources. In this model, people were led towards modern environmentalism. On the other hand, Scott showed a resisting

community model where local villagers used local values to resist local powers in the face-to-face local community. In this model, local villagers and rules resisted the hegemonic power structures and sought compromises with powerful elites using local custom in small communities. How can we resolve the inconsistency between the two perspectives; the subordinate community and the resisting community models?

Some scholars have further made studies in political negotiation on participatory forest management to analyse the political economy of natural resource management programs with local community. In these studies, local communities strategically negotiate their legitimacy to transform their identity and original social systems to be a suitable community idealised by the project and involved in compromises in controlling the natural resources with powerful stakeholders (Li 1996; Walker 2001; Pinkaew 2002). Tania Li (1996:501) focuses on the local communities struggle to gain a representation of the community in managing the forest in the context of 'struggles over resources' at Lauje in Central Sulawesi in the community-based natural resource management projects introducing estate crops into the villages, and which were being implemented by an international development agency. Lauje village leaders strategically denied that other Lauje groups had community, tradition and land rights, and legitimated their interests in natural resources in collusion with the interests and images of the state and international agencies (Li 1996:513).

Local communities strategically simplify their member's behaviour and appearance to be more close to that favoured by the state or the public's hegemonic environmentalism in negotiations to secure their economic distribution or citizenship rights. Andrew Walker (2001) also outlined the community's struggle in the practical political economy and in ideological negotiations on community-based forest management and their seeking of legitimacy by using 'community simplification'. He reported a case of a minority community in northern Thailand where local community

leaders decided to cooperate in natural resource management with government officers by prohibiting any agricultural activities or cutting trees in the forest in a simplification of their livelihoods in negotiations with the state and Thai public. From this observation, he argues that their 'commitment to protect forested areas under the community forest framework could be used to bargain for more formal acknowledgement of rights to agricultural land, rights that are currently constrained by dominant discourses of citizenship and conservation' (Walker 2004:7). Through negotiations, local villagers can seek compromises with the source of power by transforming their original livelihood systems to become those that embrace natural conservation. Local logic is adjusted to approach the modern environmentalism reflecting the asymmetric power balance.

Negotiations by local community can be seen in a number of discourses on natural conservation. Pinkaew reported that a northern Thai ethnic group, the Karen, attempted to create a positive acknowledgement of their livelihood (Pinkaew 2002). In the past, people generally implied that the Karen's slash and burn techniques caused forest destruction, but the Karen community transformed this ecologically destructive notion of slash and burn cultivation to an eco-friendly notion by using the term rotational shifting cultivation. Through networking activities by Karen villagers, journalists and academics, they succeeded in creating some acknowledgement of their livelihood using local knowledge. They demonstrated that Karen customary shifting cultivation actually helps forest conservation and is actually ecological sustainable. This led to development planners considering customary uses in their projects in the uplands of Northern Thailand.

These literatures showed that it was necessary to consider participatory forestry in this thesis from the basis of two points: 1) the view that the local community is not a victim of state power but is a more flexible stakeholder able to act in an asymmetric power structure, and 2) the village community is a part of a broader world that is closely

connected with the Thai public and global modern environmentalism. The Thai village and other stakeholders unavoidably have to respond to political and ideological assistance and pressures on forest issues in northern Thailand. In particular, participatory forestry means interaction between the village and external agencies.

There are still issues at the theoretical level. It is difficult to estimate how much the village community actually has room to act strategically in the power structure of natural resource management. In terms of negotiating, the negotiation perspective still seems to sway between Scott's resisting model and Agrawal's subordinating model. If villages' freedom of selection is unconsciously controlled by environmentality as Agrawal suggested above, the strategic behaviours of villagers may become just the villagers' innocent behaviour under the control of the state. Even if the villagers thought they could achieve partial success in achieving a compromise by transforming their livelihood and identities in their strategic behaviours, it may only be a transition on the way to them completely surrendering to modern environmentalism or 'environmentality'. However, there is still some room to overcome 'environmentality'. Agrawal's model seems to describe the tendency for whole communities in Thailand to head towards the unitary goal of environmentalism, but Thai environmental movements show more diverse tendencies which should be regarded as multiple environmentalisms involving localism at practical and ideological levels. The diversity of environmental views opens opportunities for communities to choose their strategies on natural conservation.

Local Knowledge as a Negotiation Tool

With the increasing enthusiasm of the environmental movement for local communities' involvement in forest management, Thai local communities and NGOs are seeking legitimacy for their natural management using their own local knowledge to justify their interests in the forest against the centralised forest management with the universal and

standardised techniques which were externally introduced. Participatory forest management using local knowledge allows people to have diversified views and to negotiate with the state-wide universal environmentalism. Local knowledge is originally a site specific knowledge which local persons or their communities have accumulated in a long and holistic relationship with ecology, climate, geographic features, soils, flora, fauna or local society in a small territory (Yos 2003). Local knowledge is a practical and contextual knowledge that is intricately interwoven with local villagers' everyday life practices including customary production habits and religious practices. For example, local farmers know the subtle differences in soil quality and micro-climate even in a small plot from their everyday practice of growing vegetables. In a general view, only local people who have been handed down the detailed and complex knowledge through generations can decipher the knowledge and utilise it in harmony with everyday life and nature.

Scott focuses on another dynamic aspect of local knowledge accumulation using the Greek term, *métis* to express the dynamics of local knowledge. *Métis* is 'a wide array of practical skill and acquired intelligence' in responding to a constantly changing local nature and human environment (Scott 1998:313). For example, local people gradually change their application of techniques such as the way of cultivating and selecting vegetables depending on local conditions by following day by day practical experimentation in the field. On the other hand, scientific knowledge is a sophisticated and simplified technique found in controlled *ex situ* conditions, but it tends to be awkwardly applied to large state projects such as designating areas as nature parks or town planning without taking into consideration the complex situations of the actual world. Scott argues that ignoring the subtle and complex balance of local ecology between human life and nature has resulted in the failure of large state systematically planned state projects. Agrawal further focused on the dynamics of local knowledge

which could accumulate western knowledge as part of the knowledge. Local knowledge is 'a dynamic entity that undergoes constant modifications' between external and indigenous knowledge following the needs of the community (Agrawal 1995:427).

Nonetheless, in this decade, local communities and NGOs gradually utilised local knowledge as an alternative political source to allow the community to manage nature conservation following local logics. Forsyth and Walker (2008:14) pointed out that the knowledge is embedded within the political values of traditionalism, community and local democracy in the Thai environmental movement. Local communities, development NGOs and academics proposed the utilisation of local knowledge in forest management as an alternative to state forest management (Anan 2000). During the 1990s when the environmental movement began, most of the studies about local knowledge and customary forest management also began (Shigetomi 1996:246). Scholars explored local livelihood customs and rituals, and (re)discovered the local knowledge used by villages to empower the role of local communities in natural conservation.

Furthermore, through increasing mass movements on environmental issues in Thailand, the local community found an audience in the Thai public, international civil society and the state agencies where they asked for support for their use of the forest using their local knowledge. Along with success in gaining recognition of the idea of participatory forest management, it also generally led to the Thai public having a romanticised perception of local knowledge in community-based forest management as a panacea for dealing with environmental issues (Yos 2003). Local villagers' demonstration of local knowledge was also gradually welcomed by external agencies promoting their participatory forestry projects. Both the state and the public also sought an ideal community in harmony with the local ecological system, in participatory forest management policy in response to demands from the mass movements that had occurred.

So far, ideological reasons for participatory natural resource management, and the social norms and the long enduring existence of community and its use of nature indicated that the movement towards community involvement is appropriate in forest conservation (Ostrom 1990). Reflecting the expectation of various interests, the eco-friendly local knowledge became a critical issue for village communities in proving their ability to manage the forest in their social negotiations with stakeholders (Li 1996; Agrawal and Gibson 1999). Thus, local knowledge functions as an ideological base for participatory forest management by the community in the Thai eco-political context, and at same time, it also becomes an arena where local communities struggle to seek recognition from the Thai public and external agencies.

Local knowledge can be a tool for local communities to demonstrate their environmental consciousness and unity in the community as they respond to changing local politics and social systems (Yos 2008). It is important that there is flexible interaction between local values and new ideas from outside the community. Through the general term of local knowledge, dying old customs are grafted with new thoughts in eco-friendly 'traditions' which Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) refer to as 'the invention of tradition'. The local community reorganises their customs and behaviour to fit appropriate images of eco-friendly communities in state or international forest management projects (Li 1996; Agrawal and Gibson 1999; Walker 2001). Villagers organised new forest conservation groups, created religious rituals of tree planting or eco-friendly religious events (Darlington 1998; Yos 2008) and demonstrated a counter-discourse to slash and burn agriculture by using local knowledge as a new 'tool for resistance' (Pinkaew 2002:211). Thus, the old-fashioned customs of the local village become 'cultural capital' (Yos 2008) or a 'strategic resource' (Pinkaew 2002:15).

Villagers reorganise features of their localism such as their social norms, traditional customs or their livelihoods to fit with the demands of the powerful

stakeholders in the social negotiations in an effort to seek political and economic benefits from participatory forestry. The village community demonstrate their environmental consciousness using their local values such as spirit worship or Buddhism. These political demonstrations of localism are further used in negotiations in the practical political economy of natural conservation as a protection against forest destruction. For example, the community can simplify the cause-effect results of natural degradation and claims for ownership of local ecology by using local religious symbols. In the cable car project in Doi Suthep in Chiang Mai, the sacredness of the mountain for northern Thais is utilised as a reason for protest (Hirsch and Lohmann 1989:444). The same thing can be seen in the protest against the Pak Nam Dam project in Northeast Thailand, where protesters offered rituals to the water spirit to protect the spirit's residential areas in front of governmental officials (Mekong Watch 2001). In the western Himalayas in Nepal, the oracles from one hundred villages participated in a protest against the governmental development of ski villages (Singh 2006:335). Religious symbols are utilised to justify the rights of the local community to the local environment and exclude the 'enemy' from outside the community.

However, some also raise the argument that local knowledge is not only a tool for the local community, but also for external agencies. As the recognition and reputation of local knowledge increases, powerful stakeholders like the state agencies also attempt to justify their nature conservation management by demonstrating a good relationship with local communities and understanding of local knowledge. The state agencies participate in the tree ordination ceremonies (Darlington 2007) and the environmental rituals of the Hmong, another major upland minority group in Thailand (Isager and Ivarsson 2002; Tomforde 2006). Through the rituals supported by the state agencies, local villagers support or demonstrate their loyalty to the state forest policy and the state itself. Thus, local knowledge became another arena where stakeholders

compete to initiate and legitimise forest management in the political economy of natural resources.

The dynamic process of interpenetration between modern environmentalism and local knowledge is unavoidable in the introduction of participatory forest management, which involves interaction and negotiation between stakeholders and villagers. Modern environmentalism and local knowledge become tools for the local community to seek control over natural conservation and for the state and its agencies to control the local community under its environmental policy. Depending on their interests, the introducer adjusts both environmentalism and local value systems by changing and taking into account their environmental norms, loyalty to the king, the state or Buddhism and local belief systems. They also put various meanings even on a particular environmental event depending on their interests. For example, the state agencies promote tree planting on the king's birthday to extend the consciousness of natural conservation throughout the nation. At the same time, the local community strategically transforms the meaning of tree planting for their own interests such as security of forest interests or to promote a good connection with the state officers. This multi-layered localisation at the practical level undermines Agrawal's view of the trap of 'environmentality' because it enables the dissolution of unitary environmentality into multiple environmentalisms diversified through the everyday practice of local politics. Finally, it becomes a tool for everyone including the state, NGOs, local communities and other stakeholders and it also becomes an arena of power.

So after considering all the literature, the contribution of this study is to examine the dynamics of negotiation between the stakeholders in participatory forestry by closely observing actual behaviours and interviewing local villagers in their everyday life. This study planned to re-examine the framework put forward in much of the existing literacture that was based on confrontation between the state and local

community on forest conservation issues. Vandegeest's (1996) concept of territorialisation also illustrates the historical process whereby the state government claimed the resources and strengthens control over the human activities of the local communities. This confrontation between state control and local freedoms, is also seen in the discussion by Jin Sato on the resistance of the resistance of the Karen people in trying to keep their communal land in the face of the state's advances onto their land (Sato 2002). However, this study does not believe that state participation in forest policy only means the subordination of local communities to the more powerful stakeholder. The fact of cooperating with the state in a project such as that on social development or forest conservation enhances the political power of the participating community and weakens that of the excluded community as Li (1996) suggested. Li proposed that compromise as a result of negotiation with powerful authorities should be regarded as one of the most useful and necessary strategies for village communities on a local level. The research conducted for this study focused on various aspects of the local politics of forest conservation including both the formal and informal political meanings of local community involvement and the process of political empowerment.

This study also shows the dynamics of compromise and alliance among stakeholders, which are subtly politically balanced in a local village context. The field research suggests the flexible behaviours and thoughts of local villagers in everyday life, which may challenge the consistency of the so-called trend of 'environmentality' guiding a local community to state environmentalism as proposed by Agrawal (Agrawal 2001a, 2001b, 2005a). From more interactive relationships in a face-to-face village context, local villagers strategically select their alliances or compromises with the various powers and create an alternative environmentalism on a practical level. From this aspect, the study will attempt to explain what I saw in the village at the beginning of my fieldwork: local people keeping their lives utilising the forest by showing respect to

forest policy. The villager leaders explore various local eco-friendly elements of village history and custom in their use of the forest and selectively reorganise these to fit with modern environmental policy to gain public legitimacy as an appropriate community.

Thesis Objectives

This study focuses on the ideological and practical negotiation processes of participatory forest management involving local community. In this type of forest management, there are several heterogeneous power structures overlaying the forest issues in the village. There are three tensions arising from the implementation of state forest policy: 1) political and economic tensions among villagers, village leaders, state agencies, outside agencies and upland communities, 2) ideological tensions between dominant environmental discourses and counter-discourses, 3) tensions extending from the forest issues to secondary issues such as Thai nationalism, ethnicity, rural-urban problems, tradition and modernity.

With this in the background, this study examines the social negotiations in the tensions from the aspect of a village community. For local villagers, participation in forest management, the symbolic use of local knowledge and loyalty to the state would be flexible tools to create allied relationships both within the village and between villagers and the state agencies. Through the examination of the negotiations in these tensions, this study aims to answer one main question and three secondary questions.

Main Question:

- How does a village community negotiate both within the village and with powerful external agencies to adapt forestry management in order to secure its livelihood and political position?

Secondary Questions:

- What kinds of power relationships exist among multiple stakeholders in

participatory forest management?

- How is the decision-making process structured in the village community and who represents the community?
- How does local knowledge and modern environmentalism function to achieve a compromise between state environmental policy and the villagers' needs in participatory forest management?

Methodology

The study was mainly planned to employ participant observation and interviewing in Thai lowland villages in Northern Thailand. Participant observation was carried out for a year and two months from May 2007 to June 2008. My research site, Ban Mae Luang village, is located in Saeng Thong District in Chiang Mai Province. This village is about one hour and thirty minutes drive away from Chiang Mai; it is located in the basin of the Mae Luang River and is surrounded by a large expanse of dense forest (Figure 1.1). The Ban Mae Luang villagers mainly cultivate glutinous rice and cash crops such as maize and peanuts, at the foot of the mountains. Ban Mae Luang is an administrative village, which had 1,103 inhabitants and 302 households in 2007 (Ban Mae Luang Village Community 2007). The village is roughly composed of two hamlets. At the centre of the Mae Luang River Basin, there is a large hamlet called Ban Mae Luang. The main part of the population is located here. On the south-eastern side of the village, there is a smaller hamlet called Ban Mahoi, which has 133 inhabitants. A few decades ago, these hamlets were administratively separate. The hamlets have some independence from each other, for example, they have close networks of agricultural practice, kinship groups, or festival coordinating groups. They are nowadays integrated into a single village.

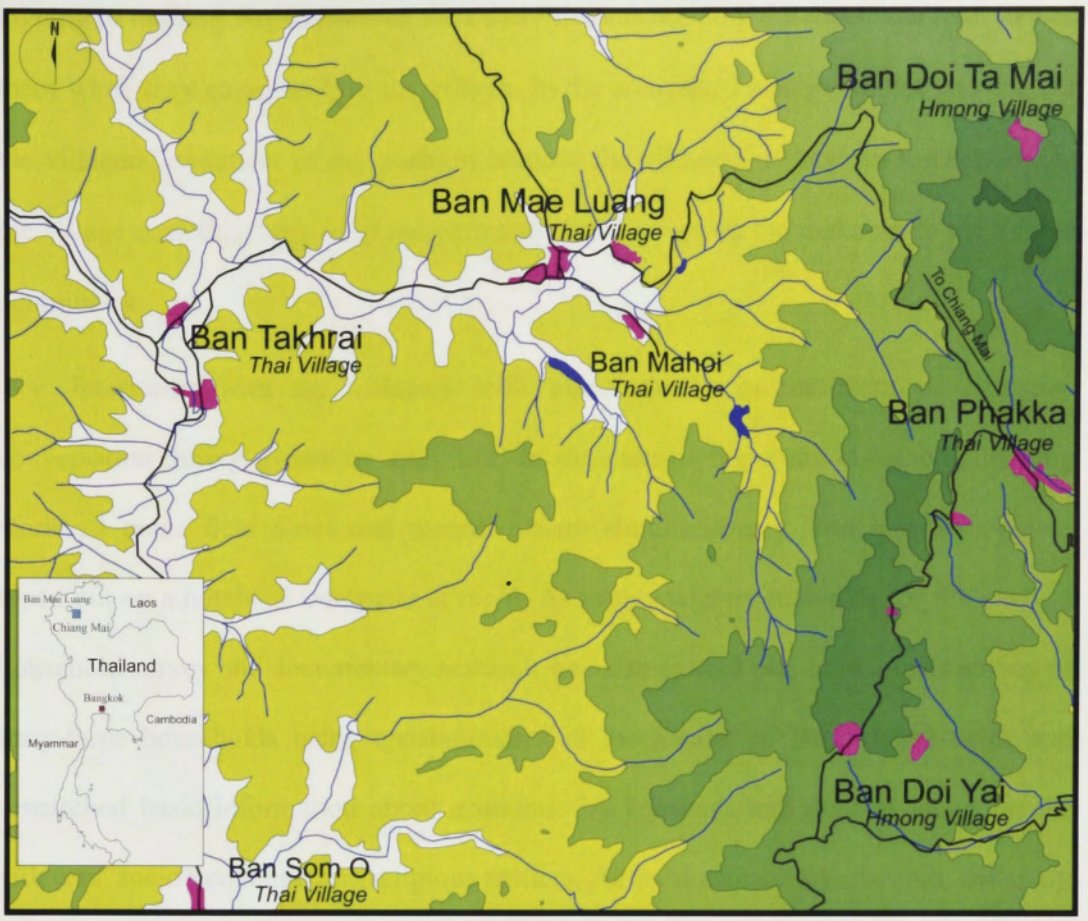

Figure 1.1 Map of Ban Mae Luang

In order to analyse the strategic negotiations of the Ban Mae Luang villagers, it was important for the study to be able to observe and thus make comparisons of their behaviour and speech in their daily life. Therefore, I rented a house from a host family in the hamlet called Ban Mahoi in Ban Mae Luang village and participated in communal activities, daily meals, agriculture in the fields, religious events, and casual chatting in everyday life as often as the villagers would allow. My position in village society swayed between that of an internal member of the village community and an external visitor depending on the situation, but overall the villagers generally showed me a warm hospitality in my time there. In agriculture or religious rituals, I was counted as another young labourer in the communal labour exchange or as one of the regular participants in religious rituals in the community. However, Ban Mahoi villagers unfortunately did not allow me to join in some of the more sensitive activities in the forest such as illegal

logging or hunting. So, I observed their activities surrounding the forest and interviewed them when they came back to the village. In the analysis, I also attempted to consider the villagers' treatment of my position because the villagers' behaviour towards me in the village sometimes provided me with thoughtful issues on the make-up of the village community.

Interviews with the villagers took place mostly in the form of everyday conversation during events or daily life. In the case of important statements or long stories, I made field notes and recorded them simultaneously. The information was typed out on a notebook computer at night. As supplementary materials for the study, a household survey and documentary research was also carried out. I did a brief survey of forty-three households using questionnaires in the hamlet of Ban Mahoi twice and researched basic information about economic backgrounds and general views on the villagers' socio-economic and religious matters. As for documentary research, the study also focused on the information circulated among the villagers for the purpose of public education. The message boards, posters and public notices were carefully recorded by camera. In addition, official documents kept by the village leaders, such as governmental notices, orders, various posters, notes of village meetings, or notes of religious events were gathered from the village. I asked them to lend me these documents and I made a copy of these documents in a photocopy shop in the neighbouring town.

Composition of this Thesis

Chapter 2 shows the geographical location, the basic structure, and the policy making structure of the research site. It also shows how village leaders manage and represent their community by focusing on the multiplicity of the village leaders' roles: as representatives of the village community and agents of the state. For development projects and festivals, village leaders play important roles in unifying the community

and in seeking support and funding from external donors and the state agencies.

Next, Chapter 3 examines the state's attempt to control forest lands by introducing the forest laws and the village leaders' participation in this policy. With villager leaders and local staff of the state agencies as negotiators, Ban Mae Luang village council succeeded in establishing a conservation institution to control the complex forest use and the diverse behaviour of villagers. The chapter also explores the formal and informal alliances that occur in the forest management as a result of the practical negotiations between the state agencies and the village leaders.

Chapter 4 shows the Ban Mae Luang villagers' adaptation of forest management in their livelihood systems from a socio-economic point of view. Recent changes in their livelihood strategies enable them to utilise the arable land more intensively, diversify their income sources, and join in the market economy. However, the villagers diversify their strategies depending on their economic classes and socio-economic relationships in village society. The following chapters reveal the socio-economic struggle and negotiation between village leaders and ordinary villagers in forest conservation.

Chapter 5 illustrates external environmentalism attempts to control the villagers' consciousness through social environmental education and the villagers' struggles for ideological control using localism. All the state agencies, the Ban Mae Luang village council and the Thai public play a role in promoting the dominant environmental discourse to draw the local villagers' attentions to the need for environmental conservation through both mass communications and environmental education. However, ordinary villagers struggle to make compromises between the ideological environmental governance and their livelihood security in the forest obtained from activities such as logging or bush firing.They use local customs and traditions to justify their behaviour and to form informal alliances among the villagers and the outside agencies.

Chapter 6 examines the symbolic negotiation process where local villagers' claim rights to community forest management by reorganising their village belief systems to fit modern environmentalism. To illustrate this, the chapter discusses the religious rituals used in environmental projects. In Ban Mae Luang village, village leaders use their 'sacred forest of the village spirit' belief in an experimental 'community forest' project with the approval of the Watershed Management Unit (WMU). In a manipulation technique by the village leaders, the village spirits were strategically designated guardians of the forest. The chapter shows the process whereby the village spirits became the symbolic mediators of the villagers in demonstrating their well-managed nature conservation to the state and the public.

Chapter 7 describes the Ban Mae Luang Thai villagers' negotiations with an upland Hmong village and the WMU officers in an effort to secure their use of forest resources in a water dispute with the upland Hmong village. In this conflict over water resources, Ban Mae Luang village leaders strategically use their legitimacy to govern the watershed forest, created by their fraternity, communal history in communications, economic expectations and environmental images of ethnicity with the stakeholders. As a result, Ban Mae Luang village leaders demonstrate their appropriate ability to manage the water resource in the headwater forest through their handling of water disputes with the Hmong, too.

Finally, chapter 8 summarises the strategic negotiations of the village community on participatory forest management. The chapter points out the importance of seeking both the practical and ideological negotiations in forest management in the heterogeneous power structure of everyday life.

National Events		Local Events		
1938	-Forest Protection and Preservation Act	1901		-Saeng Thong sub-district founded
1941	-Forest Act	1974		-Watershed Management Unit (WMU) in Ban Mae Luang founded (Ch.3)
1961	-National Park Act			
1964	-National Forest Reserve Act	1985		-Protest against a cable car construction in Mt Doi Suthep, Chiang Mai (Ch. 6)
1989	-National logging ban			
1994	-Sub-district Council and Sub-district Administrative Organisation (SAO) Act	1989		-First tree ordination ritual by Phra Manas Nathiphithak in Nan province (Ch. 6)
1997	-The 1997 Thai Constitution - The first draft of Community Forest Bill and mass movement against the draft.	2002		-Spirit forest in Ban Mae Luang designated as a village-led experimental community forest project (Ch.6)
2001	-Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE) founded	2006		-Ban Mae Luang village council decides the rules for forest conservation (Ch. 3)
2007	-The 2007 Thai constitution - MNRE proposes Community Forest Bill and passes the bill	2007	Apr.	-Thai New Year (Ch. 6)
			May	-A sacrifice ritual in spirit forest in Ban Mae Luang (Ch. 6)
2008	-Constitutional court voids the 2007 Community Forest Bill		Jun.	-Buddha's footprint festival in Ban Mae Luang (Ch. 2)
			Dec.	-Saeng Thong district's ceremony of tree planting (Ch. 6) -Thailand general election
		2008	Feb.	-Firebreak building in Ban Mae Luang (Ch. 3)
			Mar.	-Water dispute occurs between Ban Mae Luang and Doi Yai Hmong village (Ch. 7)
			Apr.	-Thai New Year (Ch. 2 & 6) -SAO election (Ch. 2)

Figure 1.2 Timeline of National and Local Events

Chapter 2 Leadership and Community

In line with international trends, participatory forest management involving village communities has been widely discussed in northern Thailand as an alternative form of forest management (Shigetomi 1996; Reynolds 2009). Recently, the Thai state, international organisations and NGOs have launched several pilot projects of participatory forest management involving village communities. Section 66 in the 2007 Thai constitution stipulates that 'Persons so assembling to be a community, local community or traditional community shall have the right to [...] participate in the management, maintenance, preservation and exploitation of natural resources and environment including biological diversity in a balanced sustainable manner' (Kingdom of Thailand 2007). Even though full legal support for participatory management has not yet been implemented by the state, the community has arrived on the stage as one of the main actors in the state's policy on forest management. The community of Ban Mae Luang is one of the communities that have started to take a role in managing the forest with government agencies.

The following chapters will discuss specific issues involved in the forest management system in Ban Mae Luang. This chapter examines the structure that represents communal will and the role of the village leaders, as these both influence forest management. In participatory forest management, it is necessary for local villagers to show a consensus among their various interests in forest resources. However, the villagers usually have varying ideas on forest conservation because they do not face only forest conservation issues but also various problems in local society and politics such as livelihood issues, land issues and civil rights issues. In seeking a holistic solution for these complicated matters in the village, village leaders have an important function in coordinating the issues between the villagers and the state and in arranging the various socio-economic backgrounds and differing ideas among the villagers into

collective action.

The village leaders function as 'synaptic leaders', forming a bridge between the village and outside society in economic, political, and social transactions (Moerman 1969). Moerman discussed the role of village leaders as coordinators between local villagers and the state in village administration. Through his anthropological fieldwork in a Thai-Lue village in Northern Thailand, Moerman found that village leaders have a synaptic role in communicating between villagers and outside agents such as state agencies, companies and NGOs, utilising their social power relationships or customary relationships in the village. Village leaders represent their village in public meetings with state agencies or negotiations with outside agencies. Villagers expect village leaders to mediate for them on any troubles they have at these meetings. Moerman attributed the village leaders' passive attitudes to their synaptic roles between the village and the state in the context of the decreasing power of village leaders and increasing intrusion of the state centralised administration.

However, recent reforms in local administration have resulted in a more decentralised system and a democratic election system in the village. This has changed the passive view of the synaptic leaders to a more positive role for the village leaders in seeking political power and funding for the village elections, village projects and forest management development projects from external bodies such as local politicians, local merchants, the state agencies and international development agencies. Bowie (2008b:487) focuses on village leaders' behaviours in seeking political power and more money after reforms in local administration. In addition, increasing competition among candidates for election and interaction with external agencies stimulated village leaders' activities in raising funds from external politicians and merchants in the 1995 local election (Bowie 2008b:494-496). Village leaders have now more positively started to take an important role in bridging the village demands and acquiring external funding.

In an Indonesian example, Li (1996) talks about how village leaders' eager appeals in response to the community demand for external funding transformed their representation of the community. They worked out the boundaries of the community and decided what was necessary to make the community suitable to be able to apply for external funding as a community-based natural resource project.

In Ban Mae Luang, village leaders are also active in connecting and representing their community with external agencies. The village leaders occupy key positions in controlling the relationships between the village and outside agencies as positive synaptic leaders. As one of these projects with external agencies, participatory forestry is coordinated by village leaders during village decision making. They represent the Ban Mae Luang village' common decisions, even if there is little consensus, and organise the villagers in supporting outsiders' projects such as road construction projects, development campaigns, participatory forestry or elections in the village.

The first section of this chapter examines the characteristics of Thai village communities and the role of village leaders. Following the development of communication technologies in the village, northern Thai villages have gradually become integrated into the national socio-economic system. Village leaders have become integrated as agents of the state in the administration system as a result of increasing interaction with the state. The second section examines the processes of political coordination in the village community for village leaders. Even though the Thai electoral system for local elections is developing well, the power of village leaders over villagers still attributes to both customary authority within the local political culture and the state's authorisation. Ban Mae Luang village leaders utilise old customs such as patron-client and kinship relations to gain new official positions created in the wake of the decentralisation of the state's administration system. The third section shows how the village leaders mobilise villagers to fit the state's or outsiders' demands

by appealing to local contexts or rituals in the community. This creates a representation of village community while still keeping the heterogeneous ideas of villagers. Finally, the fourth section focuses on how the village leaders work as negotiators between the state and the village. Even though the state system integrates northern Thai people into the public administration system, the Ban Mae Luang village leaders utilise localism and the local connections of the community in their negotiations with state agencies. The village leaders coordinate the whole villages, in a balancing act between local and state power.

Village Leaders in the Local Administration System

Along with the transformation of the Thai local administration system, the role of village leaders has also been gradually transformed. In this century, the Thai state has promoted the installation of a centralised system. Since the early nineteenth century, local administration in Thailand was centralised, replacing nobles' governance in semi-independent vassal states by Thai state formation.[1] From 1983 to 1914, King Rama V appointed Prince Damrong to the Ministry of Interior to establish modern local administration according to the Local Administration Act of 1914, which was based on the Local Administration Act of 1897.[2] By legal means, the state installed a complete system of hierarchical administration in the northern Thai villages under the Ministry of the Interior (MOI). In this administration line, Ban Mae Luang village is located in Saeng Thong Sub-district, Saeng Thong District of Chiang Mai Province. In the same order, these levels were controlled by the village chief, *kamnan*, district chief and

[1] Before the local administration system was established, the central Thai Kingdom, *Siam* was composed of a network of personal subordination between the central and local kings through tributary relationships (Thongchai 1994:81-82). The central Kingdom required that these kings of the semi-independent vassal states send regular submissions of golden and silver trees as a sign of allegiance to the central king (Vickery 1970:864; Thongchai 1994:82).

[2] The Northern Thai Kingdom, Lan Na Kingdom was integrated into the state system in two steps (Ongsakul, Millar et al. 2005:183-213). At first, the northern Thai area was governed as *monthon* which remained the Lan Na Kingdom' nobles' post under Bangkok's administration of the department of interior during the period of 1884-1899. Secondly, the provincial system was installed into Northern Thailand. The *monthon* was subdivided by province, district, sub-district, and village in 1899. From that period, the nobles' system in public administration was replaced by civil servants.

provincial governor. The provincial governor and district chief at the upper levels were state officials but the *kamnan* and village chiefs at sub-district and village levels are not state officials due to their budget constraints. [3] However, this was more recently changed to a decentralised system. In 1994, the Thai state established the Sub-district Administrative Organisation (SAO) as a core institution of decentralisation policy by passing the Sub-district Council and Sub-district Administrative Organisation Act. The SAO was legally and financially empowered by the state decentralisation policy. From 2002, in addition to the village chief and *kamnan*'s administration, local villagers choose one chief of the SAO in a sub-district and two SAO representatives from each village by direct election. In line with this trend, local villages strengthened their direct interrelationships with outside entities such as state agencies, NGOs, companies and the Thai public in order to win in the election or to get local projects in new local political systems. Village leaders nowadays have an important role in direct negotiations with outside agencies to access their economic and political benefits.

In Ban Mae Luang village, village leaders manage the village through the village council, which is a steering organisation including a village chief, vice chief and other representatives of the village. The Ban Mae Luang village council is composed of twelve members. Under the village council, there are several other village organisations and special committees. In addition, SAO representatives, medical doctors from the village clinic and village monks sometimes join this village council as advisors. The committees and other organisations include a temple committee, funeral organisation, farmers' cooperative, a livestock farming group, a mothers' group, an organic farming group, a food processing group, a wooden toy maker's group, and traditional massage groups (Village plan 2008). There are also other temporary committees: a watershed

[3] Following the Local Administration Act in 1914, *kamnan,* who were elected from the village chiefs, were appointed by the state. The District Office pays honorariums to them as representation fees. The District Office looks upon this fee as being different from the salary of a state officer (Yano 1980:218).

forest management committee and an election committee. The temporary committees are organised by village council members to manage special events. Village meetings usually take place in the first week of every month, (Figure 2.1). Each household sends a member to the meeting to discuss important issues.

Figure 2.1 Village Meeting

At the centre of this village system are the important positions of community management in the village: the village chief position and the SAO representative position.

(a) Village Chief

Ban Mae Luang village chiefs take an important role in organising collective action in the village. According to the Local Administration Act of 1914, the duties of the village chief are stipulated as that of a state agent. This can be summarised as having three roles: 1) to communicate between the village and the state, 2) to implement peace keeping operations in the village, and 3) to assure village financial and legislative agreements like marriage or debt among the villagers (Moerman 1969; Bowie

2008b:475,482).[4] The village chief is expected to attend district meetings and to give accurate information about these district meetings to the village meetings. At the monthly Ban Mae Luang village meetings, the village chief brings the documents distributed by the district office and explains the state's notices, news and events to villagers and answers questions as an agent of the state. Furthermore, the village leaders also organise public works and religious affairs for the community. Secondly, village leaders are responsible for village security. Village leaders usually have a gun to help them in keeping order in the village. All of the dangers to the village and the state, such as capturing criminals, controlling diseases and monitoring strangers, should be reported to government officers. Finally, village leaders have the most important role in coordinating social and economic activities with outside agencies. They also witness important contracts such as transactions of land, equipment, livelihood and houses between villagers. In Ban Mae Luang village, private companies sometimes contact village leaders to try to sell chemical fertilisers or life insurance to villagers. Through them, the state or companies have access to villagers. This post of village chief had been regarded as a honourable post without payment, but since around 1938 they have been given some stipend for carrying out their duties and have been trained as semi-official state agents to take care of individual households in the villages (Yano 1980:218; Bowie 2008b:476).

In addition, the village chief according to custom is the 'great father' of the Ban Mae Luang village community, and is called *pho luang*. The village chief's jobs are also related to the life cycle and religious life in the village. He mainly becomes the first

[4] The Local Administration Act of 1914 listed eight duties of the village chief: to maintain peace and public well-being; to inform the *kamnan* of dangers requiring his assistance; to inform villagers of all government announcements or orders; to keep village household registration lists up to date; to inform the *kamnan* of unusual events in the village that may endanger the village or the government; to investigate any strangers who are not listed on the village household register who enter the village; to summon villagers to catch criminals, confiscate stolen property, extinguish fires, or render other assistance: and to summon troublemakers and vagrants for questioning (Bowie 2008b:475). Another eleven duties were added to the role of village chief in 1943: to train fellow villagers in welfare; to protect them from infectious diseases; to improve villagers' livelihood in agriculture, commerce, and industry; and to keep villagers clean and orderly (Bowie 2008b:482).

person who has the responsibility to hold public works, ceremonies or religious rituals in the temple and to encourage villagers to join in these village collective actions. He supervises working groups and special committees for communal work and records villagers' contributions to communal work (Figure 2.2). During ceremonies, the village chief makes speeches to thank the villagers for their participation and to represent the will of the community. They also participate in village wedding ceremonies; for example, the village chief was invited to a wedding ceremony in the village as a witness. The village chief often counts the betrothal money from the groom and accepts new members in the community.

During the early period since the state installed democratic elections for the selection of village chief, being the village chief was a far from desirable position.[5] In usual cases, the village chief was elected from candidates arranged by the elders' committee of villagers. Moerman (1969:547) showed that the position of village chief was not so willingly accepted by village leaders around the 1960s. He noted complaints by the village chiefs that 'It's hard and the money is small. No one wants the job'. The post of village chief was less attractive because they did not have official budgets, the duties were growing and the villagers expected village chiefs to work hard coordinating matters between the state and villagers (Bowie 2008b:484).

[5] The democratic election system installed in 1932 was practiced for a short term and then the state's appointing system was restored. The election system was re-established in 1947.

Figure 2.2 Vice Village Chief Recording Participants in Communal Work in a List of Names

(b) Sub-district Administration Organisation Representative

Following the demand for decentralisation from the 1990s, the state strengthened local autonomy through democratic election by installing a new system of SAO. In 1994, the Sub-district Council and Sub-district Administrative Organisation Act decided that each village would elect two representatives to represent the village in the sub-district council. An SAO in Ban Saeng Thong Sub-district including Ban Mae Luang village was also established by the MOI in 1999. In the same year, the Decentralisation Plan and Transition Act transferred the power and revenue for several sub-district projects such as village infrastructure, health care, cultural and nature conservation, and promotion of tourism to SAOs (Saeng Thong Sub-district Administrative Organisation 2007). At the beginning of the SAOs' establishment, *kamnan* and village chiefs were involved as council members during the transitional period. In 2001, the government eliminated these posts in the SAOs.

SAOs have various kinds of duties in village administration. These are: 1) to

construct infrastructure involving roads and irrigation; 2) to maintain natural resources and local culture; 3) to improve villagers' well-being including education and the welfare system; 4) to promote local industry; and 5) to prevent public disasters such as diseases or natural disasters. SAOs are the units where official budgets from government and external funds are placed. In terms of its financing, the revenue of the sub-district administrative organisation mostly comes from the central government, but they also have their own budget from taxes for land, buildings, and displaying business signs (Saeng Thong Sub-district Administrative Organisation 2007). The financial system at the sub-district level was criticised by some scholars as to its autonomy because of the control and supervision of it by the provincial governor and district officer and due to its high financial dependency on the state (Apichai 1997:74-75; Garden, Lebel et al. 2010:148).

Following this decentralisation process, this establishment of SAOs became a new arena to seek power and financial benefits in village politics. The local village leaders started to attempt to join the SAO gaining official positions through democratic election. The village leaders sought an opportunity to advance their political positions for power and funds from the state and outsiders such as politicians or urban merchants (Bowie 2008b:472). The *kamnan* and village chief are nowadays encouraging their family members to run for SAOs, because of their lower salary and decreasing responsibility in this transition (Bowie 2008b:472-473). This new structure of power has started to bypass the previous hierarchical structure of the village/district/province and replaced it with a more direct connection between village leaders and the sub-district administration office, state agencies, companies and local politicians. The state agencies started to connect directly with village leaders in the implementation of state projects, which included participatory forestry. In this situation, the activities of the village leader also transformed. Village leaders needed to demonstrate the needs, ability and efforts of

the village to outside politicians and state agencies to attract benefits and projects into their villages. As a result, village leaders started to be more positive 'synaptic leaders' to create political and economic benefits for villagers from external agencies.

In summary, village leaders transformed their roles in the villages following the reform of the state local administration system. They started to need more coordinating abilities as positive synaptic leaders in order to gain political and economic benefits for themselves and the village. They needed the ability to assess the demand for and the appropriate capacity of the village and their suitability to the state's projects. As a representative of the village, they needed to present a common consensus by creating alliances with villagers who had various ideas on these projects. Secondly, they also nowadays need to be a member of the SAO and they need to create good personal connections with village kinship groups and influential local politicians. Village leaders lobby influential politicians in the surrounding villages and Chiang Mai to seek assistance at elections or for village development proposals such as the construction of water reservoirs, land development and the building of roads. Village leaders, compared to past leaders are now more actively travelling to meet with these people at external villages because of improved transportation systems.

The Political Formation of Village Leadership

Due to the decentralisation policy, the roles of village leaders as negotiators increased—particularly negotiation with outsiders as in participatory forest management. Some scholars have pointed out that this leads to an abuse of power by the village leaders resulting in an unequal resource distribution and decision-making process in the process of 'elite capture' with the external agencies in participatory forestry (Platteau 2004). Village leaders create a situation in which the village elite get the largest portion of distributed goods and job opportunities from the state's or NGO's projects. They allegedly exploit ordinary villagers due to their customary nepotism or patron-client

relationships in the village. For example, Klooster (2000:5-7) noted that local forestry elites are milking community forestry and controlling the best employment in projects and logging business through nepotism in villages in Mexico.

However, the impact of 'elite capture' by village leaders in participatory forest management should be considered in the light of the total process of power formation and the balance of power according to village customs and morality in the village. Village leaders in Thailand may not have absolute power in the village, and they are always aware of keeping a balance between customary power and resistance from the ordinary villagers as being important in keeping their legitimate powers. Village elections and local customs become the key ways for ordinary villagers to control village leaders. Village elections are important focus points intermingling customary power struggles and populist authorisation in the village. The authority of the village leader is legitimated by the democratic vote of the ordinary villagers, but the motivation for their voting preference is closely connected with village politics and village custom. Bowie (2008a, 2008b) studied the relationship between customary matrilineal kinship groups and village elections in northern Thailand. She argued that customary matrilineal groups or friendship groups mobilise villagers to vote for their supporting candidate within the village. She described 'kin-based democracy' which is the democratic authority of village leaders supported by local customary organisations (Bowie 2008b:492-494, 506). Nidhi (2003) argued that political culture is more important than the written Thai constitution in understanding the rationale of Thai political life. He proposed that the way of life, the thoughts and values of society form a political influence, sacred power and morality which influence peoples' behaviour in unwritten 'cultural constitutions' which legitimatise Thai political leaders' power, like the written Thai constitutions. Walker also expanded Nidhi's concept of 'cultural constitution' in describing the village elections in Ban Tiam, in northern Thailand. He suggested that

local values in the village influence election behaviour as a form of 'rural constitution'(Walker 2008:101). The un-coded 'rural constitution' provides a basis for judgments about legitimate, and illegitimate, political power in rural electoral contexts (Walker 2008:87). As they use patron-client relationships, kinship, and friendship networks in the village to get official posts through the electrial system, the legitimate power of village leaders is constrained by these local political values in the village. Therefore village leaders have to carefully manage their relationships within village politics in order to be successfully elected in village elections.

In 2008, Ban Mae Luang village held an election for SAO representatives and for the SAO chief. This election of village leaders and the decision-making processes of village communities are officially operated along democratic rules. The tenure of an SAO representative is four years, but the election of village leaders and their leadership reflects several community influences. Mr Somphon (58) was one of the SAO representatives. He belongs to a large matrilineal kinship group in Ban Mahoi, a hamlet of Ban Mae Luang village. At that time, he was a candidate for SAO chief. Because he was one of the SAO representatives in the village, he sought this position as his next political post. At the same time, however, he had to face the risk of losing his present post if he lost the election because a person who became a candidate for the chief's post could not become a candidate for an ordinary representative at the same time. Therefore, he had to be concerned about his appearance and behaviour because these would be important in winning the election. As a result of the election, he did not win the post despite his careful strategy and cooperation and a young new leader took over his position in the hamlet. Using this case, I will examine how Mr Somphon attempted to manage his leadership for election as a local leader from three aspects: morality, protection and kinship.

Firstly, morality is very important for a local leader to establish popularity as a

charismatic leader in village politics. Candidates should not be persons whose behaviour is dishonest or immoral, and this is stated as one of the qualifications for candidates for SAO representatives, in Section 47 of the Sub-district Council and Sub-district Administrative Organisation Act 1994. However, beyond this legal requirement, morality also seems to have a political meaning in the village political culture. Village leaders have to behave like ideal respectable people in the village context. Having a reputation and sacredness as a moral person legitimatises the charismatic popularity of a local leader in the Thai village context (Nidhi 2003; Walker 2008:101). Sacredness means a person or an object has being holy or sacred character, and it is forbidden to insult then and they are regarded as being set apart from others. For example, a monk is socially recognised as being a sacred and respected person. When Ban Mae Luang villagers talk with the village monk, they sit at a lower position and use polite words when speaking to the monk. Whatever the monk says is highly repected and he is rarely directly criticised by the villagers. If a villager behaves badly to a monk, the villager will be socially sanctioned by all the other villagers. On the other hand, also in Thai custom, monks have a duty to keep special codes of conduct to maintain their sacred role in leading the people.[6] These kinds of codes also extend to village leaders. There is a social expectation that if one receives this sacred, respected position, one ought to respect these social codes of sacredness and so local leaders who hope to acquire positions with high respect like that of the monks, also follow certain typical code. Mr Somphon, for example, is always careful to maintain his reputation of faithfulness, sacredness and noble mindedness as a patron of the village, and his behaviour in these areas indicate his morality to local villagers or outside visitors.

One key indicator of morality is religious faithfulness. For example, northern

[6] In written texts in Thailand, a benevolent king must customarily follow the 'tenfold virtues of the ruler' involving charity, morality, altruism, honesty, gentleness, self-control, non-anger, non-violence, forbearance and uprightness. Monks also have two hundred and twenty-seven precepts to follow to keep their religious sacredness in the *patimokkha* text.

Thai people have a custom of not drinking alcohol during the period of the Buddhist Lent. Village monks and village chiefs promote abstention and issue a certification letter to people who refrain from drinking alcohol during this time.[7] Ordinary villagers do not usually manage to abstain for the entire lent period. Mr Somphon, however, received a certification of alcohol abstention from the village temple every year and displayed it on the wall of his living room. He is a role model for the Ban Mae Luang villagers. Due to his moralistic reputation in the village, he succeeded in getting a position as a protector of the village religion. He is one of the reliable core members on the village temple committee and he has responsibility for accounting and fund raising. He attends Buddhist rituals, village spirit rituals and other festivals. His devotion to his spiritual beliefs extends to serious awareness of traditional taboos, too. He has never allowed his wife to wash his clothes with women's clothes and he also prohibits her from drying his clothes under women's clothes. This taboo comes from the belief that female clothes may pollute the male's sacred power because drying female clothes above male clothes offends against the customary order of male potency (Davis 1984:65-66, 96).[8] His wife and his sisters were not so happy with his behaviour and commented that 'his behaviour is really like a monk'. His wife's comment correctly points out his aim. He believed that being as devout and sacred as a monk will give him the moral reputation which is befitting for a village leader.

Secondly, a village leader has to be a financial and political patron of local villagers. Mr Somphon is one of the main financial contributors to village projects and festivals. In the village, when they gather donations for village development projects such as building a resthouse, crematorium, temple or road construction or religious

[7] In TV programs in the village, the state also broadcasted various programs to promote alcohol abstention.

[8] Davis (1984:96) noted that 'a man's magic power is always in danger of being diminished by contact with inauspicious and low things'. The woman is thought to be a low thing because woman possesses less potency than the male in northern Thai lowlanders' beliefs. It is regarded that the objects associated with females, such as female clothing, are particularly threatening to a man's magical potency. A man will not walk under a clothesline on which female garments are hanging, nor allow a standing woman to come close to him if he is seated (Davis 1984:65-66).

activities, it is quite common to raise a sign board with the donors' name and the amount of their donations. All three sign boards in the village had Mr Somphon's and his family's names on the top lines of the boards as one of the major donors. His financial generosity can be observed in village merit making festivals. For example, the Ban Mae Luang villagers usually band together in a group of several families to offer one money tree as a donation to the temple (Figure 2.3). However, village leaders like Mr Somphon often individually donate a large money tree by themselves (Figure 2.4). Other villagers said of him that 'he likes donation', however it is necessary for him to donate money to the village temple and village. There is a clear communal obligation that village leaders must be patrons of villagers. The village leaders need to distribute large amounts to demonstrate their leadership to the villagers (Walker 2008:92-93).

Figure 2.3 Village Group's Donation to the Village Temple (left)

Figure 2.4 Mr Somphon's Donation to the Village Temple (right)

For ordinary villagers, making donations is regarded as an appropriate way for village leaders to behave, otherwise their leadership and support for it may be eroded.

My experience also supports the importance of village leaders exhibiting appropriate behaviour following the reasonings of the community. One day, a villager asked me for a donation to the child care centre in the village. I decided to refuse this request and explained to him briefly that I could not donate to the project since other villagers did not do so. However, he felt I did not fulfil my duty in showing morality and providing financial protection for the village as a rich village member. Then he started to cause difficulties in my interviewing. Another village woman was worried about this situation and repeatedly recommended that I contribute to village development and election activity as part of my duty as a village man and kinship member. Therefore, I discussed this issue with a village leader and decided to donate to the construction of a village road following other local leaders' donations. A donation certification with the stamp of the village temple committee was provided to me and village leaders wrote my name on a sign board. After this, the objections to my interviewing gradually disappeared.

Village leaders have to provide financial support to villagers and villagers supported their leadership in this reciprocal arrangement. In another case, there is a northern Thai customary ritual called *dam hua* on New Year's Day (*songkran*). According to this ritual, villagers show their respect for elders, teachers, seniors or patrons by making a gift which can include rice, flowers, candles, a small amount of money, soap, detergents and water with *sompoi* (*acacia concinna*). They do this to ask for forgiveness for faults committed intentionally or unintentionally to people who should be respected (Sommai and Dore 1992:186). Therefore, the gift includes washing tools which represents washing off sin. This ritual also now includes the recent political meanings of reconfirming the patron and client relationship (Bowie 2008a:497).

On New Year's Day, a village chief took two pickup trucks full of Ban Mae Luang villagers to Mr Somphon's house to practise the '*dam hua* ritual for sub-district administrative organisation representative'. They offered *sompoi* water and gifts to Mr

Somphon. He combed his hair with the offered *sompoi* water. In return, Mr Somphon celebrated their attendance by blessing theim and wishing them happiness and long lives. After the ritual, the family of Mr Somphon treated all the attendees to beer, local whiskey and foods like sausage salad, sour soup, marinated raw pork and sticky rice (Figure 2.5). Through this ceremony, village leaders also confirm their connection with influential people in village politics. Mr Somphon also goes with his family and followers to practise *dam hua* for some other friends and patrons like the village chief, an officer of the Electricity Generating Authority of Thailand (EGAT), a chief of the SAO, and old friends from childhood (Figure 2.6).

Figure 2.5 A Party with the Village Chief and Villagers after *Dam Hua* for Mr Somphon

Figure 2.6 Mr Somphon's *Dam Hua* for Village Chief

Thirdly, kinship is another element that influences leadership in the village. Social discrimination by kin groups is not so obvious in the Thai rural village. However, the relationship between kinship groups influences the mobilisation of members in the community. In northern Thailand, the worshiping of a spirit called *phi phu nya* reinforces matrilineal kinship. *Phu nya* generally means grandfather and grandmother in northern Thai language. The spirits are regarded as ancestral spirits but they are not related to a specific ancestor in the kin (Davis 1984:59-60; Walker 2006:198). The spirits are generally regarded as guardian spirits, whose purpose is to protect the house and the matrilineal kinship group.[9] The most senior woman in the matrilineal kinship group has a small altar for worshiping the spirits in her room. The house which has a

[9] The spirit has a role to keep order in the house. Villagers believed that *matriline ancestral spirits* protect the kin, but they also can punish a kin member if they commit adultery, immorality, or abandonment called *phit phi* or irreverence to spirit. They believe that punishment by the spirit is mean and terrible. The violator and kin can lose their fortune; have a terrible illness; lose all rice in the granary; sometimes even die. In order to appease the spirits, believers come to the *ban gao* and offer chickens in the Thai new year or *songkram* (on the 'prince day' or *wan prayawan*); also there is a large sacrifice day in *Lan Na* the ninth month, and the starting day of Lent, the ending day of Lent, and at the new rice offering festival. In addition, before the wedding of a house member, the eldest female makes offerings to the spirit.

spirit altar is called the *ban gao*, which means 'core house' or 'stem house'. This spirit follows the matrilineal line—grandmother to mother, mother to daughter. In Ban Mae Luang village, there are nine spirit worship groups and they hold their annual worship in the core house.

The importance of the matrilineal spirit worship network in village politics is discussed in Bowie's study on village elections (Bowie 2008a). She focused on matrilineal kinship as a basic institution in vote gathering in the electoral campaign. Because the village community of northern Thailand is traditionally a matrilocal system for residence after marriage, female members in the kin groups tend to stay in the village and maintain the relationships among villagers for a long time while the male members tend to be outsiders from other villages. Therefore, although the politics of Thailand belongs to the male world in the sense of gender, his wife and female canvassers take an important role in gathering the support for village members in elections. In the village, female lines easily get together in religious practice or in agricultural working groups.

The village politics among kinship groups could be observed in Ban Mahoi, a hamlet of Ban Mae Luang village. Mr Somphon, an SAO representative, belongs to a relatively old spirit group that has the second largest number of followers, of which Mr Somphon's mother is the head of the worshipping group. His mother's father was one of the village chiefs of Ban Mahoi. The family originally came from Lampang at the time of Mr Somphon's mother's grandfather. Mr Somphon's mother is also one of the large landowners in the village. She was married twice. In her second marriage, she was married to the son of the oldest family in the village that held the best upstream land. However, another large spirit group gradually gained power in village politics. The spirit group members called themselves '*sip si langkha*' or 'fourteen house roofs'. This group centred on two old sisters and was recognised as a sub-community in the village.

Compared to Mr Somphon's group, this group was a relatively new group of settlers who originally emigrated from Mae Rim district in Chiang Mai about half a century ago. After their arrival, the family then hosted their relatives from various suburbs in Chiang Mai or neighbouring villages in their house. These relatives gradually expanded their residences and upland fields to the south of the village. Owing to their late arrival to the village, they tend to have poor quality ricefields. A core house is operating village shops and various businesses in Ban Mahoi employing some young relatives. These two local groups officially formed one community, Ban Mahoi. All the Ban Mahoi families participated in communal works, installing water pipes or building new roads.

Mr Somphon's group was gradually losing control of the village due to the increasing power of 'the fourteen households' group. In Ban Mahoi in 2007, political separation between the two kin groups resulted in several small conflicts. Mr Somphon's group had only the one important post as SAO representative. However, 'the fourteen households' group succeeded in having the important posts of vice village chief and members of the temple committee. One of the reasons for the growing political power of this group is thought to be the existence of prospective young successors who could influence village members. Mr Somphon's group also has young educated children—in fact more than 'the fourteen households' group—but most of them are working in Chiang Mai or other urban cities as clerks or company owners, and they rarely come back to the village. Consequently, they do not care for village politics so much even though they are still major financial supporters of the village festivals. On the other hand, 'the fourteen households' group has plenty of young labourers and operates a number of businesses in the village. As most of these people could not get a better education than Somphon's children, they chose to stay in the village. A large number of young people with a close commitment to the village has gradually empowered 'the fourteen households' group in village politics.

Tensions have become greater between the two groups under the seemingly peaceful everyday life in the village. As the next young leaders from 'the fourteen households' group started to appear on the political stage in the village, the tension became more obvious. On the other hand, intentionally or unintentionally, both of the groups had sometimes attempted to fix their relationship. A few years ago, the village elders encouraged a marriage between the sister-in-law of Mr Somphon—she was a widow of a dead younger brother—and a son from 'the fourteen households' group. However she refused the arranged marriage and found a husband in another province. So this arrangement to try to repair the groups' relationship failed. Then, a remarkable event happened just before Mr Somphon's election for chief of the sub-district administrative organisation. In a funeral ceremony of a 'fourteen households' group member in 2007, when Mr Somphon started to make a speech for the dead person, a young leader from 'the fourteen households' group started to make fun of him and other young members followed this joking. Mr Somphon totally ignored him. It was clearly challenging to Mr Somphon. This incident showed the clear split between kinships in the village.

Mr Somphon needed to fix the relationship with 'the fourteen households' group immediately as he wanted to be a candidate for chief of the SAO. On the Thai New Year's day in 2008, Mr Somphon announced his informal marriage to the second daughter of a core house in 'the fourteen households' group. All the members of Mr Somphon's and 'the fourteen households' groups got together and participated in an unofficial celebration to confirm the unity of village. At that time Mr Somphon performed a *dam hua* ritual to elders of 'the fourteen households' group.

However, his consolidation strategy was ultimately unsuccessful in getting him elected. Mr Somphon did not get to be a chief of sub-district representative. In the election activities, he got considerable support from his kinship group and fellow kin

groups but he could not get support for the election from 'the fourteen households' group. Before Mr Somphon's marriage, 'the fourteen households' group had already appointed a new young leader—the one who had challenged Mr Somphon in the funeral ceremony, as the one they would support as the SAO representative. Mr Somphon could not extend his election campaign to neighbouring villages because 'the fourteen households' group did not join in his campaign.

In these ways, village leadership is based on communal support amongst the villagers. Otherwise they lose legitimacy in the eyes of the villagers. The leadership of Ban Mae Luang is not only legitimated by the state, but also influenced by one's carrying on spiritual devotion, making donations, or kinship. Ban Mae Luang has a new young leader from 'the fourteen households' group. This was the man who challenged Mr Somphon in 2007. He was elected as the new sub-district administrative organisation representative in 2008. After the election, I went to meet the young leader at his house. Once he liked to behave like a young village man, talking joking, speaking loud and funny, however, his behaviour had totally changed from the one of the previous year. He now behaves like one of an ideal mature leader, talking calmly and looking after the villagers generously like a father. The demands of the community had changed his behaviour to that of a mature representative and a nice negotiator in village politics.

Village Leaders' Coordination through Localism

Village leaders' powers are restricted by the demands of the ordinary villagers through village customs as seen above; however, village leaders also use these customs to represent community policy to people with different ideas. Village leaders' decisions are influenced by local politics and depend on negotiations with villagers according to local demands. They encourage villagers to join in collective religious activities and communal duties that fit with both the will of the leaders and local customs.

Between the villagers' and external agencies, there is an ideologically large gap. For example, officers of state agencies sometimes attend Ban Mae Luang village meetings to discuss projects or give notices to the villagers. During the meeting, the officers read and explain official documents to the villagers: on life insurance, or village aid programs, and illegal logging or drug abuse. The language of the announcement is very important to the villagers. Villagers sometimes have expressed '*bo hu rueang*' (I cannot understand) when they have faced the unfamiliar central Thai language and the terms of the state officials or the notice. Some villagers really had difficulty in speaking central Thai. However, it was not only a problem of knowledge of the language, but also a problem connected with difference in the ways of thinking. Villagers expressed their confusion about the messages. The special terms of Thai bureaucrats are sometimes difficult for the villagers to understand. They include new concepts for the villagers such as village administration, illegalisation of logging or encroachment, new bike registration systems or life insurance. Some concepts do not fit with real life in the village, and there were some gaps in understanding between the state and local villagers.

Village leaders' role is to fill this gap and to help the villagers to accept the new concepts by interpreting them using local terms and concepts. When the Ban Mae Luang village chief receives a notice from the state government, he usually reads the whole sentences of the notice in front of the village seriously without any changes. However, if he finds that the contents of the notice are difficult for the villagers to understood, the village chief sometimes uses examples from village life to explain the state announcements. His explanations sometimes draw a laugh from the villagers, but people appreciate his explanations using the same logic to that of the community.

This arrangement is close to the technique of *so*, the northern Thai customary comedy opera which is usually held during the festival time of *poi luang*, which is a large celebration for a temple building or renovation. *So* opera is composed of chats or

songs performed by a couple of male and female singers. The contents of their chatting sometimes include serious announcements about the origins of the temple, the cost of the renovation, national politics or economy. However, large laughing breaks out from the audience because of the way it is explained. The national economy is localised into the life of the village. The content of the topic is made more interesting for villagers in the local context. Even though there is a difference in that *so* is an entertainment whereby entertainment meets the serious business of the village, there are similarities in the village leader's techniques to make difficult content fit into the context of village life. McDaniel (2008:6-9) also referred to this talking about 'language' written in the official texts and 'languaging' which is the digesting of the language in the context of the actual Lao and Thai Buddhist curriculum and present real practices in monasteries by the teachers. The 'languaging' is a more important part of knowledge formation *in situ* than the 'language' in the official texts. Similarly, the village chief interprets difficult official projects to make them understandable for the villagers and to lead the villagers by communicating it in a local context.

By using the technique of 'languaging', projects from the outside agencies are translated into communal projects by village leaders to mobilise villagers even though the benefit may not be to all the villagers. For example, a plan to install additional computers in the village elementary school was raised at the village council by the elementary school principal in Ban Mae Luang village. Some of the funding of the plan was supported by school graduates and their related agencies but they still had to ask village leaders for financial support for this plan as a community project. The plan faced objection from some villagers and students' parents because they thought the village school had already gathered enough money from parents, such as the cost of materials for study and school trip fees. The gossip in the village said that if they bought an additional computer, it would be used not for education but for playing video games by

the teachers. One parent said that 'if we have enough money to pay for such a computer which we really cannot use, we want to use the money for giving lunch meals for children'. However, in the village meeting, village leaders persuaded the villagers by explaining how computer education becomes important when their children go to Chiang Mai for further education or to seek employment. At last, the villagers decided to support the computer installation plan.

However, Ban Mae Luang village leaders sought a compromise with villagers who were opposed to the plan by seeking fund raising for it in the village. They did not use money from the village budget, but decided to use traditional fund raising called *pha pa*. *Pha pa* literally means 'forest clothes'. This was originally a ritual where robes were left on the branches of tree for wondering monks in the forest (Mani 2005:227). However, the ritual nowadays has become a method of fund raising in the village particularly for temple renovations and public constructions on festival days (Figure 2.7). One remaining element of the original ritual can be seen in the parades with people holding a branch of tree with a robe hanging from it. On New Year, villagers organised a charity band to ask people for donations in a bowl as merit making for the installation of computers. When the band came to the households, the head of the household usually gave some money or sometimes some bottles of beer. However, poor villagers or those who did not want to donate sometimes went out from their house to escape this gift giving when they heard the sound of the northern Thai music that the band was playing. Some poor villagers unfortunately failed to escape from the band members. In a festival mood, the villagers persuaded them to donate for merit making instead of paying money for white whisky for them to consume that day. The band furthermore rushed to cars or bikes passing through the village and asked for donations to their temple, for merit making. After a long day of charity walking, all the donations in the bowl are brought into the village temple and counted by the village council members (Figure 2.8). Then

the council member reported the total amount to the village monk and village chief. All the donations were used for the installation of new computers.

Figure 2.7 Band Parade at the *Pha Pa*

Figure 2.8 Counting Donations at the Village Temple

Through this process of customary village fund raising, the antagonism toward the computer installations was alleviated through the context of communal cooperation, merit making according to Buddhism and a festival mood. Village leaders use similar techniques of 'languaging' to reinterpret the official orders to that of customary obligation in the local political culture. Here they mixed the need for computers as official meanings with village commonality, and created a merit making donation festival to bring the different ideas into village life. Through this event, Ban Mae Luang village leaders changed the meanings of their behaviour from that of a fund raising event to that of a merit making event and communal cooperation. Thus, the moralistic restrictions of community become an engine through which to encourage the villagers to engage in collective action.

The Ban Mae Luang village leaders succeeded in integrating the dispersed ideas of the villagers that the plan by the village school had raised and mobilised the villagers into collective action. They also manipulated the village festival as a tool to make their decision appear to be communal will. Even though the village leaders have to make more donations than other villagers, their policy is thus supported by villagers and becomes one of village unity despite there having been originally heterogeneous ideas inside the community. Village leaders compromise with the ordinary villagers who do not want to make donations. As described before when the *pha pa* came to the village, most of the young landless workers disappeared from their usual gathering place. After the band left, they came back to the village and restarted the New Year drinking party again.

Representing the Village Outside

Village leaders also work as village representatives to materialise villagers' benefits by utilising their connection with outside agencies. Establishing a good relationship with influential outside agencies or individuals, and bringing development funds and political

benefits to the village also became important jobs for the village leaders. Due to an increase in participatory administration procedures and development projects, village leaders have increased their chances to negotiate with outside villages and influential individuals by means of both formal procedures using proposals and informal negotiations when hosting them at festivals, election support or individual social drinking.

When village leaders need funds from outside for things like dam construction, road construction or village festivals in Ban Mae Luang, the village leaders usually write a proposal and approach the provincial office or outside fund agencies. With these proposals, the village leaders negotiate with the outside agents such as the state agencies, local politicians or their rich relative to get aid projects or funds. They sometimes get together at the house of the village chief or SAO representative to draft the proposal and type it on the village leaders' personal computer.[10] In this process, the village leaders justify that their demand is reasonable and that the characteristics of the village are favourable in meeting funding criteria. The role of the village leaders becomes significant in simplifying the multiple characters of the villagers and creating a unified image of community with the suitable concepts of indigenous, community, custom, traditional eco-friendly life style, Buddhist faith, loyalty to the king and the state and unity of a community fitting the preferences of the outside agencies (Li 1996; Walker 2001). They interpret the communal demands of the village to fit the outside demand of appropriate village images in a Thai context.

As strategic leaders seeking fund raising, Ban Mae Luang village leaders functioned to transform the image of the village to be suitable to the demands of the outside agencies by utilising their history and identity. They integrate village history

[10] Mr Somphon had a personal computer and a printer for writing official documents even though it was not connected to the internet. However the computer was mainly used for *karaoke* at the drinking parties at Mr Somphon's house or during village festivals.

into the official written documents of the proposals to show a venerable village with a long history. The village chief has written up the village history using a government history document as a guide. The story of Ban Mae Luang was written along the lines of a document 'Saeng Thong 100 years' which the Saeng Thong district had published to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the establishment of Saeng Thong district in 2001 (Saeng Thong District Office 2003). This book was probably the first attempt to compile the vague history of the villages into an official history of the district under the state system. In the book, the legendary origins of the Saeng Thong district were based on interviews with local villagers who know about the history of the Saeng Thong district and this was connected with the authentic historical story line of the Province and the state from the sources such as the Chiang Mai Chronicle, the modern history of the Thai state, and then recent records of the royal family's visits. This project of grafting village oral history with the official written history is being coincidentally promoted by both village leaders and the district. The village leaders' reports also will explain the establishment of the village by including the historical events of refugees' immigration from wars and the establishment of the elephant training centre by King Kawilorot Suriyawong (1856-1870)[11] which are in the Chiang Mai Chronicles as authorised history. So in the written history, information was selected to create an authorised history. Even though local history has abundant variations, both the village leaders and the district officers utilise materials such as this to represent the long history of the community and to demonstrate regional unity from a long time ago, in order to attract external projects.

Using these selected representations of the village, village leaders positively promote access to funding. The village festival is also one of the stages where village

[11] King Kawilorot Suriyawong, was a son of King Kawila. He was well as known *Chao Chiwit Ao*, meaning 'Lord Taker of Life' because he was famous in ordering people to be beheaded by uttering only a word '*ao* [take]' (Ongsakul et al. 2005:140).

leaders can appeal for outside funding for the village. As seen in the previous section, the Ban Mae Luang village leaders raise funds for village development from the villagers, however at the same time village leaders also seek donations from outside the village. Donations from outside actually account for a main part of the donations. According to records of donations for building a small resthouse for the temple in Ban Mahoi, village leaders asked for donations in two different years. In 2001, over eighty per cent of the total amount of donations came from persons who lived outside the village.[12] In 2006, sixty per cent of the total amount of the donations came from outside the village.[13] Village festivals are financially supported by people from outside the village. Therefore, the connection between village leaders and outsiders has become important for village development.

Fund raising usually starts before the festival day. Invitation letters are sent outside the village in the name of the whole village and temple committee. The invitation letters emphasise their long tradition of ritual and faithfulness to northern Thai traditional Buddhism and the unity of the village to make outside villagers feel sympathetic to their cause. For example, an annual festival worshipping Buddha's footprint in Ban Mahoi was held in 2007. It was also held as a fund raising event for a cement-sealed road to go up to the Buddha's footprint. In the invitation letter, they wrote as follows;

> Faithful devotees in Ban Mae Luang worship the Buddha footprint and stupa. The Buddha foot print and stupa are holy relics in the village. Villagers pray to them so that they can live in the village peacefully and happily for a long time. Villagers have been carrying out the ritual of soaking Buddha's footprint with water for a long time. This ritual is an auspicious and good tradition, which

[12] In 2001, the number of donors was fifty and thirty five of these were outsiders.

[13] In 2006, the number of donors was twenty nine and eight of these were outsiders.

has much worth and should be carried on through generations.

The letter contained a number of nostalgic key words regarding a northern Thai village: Buddhism, a peaceful image of a unified village and a long northern tradition. The words are not untrue, but they may be exaggerated a little. Village life cannot always be so peaceful and happy. In addition, Ban Mae Luang village religion is a mix of Buddhism and spirit beliefs and villagers are not always joined in religious rituals. However, the words bring the idea of a customary image of villages that all villagers can agree on in the local value system. The nostalgic words are attractive to those outside. This letter was sent to relatives working in urban cities and friends outside the village. In most cases, they sent money back to the village or came to the festival to offer donations.

In the festival of Ban Mae Luang, some villager leaders are more interested in fundraising and creating connections at the night parties rather than the religious rituals during the daytime. They especially invite influential or rich persons to participate in the ritual and the entertainments after the ritual, such as traditional bamboo rocket launching, and *karaoke* or dancing parties. The festival is one of the opportunities where the district officers or policemen can be invited and negotiations about village development can take place. Since the festival should always be reported to the district office and the police office, the district officers or policemen also have reasons to come to control the festival so as to avoid the incidence of accidents or fighting. The village chief and high positioned officials take central seats at the rituals and the festivals and there is friendly talk on various issues such as political issues or development projects in the village. Villagers sell food or alcohol to the participants. After the festival, the income from the festival is counted by the village leaders and used for public works.

Apart from the festivals, village leaders also sometimes directly ask prospective donors to help the village by appealing to their sympathy for their homeplace. Village

leaders take letters and several files to influential individuals who visit the village or stay in Chiang Mai and ask for cooperation in village projects. For example, Mr Somphon was involved in a project to build a village road up to the stupa. He visited a relative who was working as a senior officer in the EGAT when he came back to the village to his family's house for Thai New Year celebrations. Mr Somphon visited him to *dam hua* as an old friend. They talked about old memories and recent situations. Mr Somphon talked in a friendly manner about the electricity situation in the village in the last year. During the rainy season, a ground avalanche resulted in the electric line being cut off for one week. He related this episode to show how much his village friends needed help from an old friend working at a famous public electric company. After Thai New Year period Mr Somphon's friend went back to Bangkok but his name appeared on the first line of the message board of the list of donors for a road construction village project with a large donation amount a few months later.

In this way, village leaders use appropriate images of the community to appeal to influential outsiders for financial and political support for the village development projects. The long history of the village, loyalty to Buddhism, and royal family and good friendships and customary familiarity were used to portray an attractive image of the village and to gain sympathy from outsiders. The village leaders' abilities in establishing cooperation and help from outside the village become a key in the decision-making process in communal projects.

Conclusion

Through this chapter, the role of village leaders and their ways of representing the community's will were examined. Increasing democratic elections and interaction with external agencies have gradually transformed their leadership from that of a passive 'synaptic leader' observed by Moerman to that of a positive 'synaptic leader' forming a bridge between the local village community and institutions and people from outside the

village. Village leaders seek political power and funding for state village development projects by making connections with powerful outsiders and interpreting the identity, history, the festivals or customary methods of the village to fit in with outside attitudes. In these negotiations, village leaders have an important role in representing the village community to the outside.

In addition, this chapter also showed the struggles of the Ban Mae Luang village leaders in maintaining their power within the local community. Their power is restricted by community thinking such as morality or kinship power relationships in village politics. The new situation of democratic elections seems to further emphasise the importance of local values. Kinship ties and village leaders' populist behaviour in the village community and local values in village life underlie processes and practices in election campaigns. Through fund raising, benefit distributions and job opportunities in projects for the villagers, village leaders gain official positions and legitimacy and power to enable them to negotiate with the villagers and persuade them to join in collective actions.

In the increasing interaction between outside agencies and the village community in village development projects, village leaders attempt to balance obedience to the state with the local village's interest in gaining holistic benefits and their own political influence. To introduce development projects including participatory forestry in Ban Mae Luang, village leaders, as 'synaptic leaders', attempt to attract attention from the state or external development agencies to the village by representing the village community as being well worthy of consideration. Based on this discussion of the role of the village leaders, the next chapter shows village leaders' functions in coordinating participatory forest management in the interaction between the state and the village community.

Chapter 3 Village Forest Management

According to villagers in Ban Mae Luang, their ancestors gradually enlarged their village and arable lands by clearing dense forest surrounding the village. However, the increasing scarcity of forest land has resulted in numerous conflicts between this way of improving villagers' livelihood and the state's resource management in the past few decades. This means of villagers' livelihood has not officially been allowed in state policy. Official laws and regulations have prohibited encroachment on forest land and commercial logging by the villagers. The state had also created various institutions like the RFD or the Land Development Department, which attempt to separate the villagers' living areas from the forest in order to control forest resources and villagers' behaviours.

However, these conflicts surrounding northern Thai villages are gradually disappearing due to the reduction of tension caused by curtailing the decreasing rate of forestland and increasing participatory forestry. In Ban Mae Luang during 2007–2008, forest management did not face an urgent problem of deforestation. Rather, village leaders and the WMU, a state agency in charge of the Ban Mae Luang forest, shared recognition of the recent recovery of watershed forest as a result of their efforts in participatory forestry.

This new phase of forest management in Ban Mae Luang is now leading to détente in the conflict between the state agency and villagers, because it stresses the importance of mutual cooperation between the village and the state agency for natural conservation. Problems such as commercial logging or bushfires are regarded as manageable as long as mutual agreement to respect forest policy is kept between them. Forest management has become more negotiable among state agencies, village leaders, ordinary villagers and other stakeholders with various backgrounds. All have joined in forest conservation through participatory forestry to achieve different purposes at

various levels. For instance, in exchange for supporting forest conservation by state agencies, villagers in Ban Mae Luang can seek security of their livelihoods, political advantages or loyalty to the state.

This chapter mainly focuses on these interactions in Ban Mae Luang between the officers of the WMU, an agent of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MNRE), the village leaders and other villagers in managing participatory forestry. The examination shows compromises made about the various levels of forest management. The first section reviews the transformation of conflicts in Ban Mae Luang village and shows the main points of participatory forest discussion in the village. The second section shows the structure of participatory forestry and the interaction between the WMU and the village council in Ban Mae Luang. The third section examines the actual negotiation process regarding land use in the village between the state agencies and the villagers. The final section discusses the coordinating roles of the local leaders and local officers to achieve compromises among the villagers in actual participatory forest management.

Background on Forestry in the Village

In northern Thailand, participatory forestry which allows the local community to join in forest management has been informally practised in several areas without basic law or communal land rights. To strengthen the villagers' use rights and to encourage autonomous forest management by the community, northern Thai villagers agitated for a Community Forest Bill that had been discussed in Parliament for two decades. In 2007, the Bill was passed by the National Legislative Assembly of the Surayut Chulanont government, which was formed just after the military coup in 2006 (Apinya 2007). However, the constitutional court voided the Community Forest Bill in November 2008 beacuse the assembly did not have a necessary quorum and it is still now under discussion (King-oua 2008). Participatory forestry in Ban Mae Luang village has also

gradually become a pilot case in community forest development through long political interaction between the WMU and the villagers and thus reflecting the historical transformation that is occurring in Thai forest policy.

In the history of northern Thai forestry, the forest resources of northern Thailand have been increasingly centralised as important resources for the state treasury under state control. Following the increasing scarcity of the forest, the state has strengthened its control over the forest through conservation and reserve forest measures. Vandergeest (1996a) examines this expansion of the state's control over forest land as shifting from tree control to territorial control through the concept of territorialisation. The territorialisation started with the establishment of the RFD office in Chiang Mai in 1896. Then the RFD centralised teak trading as a source of revenue in northern Thailand which the nobles of the northern Thai Lan Na Kingdom had controlled (Vandergeest 1996a; Ongsakul, Millar et al. 2005). Then the RFD's control of teak logging was expanded over the whole forest land of Thailand. The zoning technique of natural conservation was started after the 1938 Forest Protection and Reservation Act.[1] The RFD further strengthened enclosure of the forest by classifying the forest as either a tree concession area or conservation forest following the National Park Act in 1961 and the National Forest Reserve Act in 1964. This caused numerous conflicts with local people who had lived and cultivated upland fields in the forest before the state's designation of them as conservation forest.

This territorial management of the forest also affected Ban Mae Luang forest management. The WMU in Ban Mae Luang was established under the Watershed Management Division of the RFD as a pilot demonstration site aiming for integrated forest conservation and research of the headwater forest by the state, in cooperation with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the FAO in 1974 (Watershed

[1] The RFD firstly attempted to introduce zoning measures in forest management in the draft of the Forest Conservation Act in 1916, but the draft was not enacted at that time (Fujita 2003:210-211).

Management Unit 2007a:1). Ban Mae Luang forest had several characteristics that interested the government and international institutions as a forest management project site in a project named the 'Integrated Watershed and Forest Land Use Project'. Because they thought this forest was located at the headwater of the river flowing into the Chiang Mai valley, forest management was expected to help in maintaining the water flowing to Chiang Mai. The project was also planned to enhance the physical well-being of the local inhabitants while also improving the function of the ecosystem for downstream communities by maintaining the quality and quantity of water flows to downstream communities including cities (Figure 3.1). Even though the connection between headwater forest management and the changing quantity of water flows was still weakly supported by scientific research, the connection between headwater management and lower communities including cities was conceptualised as one of the main principles of the project (Forsyth and Walker 2008:99-113).

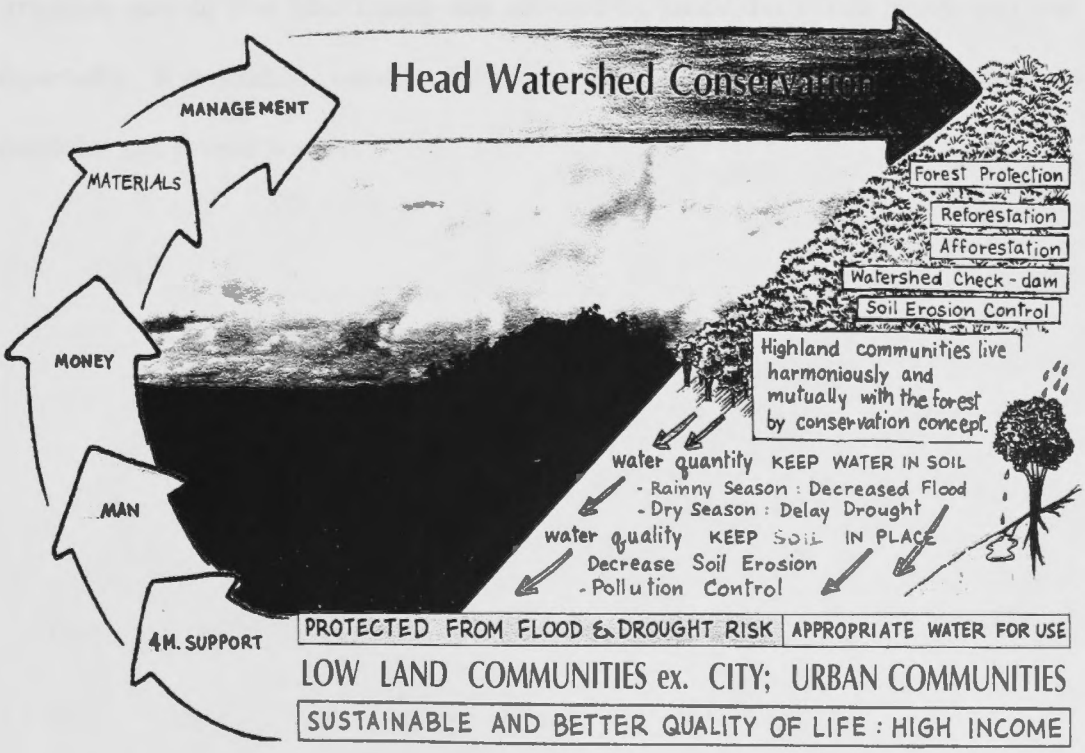

Figure 3.1 Model of the Connection between Headwater Forest Management and Lowland Communities (Source: the WMU)

The state government regarded this forest as having kept sufficient mass to keep up the quantity of water flows to downstream as the difficult access and relatively poor vegetation for commercial logging compared to other surrounding forests had not attracted large logging companies for a long time. The vegetation in the mountains around Ban Mae Luang consisted of two categories. The land below 800 metres was mostly occupied by sparse mixed deciduous forest and bamboo shrubs, or low evergreen forest (Figure 3.2). The deciduous forest contains some useful trees such as teak, *pradu*[2], *chinchan*[3] and *tabaek*[4]. The land above 1,000 metres is occupied by high evergreen forest but without tall trees because of the cool weather in the northern mountains (Figure 3.3). Furthermore, the poor soil fertility also does not suit commercial logging. The forest bed soil has many pebbles and sand which affects moisture retention in this forest, so trees grow slowly and bushfire frequently occurs. This soil quality also makes the forest area vulnerable to disaster. In 2006, the large irrigation dam in Ban Mae Luang was affected by landslides which heavy rain and, reportedly, deforestation caused. This caused the washing away of downstream ricefields and several houses.

[2] *Pterocarpus indicus*
[3] *Dalbergia oliveri*
[4] *Lagerstroemia floribunda*

Figure 3.2 Mixed Deciduous Forest in Ban Mae Luang (March 2008)

Figure 3.3 High Evergreen Forest in Ban Mae Luang (February 2008)

During the period from 1974 to 2002, Ban Mae Luang villagers faced increasing competition for the use of forest land by various actors like logging companies, the WMU, upland communities, and state agencies even though the forest of the village was not so fertile as seen above. Ban Mae Luang villagers experienced many conflicts between their forest livelihoods and forest management, but these conflicts also led to them becoming involved in participatory forestry. Two important conflicts arose in Ban Mae Luang village regarding the use of the forest: conflict with commercial logging and conflict with the designation of the forest as a national park.

The first conflict between Ban Mae Luang and a logging company was recorded in the 1980s. Following the development of a road system in Saeng Thong District, the forest of the district, which had been closed by Cabinet since 1979 to preserve forest resources, was targeted by a Chiang Mai based logging company. In 1986, the logging company applied for a concession to work in the forest of Ban Mae Luang. The activities of the logging company probably reflected the state forest policy at that time. During the 1970s and 80s, the Thai government was attempting to develop forest management, with private and state companies, by running appropriate cyclical management of commercial logging all over the country. Following this policy, the government had upgraded their forest industrial companies such as the Thai Forest Industry Company, the Thai Plywood Company and provincial forestry companies to control the Thai forest industry by centralising forest concessions (Tasaka 1991:107-111).[5] However, this centralisation caused much corruption between these companies and the provincial forest officers. The corruption led to overexploitation of concession plots and illegal logging from outside of the plots (Tasaka 1991:113).

Ban Mae Luang and other villages convened an inter-village meeting because

[5] The Thai Forest Industry Public Company was established from a department of the RFD in 1956. In 1960, the company monopolised teak extraction. Then the state increasingly strengthened the company's role as the largest concession holder to control the forest industry in Thailand. The company invested in the Thai Plywood Company and other wood processing companies. The company worked as the centre of these groups of Thai industry (Tasaka 1991).

they were afraid of damage to the natural resource and the inappropriate distribution of benefits for the locals. They argued that indigenous residents should have priority to use natural resources in the watershed forest which they and their ancestors had protected for many decades. Because of this collaboration among the villages, they succeeded in negotiating with the RFD and the company not to issue the concession. As a result, the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives ordered the RFD not to issue the concession to the company until the problem was resolved. Receiving this order, the company finally withdrew the application for the concession. The company's spokesman stated to the public that they could not find enough financial benefit from logging a less productive forest like the Ban Mae Luang forest producing only one marketable log in one *rai* to make it worthwhile to confront the villagers' disagreements. Since then, the inter-village meeting among village chiefs, and involving the RFD has been used to solve large problems in the wider area.

After solving the problem of the logging company, the Ban Mae Luang villagers had to face the national park problem next. The plan to designate the watershed forest surrounding Ban Mae Luang as a national park was proposed in 1993 (National Park Wildlife and Plant Conservation Department 2005). However, this plan faced severe disapproval from the rural villages surrounding the designated areas because local use of the forest resources would be severely restricted by the National Park Act of 1961 (Kingdom of Thailand 1961). Around the 1990s, Thai policy rapidly moved its emphasis from commercial logging to nature conservation by expanding the number and area of national parks and conservation forests. In 1986, Thailand had only 52 National Parks and 28 Wildlife Sanctuaries covering 9.4 per cent of total land. By 2005, the state had increased the number and size of conservation forests to 61 National Parks and 42 Wildlife Sanctuaries covering 12.5 per cent of the total land and was planning

further expansion in the future (Vandergeest 1996b:261).[6]

A turning point in Thai forest policy was the logging ban in 1989. This ban occurred after the flooding and landslide disasters in southern Thailand in November 1988. From November 22 to 25, landslides which occurred after heavy rain killed 350 people and damaged 55,000 houses and 3.78 million *rai* of arable fields in twelve southern provinces including Songkhla, Surat Thani and Nakhon Si Thammarat ('Chon Khamueap Pa-Kem Rukkhat Thang Kanmueang [Illegal Logging Groups—Political Game]', *Sayamrat*, 11 December 1989; Tasaka 1991:118-189; Usher 2009). Because the landslides carried a lot of logs in the mud, Thai public opinion assumed that forest destruction and inappropriate management caused by corruption between logging companies and influential politicians were responsible for the disasters (*Sayamrat*, op.cit.). In 1989, the Thai cabinet decided to stop issuing concessions for commercial logging in the whole country. This logging ban deprived the RFD of its raison d'être in managing fiscal forestry by exploiting logging and it was forced to make the decision to become an organisation for forest conservation (Sato 1999:73-74; Usher 2009:175). The state's shift to environmental conservation also affected the budget's allocation to conservation. Comparing the 1982 and 1995 budgets of the RFD, the total amount increased from 1,269 million baht to 9,305 million baht in nominal value and the portion allocated for natural conservation increased from 27 per cent to 84 per cent (Sato 1999:74). Sato concludes from this evidence that the RFD succeeded in justifying the increase in the budget by increasing the conservation area of forest (Sato 1999:74).

In the Ban Mae Luang case, in 1995 the government recognised conflicts were occurring between conservation and livelihoods of local people at thirteen sites in the area designated as a national park. Therefore the RFD decided to suspend this national park plan. In 2005, the WMU reported that these conflicts had been solved with

[6] Usher (2009:174) also figures on the area covered by National Parks and Wild Life Sanctuaries from interviews of RFD officers. By 2007, there were 108 National Parks, 57 Wildlife Sanctuaries covering 17.7 per cent of total land.

cooperation and understanding by the local people in 2005 (National Park Wildlife and Plant Conservation Department 2005). The watershed forest of Ban Mae Luang has still not been designated a national park but is regarded as a possibility for a national park in the future.

Through all this, Ban Mae Luang village has had to find a balance between development and nature conservation to secure the villagers' access to forest resources. Participatory forestry seems to be one of the compromises to secure their autonomy on forest management whilst following the framework of the state forestry policy. Participatory forestry in Ban Mae Luang was also encouraged by the trend of the nation-wide ecological mass movement towards community forestry in the 1990s. This movement developed as reaction to the corruption by logging companies and mistreatment by state forest management and sought to involve NGO networks, academics and the journalist community (Forsyth and Walker 2008:51). Since the 1997 Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand which introduced the communal right to manage natural resources also supported the demand for the alternative forest management within the local community, the community forest movement seemingly succeeded in integrating stakeholders and moving towards legalisation of the Community Forest Bill at Parliament House. However, the legalisation of this is still not settled among various stakeholders such as local villagers, urban citizens, NGOs, and the state officials who have not yet agreed as to whether they should allow the establishment of community forests in conservation forests (Anan 2000; Sato 2002; Walker 2004). Because the constitutional court voided the Bill which was passed in November 2007, the Community Forest Bill is still under discussion (2008).

Even though the legislation process has not been finalised yet at the national level, participatory forestry including experimental community forest projects in Ban Mae Luang has been practised in the village due to a deepening interrelationship

between the village and state agencies. In addition to the increase in understanding of the need for participatory forestry in public perception, mutual recognition that the demise of the forest has been already curtailed due to land use agreements and the removal of the Hmong upland fields in the Ban Mae Luang watershed forest, has helped to create a cooperative relationship with the WMU, the state agency managing the forest around Ban Mae Luang. In the village, the village chief and the forest officers in the WMU share a more optimistic view on forest management that the forest in Ban Mae Luang can be increased in area by planting more trees and that they can recover the forest quality by collaboration between villagers and the WMU. Even though bushfire, illegal logging and villagers' encroachment sometimes occur, they think these are manageable.[7] Their statements show confidence in their participatory forestry activities by both the state agency and local villagers. It does not mean all the problems on Ban Mae Luang forest are solved by participatory forest management, but the considerably long history of negotiation between the village, the state agencies and other stakeholders has established confidence in being able to solve problems in the community.

Structure of Village Forest Conservation Institutions

Forest management in Ban Mae Luang village could thus successfully curtail forest degradation in the 2000s by utilising this interrelationship with state agencies. This community can be regarded as being one of the forest conservation systems that has successfully managed the forest with the state agencies even though they still have several problems. This section focuses on the institutional structures present in Ban Mae Luang forest management.

In participatory forest management, evaluation of the state's contribution to forest management is one of the most controversial topics. Ostrom (1990) studied government intervention in communal natural resource management. Her analysis

[7] Interview with a staff at the WMU on April 23, 2007.

mainly regarded state intervention as an obstacle to communal natural management as it deprives villagers of local property rights or disturbs local rules even though she partly admitted the state was supportive of locally developed property systems in some areas. Her argument sought state recognition of communal property and management as one of the conditions necessary for robust communal natural conservation management. Chusak and Dearden (1999) also applied Ostrom's institutional analysis and evaluated community-based forest management in their field research in northern Thailand. Their further analysis on the political aspect of nature conservation at the national and local level in northern Thailand concluded that the state was inefficient in arranging the demands between local forest resource users and conservation supporters even though the state had a large influence on the forest conservation issues (Chusak and Dearden 1999:688-690).

The role of government especially local state agencies may need to be reconsidered from the local political context in the village. The Ban Mae Luang case seems to suggest the importance of political synergy between the state agency and community organisation for natural conservation at the operational level. Since Ban Mae Luang forest management was established as a pilot participatory forestry program by the state agencies, management of the forest has been operated as one integrated system constructed by two institutions: the WMU in the MNRE and the village council.

(a) Watershed Management Unit (WMU)

The WMU is an official institution of the MNRE established here to conserve the forest surrounding Ban Mae Luang. In 1974, the unit was installed by the RFD, in cooperation with the FAO and UNDP to ensure integrated watershed forest management covering the wider forests beyond the district's border. The unit directly takes responsibility for forest management for about 250 km² of forest located on mountains 500-1,420 metre above sea level, and which included ten villages with 4,921 people in

2003. They created research facilities and tree planting fields for rehabilitation and scientific research for forestry. The first project was terminated in 1981, but the RFD took over the project. During the ministry reform of 2002, this project was separated from the RFD and moved to another department in the MNRE. In their English information booklet for foreign visitors, the unit defines three missions: (1) watershed rehabilitation including reforestation, afforestation, check-dam construction, erosion control and conservation farming, (2) forest management including protection from encroachment and forest-fire and (3) forestry extension including training and self-conscious establishment in community forestry (Watershed Management Unit 2007a:4). In practice, the unit mainly aims at forest management and research into forest conservation using scientific forestry. However, the unit has gradually adapted experimental participatory forestry for their forest management by organising networks with neighbouring villages.

The headquarters of the unit are located in the next village about ten kilometres from Ban Mae Luang (Figure 3.4, 3.5). The headquarters have good facilities despite their small size. There are seven buildings including the main office, shelters for the officers, a radio operation office, a small lecture hall, a tree seedling nursery and garages. In the office are TV sets, a telephone, and a radio system and a large topographic map which shows the forest areas that they manage. Several uniformed administrative officers work in the office. Outside the office, 4WD pickup trucks with RFD logos, small bulldozers and water hoses are stored inside the garage. Both the WMU and local villagers' work in the buildings. Surrounding the headquarters, a lot of hired local villagers also can be seen—local labourers with hatchets or rakes riding on load-carrying platforms of pickup trucks go in and out from the headquarters for forest management in the morning and evening. In addition, several local labourers work putting soil in planting pots for growing seedlings in the nursery.

Figure 3.4 Front Gate of the WMU

Figure 3.5 Nursery of the WMU

The unit also has two other field sites. One is located in the experimental community forest area in the conservation forest. This site has two buildings, ponds and

one rest house with a blackboard for lectures. The other site consists of shelters for forest workers and experimental agro-forestry plots of Arabica coffee and Vetiver grass.[8] These shelters are temporarily used by local forest workers hired from villages when they stay in the forest. In addition, the unit also created temporary lookout stations. These are poorly constructed of logs with roofs of palm or teak leaves and are used only in the dry season. Hired watchpersons stay here for twenty four hours with fire fighting equipment to monitor bushfires.

The staff in the WMU office consisted of four official officers, two local officers as assistant officers, and approximately fifty temporary workers from neighbouring villages. Generally, most of the high rank official administrators' activities tend to be that of advising, researching and directing forest management, with not a lot of direct contact with local villagers. The officers take a consultant role by attending at the village chief meetings, and other important meetings or events. As Heyd and Neef (2004:24-25) noted on public officers' attitudes to participatory management in northern Thailand, 'the department has, to a certain extent, adapted participatory approaches but the officers do not have much contact or no contact at all with water users'. There is a similar situation in Ban Mae Luang. For field operations like cleaning the forest floor, preventing fires and setting boundary boards up for national park messages, they hire local workers and local officers from neighbouring villages. In most cases, the contact with villagers is through local officers; local officers work as spokesmen in the village meetings or facilitators of conservation activities in the village. Local officers ask village leaders to be their counterparts to mobilise villagers for field practice like building firebreaks and dams with a little financial support. Furthermore, the WMU does not coordinate conflict resolutions and problem solutions in the villages. The unit usually does not join in resolving the small conflicts on natural resources among

[8] *Vetiveria Zizanioides*

villages or taking action on illegal activities. The unit asks the village chiefs to resolve these matters by themselves with observation by the local officers. In summary, in the practice of forest management in Ban Mae Luang, the WMU largely relies on agents, villagers' labour and their participation. Without village cooperation, the WMU would find it very difficult to manage the forest.

(b) Village Council

In the official framework of watershed management in Ban Mae Luang, the village council is regarded as a counterpart of the unit and as a semi-official institution. However, the village council also has the characteristics of an organisation deeply embedded within the village community. The village council is composed of eighteen village leaders including a village chief, vice chief and special committees' chiefs.[9] In addition, the village monk takes a position as an advisor. These members are officially elected by the villagers through democratic voting every three or four years even though village politics involving kinships or neighbours usually affect the result of the voting. For watershed management issues, the village council has two special committees: the watershed conservation committee and the fire fighting committee. Both of these two committees are composed of ten members each following the watershed management scheme of the WMU (Watershed Management Unit 2007b). However, these committees almost overlap with the village council of members because these committees are temporarily formed from village council members for when special events or emergencies occur.

[9] There are several regulatory committees involving administration, elders' affairs, culture, agriculture and public health, and temporary committees relating to village forest management, fire fighting and elections.

Figure 3.6 Firebreak Building (*Muat* 7, 8 and 9 in Ban Mae Luang)

Figure 3.7 Check Dam (*Fai Maeo*) Building

The village council has a role to be a counterpart to the unit to coordinate villagers in following the state policy of the WMU. In practice, the council works to mobilise villagers to conservation activities in watershed management, such as firebreak building (Figure 3.6), check-dam building (Figure 3.7), tree planting, fire fighting or other events which the unit asks villagers to participate in. For example, Ban Mae Luang village leaders organised tree planting at the headwater conservation forest every year. In 2006, the villagers planted tree seedlings on fifteen *rai* in cooperation with the WMU in an area where the upland Hmong villagers had previously cultivated upland fields. However, a large bushfire damaged the planting area at the beginning of 2007. The village chief and the WMU then planned to mobilise villagers to plant seedlings there once more.[10] These requests were first discussed in the village chiefs' meetings at headquarters. Then the village chief gathered committee members in the temple to discuss the matter for their village.

The expenses of these village forest management activities are partly supported by the WMU, though the Ban Mae Luang villager leaders think that the WMU does not provide enough for their conservation activities. For example, in the case of the annual firebreak building for bushfire control before the dry season, the WMU distributes 5,000 baht to support for mobilising more than one hundred villagers to build firebreaks in the forest. This amount of money covers the gasoline fee used for the pickup trucks taking villagers to the forest. In another case of fire fighting activities in the dry season, the village council sent villagers to monitor or extinguish bushfires several times with 120 baht per person given from the unit.

In addition, the village council takes responsibility to resolve problems which occur inside the watershed forest in the Ban Mae Luang River basin, which is physically surrounded by firebreaks or mountain ridges. In the case of urgent problems like large

[10] Interview with village chief on August 9, 2007.

bushfires or water disputes with neighbouring villages, members of the village council were called to make a response to these issues. The unit provides some support to the village council, but village leaders mostly resolve these issues independently. If the problem becomes so large as to threaten the entire forest management of the whole number of villages surrounding the forest, the village chief uses inter-village chief meetings at the headquarters office of the WMU to encourage a united action by the villages.

In exchange for these forest conservation activities, Ban Mae Luang villagers are allowed to use forest products with some restrictions. The use of non-timber products such as wild vegetables, insects, wild animals, mushrooms and firewood for self consumption is allowed by the WMU. Commercial use of non-timber products is also allowed but the WMU officers show some negativity towards bamboo shoot or mushroom gathering for selling. Even though they accept these as a part of local life, they blame some villagers for setting fires in the forest to get more mushrooms and bamboo shoots to sell. On the other hand, stronger surveillance is applied to logging. Logging for public use and self consumption like temple or house building is allowed if it is reported to the unit and compensation is made by tree planting. During my research period, there were two cases where the unit permitted timber extraction for public use. On August 17, 2007, the village extracted several timbers from the conservation forest for temple construction. On March 22, 2008, other several timbers were cut for the renovation of wooden shrines for village spirits. There is no rigid agreement on the amount of timber extraction for these, so village leaders and officers have to negotiate for the necessary amount of timbers case by case.

(c) Integration for Nature Conservation

The two institutions work together to achieve their shared objective of forest conservation. However, the village council and the WMU sometimes face inevitable

conflicts because their interests are based on different socio-economic backgrounds. The WMU is an official government agency seeking conservation through sound forest ecology including water and biodiversity by forestry. The village council is a semi-official organisation deeply embedded within the local community to stabilise dissatisfaction among villagers seeking to use forest resources like forest products or arable lands. The council negotiates between the various different interests of the villagers and the WMU to support village job opportunities and to allow the villagers' use of forest.

In this formal framework of participatory forestry, the differences between the two institutions are communicated through the inter-village village chief meetings. Officially, the forest management meeting is held by the village chiefs several times in a year to share information and discuss specific use and protection of the forest. The unit has institutionalised inter-village meetings, which were established by twelve villages, as a regulatory institution of the state to discuss forest and water management and a liaison institution to mobilise people without an enormous administration cost in order to control village people's behaviour in cooperating in watershed forest management. The unit has a role to coordinate, consult or facilitate in the meeting. However, the village meeting is also beneficial for the villages. If problems like forest conflicts with the state or neighbouring upland communities occur, the villages also have the benefit of the meetings to easily establish harmonised action among surrounding villages. However, this formal integration process through inter-village meetings is too large a venue to deal with all the problems that happen in everyday life in the village. In other instances, informal connections between village leaders and local officers function to arrange forest activities well. Local officers hired from the village sometimes have family relationships or close neighbour relationships with village leaders. These informal close relationships with each other, also bridge the gap between the village and

the formal system of Ban Mae Luang forest management.

This coordination becomes very important in managing the Ban Mae Luang forest. The two institutions divide their functions and territories. The WMU takes charge of the supervision of the forest management by directing several village communities in an integrated forestland. The village council's role is to practically organise the villagers for forest management. Their territorial focuses are also different. The forest surrounding Ban Mae Luang is divided into two depending on the elevation: the upper forest at headwater and the lower forest surrounding the village. The WMU mainly focuses on the upper forest because the upper forest has more valuable trees with more preservation importance. Large trees in the upper watershed area have been marked with wooden or metal inventory tags, red ink on the trunk, or a signboard saying 'national park'.[11] On the other hand, the lower forest is sparser and has deteriorated with less variable tree resources and needs rehabilitation. But a deteriorated forest is not always bad for the villagers. It is much easier to find bamboo or non-timber products that they can sell here than in the upper forest because they mostly gather these products from the edge of forest. The villagers mainly have accepted the care of this lower forest through their participatory methods.

In conclusion, watershed management in Ban Mae Luang has been undertaken by the WMU and the village council in an integrated framework of forest management. They have divided functions and territories by their abilities and interests, but the system is also designed to coordinate as one system to conserve the whole forest system. The village council and the other village organisations are institutionalised as one of the two parts involved in forest conservation by the WMU.

[11] The designation of 'national park' of this area however has been suspended since 1993.

Loss of Open Land in Ban Mae Luang Village

Through the development of territorial control over the forest and the installation of regulatory institutions, it becomes more difficult for northern Thai villages to encroach on the forest and to freely declare possession of the frontier than in the past. The state officers have discouraged villagers' encroachment on the conservation forest for agriculture by many means. State forest management has affected the pattern of land use. Figure 3.8 shows an increase in forest land and a continuous decrease in arable land in northern Thailand. The amount of forest land in northern Thailand had gradually shrunk up until 1996. The period from 1996-2001 shows a rapid increase in forest land but these figures may have been affected by changing satellite resolution. During 2001-2006, the forest has slightly increased. On the other hand, the amount of total arable land is constantly decreasing. This figure shows the effects of the development of territorial control over forest land and arable land to discourage encroachment on forest land in northern Thai village society in this decade. In addition, it also shows the northern Thai villagers' increasing livelihood diversification shifting from the villagers' customary agricultural sectors to various jobs such as intensified agricultural business on limited land and wage labouring and working in the city, which do not need encroachment of the forest.

(*Rai*)	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006
Forest	51,782,072	48,214,357	46,005,288	57,269,319	57,542,692
Total Area of Holding for Agriculture	29,647,158	29,394,278	28,893,259	27,982,872	27,455,963
1.Ricefields	16,922,315	15,196,970	14,987,651	14,032,012	13,478,645
2.Upland Fields	9,993,518	10,474,955	9,943,344	8,926,591	8,599,425
3.Fruit Gardens	1,122,057	1,753,992	2,133,171	3,105,305	3,387,531
4.Vegetables and Flower Gardens	131,545	275,615	331,393	377,408	386,420
Source: Land Use—Agricultural Land Use in the Whole Kingdom, Region and Provinces (Office of Agricultural Economics 2009)					

Figure 3.8 The Change in Land Use in the Northern Region in Thailand (1986–2006)

At the beginning of the 2000s, Ban Mae Luang village council and the WMU faced difficult issues in land use planning and had to reach compromises between the villagers' livelihoods and forest conservation. This was the same as other villages in northern Thailand. In 2002, Ban Mae Luang village council agreed to categorise the forest surrounding the village into two areas of conservation forest and 'use' forest according to the three dimension model which still remains in the village temple (Figure 3.9).[12] In the negotiations on mapping the land use, the historical good relationship with the unit also fortunately contributed to achieve agreement on the land use plan. As seen before, even though the WMU legally has responsibility to control the forest, the actual implementation of the laws and practice cannot be taken without agreement by village leader groups. Negotiation between village leaders and the WMU in Ban Mae Luang seems to have resulted in good compromises on land use and forest resource utilisation.

[12] The WMU discussed the land use plan with five villages surrounding the forest including Ban Mae Luang using this three dimension model (Watershed Management Unit 2007a).

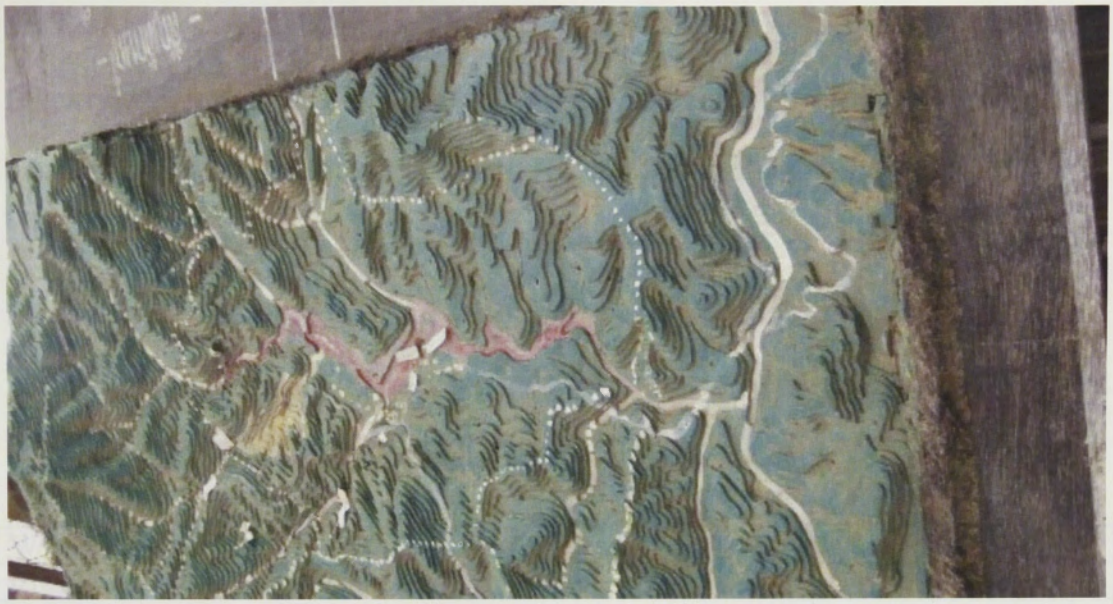

Figure 3.9 Three Dimensional Model in Ban Mae Luang Temple

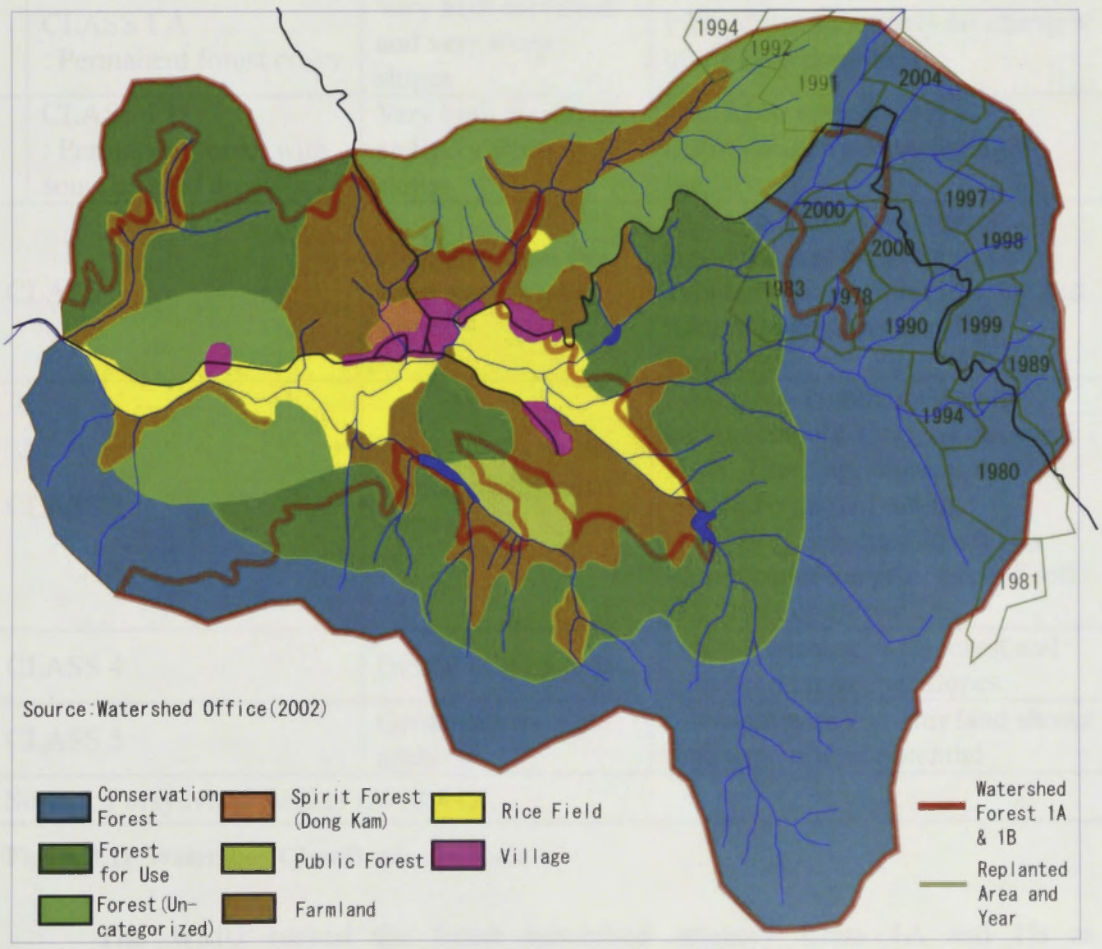

Figure 3.10 Map of Land Use in Ban Mae Luang Prepared by the WMU

The land use map illustrates the results of negotiation between actual land use by

the Ban Mae Luang village leaders and the official conservation plan of the WMU (Figure 3.10). In the forest management of Ban Mae Luang, the unit basically attempted to adapt the national wide forest management scheme called the watershed classification scheme which was based on scientific research of the land slope and the vegetation. However, the villagers' livelihood activities were, in practice, expanding into such planned conservation areas. Therefore, the WMU and village leaders needed practical agreement on land use between the two kinds of land use schemes.

Watershed Classification Scheme		
Classification	Land character	Proposed land use
CLASS 1	Very high elevation and very steep slopes	Protected or conservation forest and headwater source.
CLASS 1 A : Permanent forest cover	Very high elevation and very steep slopes	Protection. Absolutely no changes to the land permitted.
CLASS 1 B : Permanent forest with some cleared area	Very high elevation and very steep slopes	Should be reforested or maintained in permanent agro-forestry.
CLASS 2	High elevation and steep to very steep slopes	Use of land for agricultural activities is to be strenuously avoided. Commercial forestry and mining operations may be permitted.
CLASS 3	Uplands with steep slopes	Fruit trees, commercial timber, and perennials. Grazing in some areas. These agricultural activities should be carried out in a stringently responsible manner according to the principles of soil and water conservation.
CLASS 4	Gentle sloping areas	Upland farming, with forest and fruit trees on steeper slopes.
CLASS 5	Gentle slopes, flat areas	Lowland farming. This land shows high agricultural potential.
Source: Forsyth and Walker (2008:44)		

Figure 3.11 Watershed Classification Scheme

The WMU ranked the forest watershed category Class 1A and 1B as conservation forest (Figure 3.11). This watershed classification scheme has been adopted as one of the national official classification schemes in Thailand. It was established by the National Environmental Board in 1982 in order to provide a

comprehensive national watershed classification system (Nawarat and Atkinson 1998:491). The watershed classification scheme was based on a study analysing land slope and vegetation data using modern mapping technology such as satellite imagery and global positioning systems (GPS), and it introduced five categories and some sub-categories in the ranking of forest areas. By 1987, the Watershed Class 1A and 1B were endorsed by Cabinet as areas to be highly protected and rehabilitated as river headwater (Nawarat and Atkinson 1998:491). Following this decision, the RFD also claimed that the Watershed Class 1 (1A and 1B) area shall be 'kept [strictly and] permanently as headwater sources' and that 'immediate reforestation programs must be undertaken on the abundant shifting [cultivation] area' (Watershed Management Division 2004). The WMU also adopted these categories as the ideal in their negotiations on setting boundaries of conservation forest with the villages.[13] In Ban Mae Luang village, the scheme has been an important tool for the WMU in deciding on the areas to be conserved. In an interview in the unit's office, an officer explained to me the problems of land use by using the watershed classification map. He used the map when discussing the Ban Mae Luang watershed area. He explained that Ban Mae Luang was not actually in a bad situation because most of the residential area was located in the watershed classification level four. He said that another village might be a problem because the village is located in the watershed category one.

The strict adaptation of this scheme will obviously have effects on the villagers' livelihood activities. Because the Watershed Class 1A and 1B areas cover about thirty per cent of the total area of northern Thailand, these planned conservation areas involve a lot of existing upland fields and residential areas in the mountains (Forsyth and Walker 2008:42-45). As figure 3.10 shows, the watershed category 1A and 1B areas extend over most forest lands, a half of upland fields and some parts of the residential

[13] Interview with a staff at the WMU office on August 11, 2007.

areas in Ban Mae Luang village. If the Watershed Class 1A and 1B areas are designated for conservation forest such as a national park prohibiting people's settlement and forest use, Ban Mae Luang villagers will lose a large amount of their income from cash crops in the upland fields and from forest products. In addition, the villagers would also have to give up almost their whole access to these forest resources for daily consumption products because there are few forests outside the conservation forest. Therefore, it is natural for village leaders to resist the installation of the state's watershed classification scheme.

However, the WMU has gradually implemented administrative and political measures based on the watershed classification to remove Ban Mae Luang villagers' livelihood activities from the forest. Even though there are not so many records of the state's intervention into villagers' land use, some interviews and ruined signboards suggest that the policy to separate residential areas from the forest conservation areas has been applied using both 'carrot' and 'stick' methods. One 'stick' method was the relocation program to remove arable lands and houses out of the conservation forest. According to Ban Mae Luang villagers, several relocation programs took place in the headwater forest in Ban Mae Luang. One site of such a program was located in the southern forest along the mountain pass from Ban Mae Luang to the main town of Saeng Thong District. There are still several ruined houses and ricefields visible there. Another site was located at the eastern headwater forest in Ban Mae Luang. These were Hmong upland fields in the past.[14] Relocation discussions took place several times between the Hmong farmers, Ban Mae Luang village leaders and the WMU, and they finally relocated out of the headwater forest. At present, the area has been rehabilitated by replanting trees.

The 'carrot' method was a development fund trading a village land development

[14] Interview with a village chief in Hmong village of Ban Doi Ta Kao on August 25, 2007; interview with a staff at the WMU on August 17, 2007.

project for the village's cooperation in forest conservation policy. Ban Mae Luang village received a development fund for 'land development on highland community project'. Unfortunately, the village does not have records for the year the project commenced. According to internet information about 'land development on highland community projects second phase (1997-2001)' (Land Development Department 2008), the projects aim to achieve both appropriate land use and forest conservation. The program provides the budgets to develop upland fields and irrigation facilities in exchange for applying the land use zoning principles for conserving the environment and natural resources. In Ban Mahoi hamlet in Ban Mae Luang, villagers used this fund to upgrade steep upland fields used for slash and burning cultivation to permanent fields by installing irrigation using water pipes from the reservoir. The villagers also received seedlings of Vetiver glass, a plant used for preventing erosion. Through this program, rich and middle class families succeeded in enlarging their upland fields for maize, even though the soil of there is not so fertile. The programs help ease the resistance against the land use plan in the powerful village class by supporting agricultural livelihoods inside the arable area.

The encroachment of forest is monitored by the WMU and land department agencies separately. According to the interview with the WMU officer, if they find new encroached land, they fine the encroacher and then order them to fix the destruction after an assessment using GPS.[15] The encroachment data are reported to the provincial office and stored in the internet data base. Similarly, the Land Development Department, which registers local villagers' lands and issues land titles, also irregularly measures the residential and arable land of villagers for registration even though all of the lands are not legally endorsed by land right.

These watershed classification schemes and the implementation of such forest

[15] Interview with staff at the office in the WMU on August 17, 2007.

management by the state agencies have encouraged Ban Mae Luang villagers to separate from the forest. However, there is still a gap between the villagers' actual use of the land and the state's plan. In practice, villagers have different land use patterns based on their village life, micro-geography, religion or agreement among members, from the official ones. Unlike the territorial zoning of the state scheme, the land use of the villagers is multilayered throughout the forest depending on the character and vegetation of the forest products that they utilise. The forest land has a variety of uses for the village—some natural resources like bamboo shoots, mushrooms, firewood are gathered within the extension area of the forest, but for other natural resources like valuable herbs, medicinal plants or insects the villagers have to go inside the headwater forest. Some villagers also cultivate arable fields inside the forest far from the village by utilising appropriate micro-geographic characteristics like the location of a spring or a small area of flat land for cultivation. In addition, Ban Mae Luang had some forests which where were protected in the customary way by village guardian forest spirits or were used as crematory forest. Villagers were restricted here in cutting trees because of village religious purposes even though the size of the forest areas was shrinking.

Villagers' utilisation of the land obviously was in a conflict with the watershed classification schemes, so it is clear that the Ban Mae Luang village leaders need to negotiate with the WMU. However, the complexity of local landuse patterns makes it difficult for outsiders to understand. Therefore some villagers have created more of a legible local map for use in negotiation with the authorised landuse map in northern Thailand (Pinkaew 2002; Roth 2007). This local villagers' alternative mapping became a popular political tool for villagers to use to bridge the gap between local land use and the state official landuse map (Roth 2007:55). Pinkaew reported a Karen villages' map making activities for landuse negotiations with the state agencies, which started in cooperation with local NGOs in the late 1990s (Pinkaew 2002:154). In this map, local

villagers drew their ethnogeographic boundaries with the diverse categories of their forests and located local resources on a 1:50,000 aerial map. By the end of 1996, the alternative landuse map created among the Karen became one of the most popular political tools to be used for negotiation in seeking recognition of land tenure in forest land in Northern Thailand. According to Pinkaew's (2002:156) report, local villagers categorised their forest into conservation forest and 'use' forest. In challenging the state's forest management that separates local people from the forest, both forests were redefined so as not to deny the cultural and sociological connection with the village community. This landuse mapping of the Karen resulted in mutual agreement of the designation of a 'use forest' area for villagers instead of just the villagers' acceptance of the conservation forest area of the WMU. However, since this proposal faced refusal by the forestry authority, the landuse plan was only used as an operational rule in limited areas (Pinkaew 2002:159).

Following a similar process to this, the WMU and village leaders negotiated together in Ban Mae Luang village. They finally created revised a landuse map which received general agreement from both the unit and villagers. In this, they separated the Watershed Class 1A and 1B areas into conservation forest as a core area of upper forest and 'use' forest as a buffer area of lower forest. Villagers are allowed to utilise the 'use' forest for their livelihood activities except commercial logging or encroachment for agriculture while the WMU intensively conserves the upper forest.

Even though most Ban Mae Luang villagers agreed to stop expanding their arable land in forest areas after agreement with the WMU, some of them were not fully satisfied with the result of this negotiation. They still wished to have additional fields. In particular, landless labourers need to have access to land for survival. One of them, 21 year-old Top, stated his wish to gain arable land: 'we want a land for surviving. However, we now do not have any space to encroach in forest land anymore'.

Frustration can be seen in families who have young landless labourers. On the other hand, rich families with ricefields and old age families feel that the land use plan is acceptable. Mr Ja, a 57 year-old richer farmer who has a large family with large arable land in Ban Mae Luang, said, 'We could not open the forest anymore. Of course, if we could get land for surviving, I would like to get for our children and grand children.[16] However we could stay here without encroachment somehow'. Even though there are some complaints about the restriction of forest encroachment in the village, the communal decision of the village is to accept the loss of open land for agricultural expansion and the restriction of forest utilisation.

The common opinion among Ban Mae Luang villagers seems to be to attempt to protect access to forest resources or, at least, continue negotiations by agreeing to nature conservation under the name of participatory forestry. The worst case for the villagers would be to designate the watershed forest as a national park. A plan to change Ban Mae Luang conservation forest to a national park was raised in 1993 (National Park Wildlife and Plant Conservation Department 2005). At that time, the headwater forest in Ban Mae Luang fortunately was not designated as a national park because of opposition from various villages including Ban Mae Luang. In these tensions on the use of land, accepting participatory forestry is a considerable compromise for Ban Mae Luang villagers. Kan, a middle-aged villager of one of the rich old families stated that 'we agreed with the state's policy [for natural conservation] as long as they allow us to join in forest management.[17] Villagers, especially rich families, support the landuse plan of the WMU by stabilising negative opinions inside the village community as long as they can secure forest use or compensate the villagers' loss. However, if the WMU stops offering these good deals to the villagers, the villagers may then move to the opposite side to seek security of their livelihoods. This tension still exists in negotiations between

[16] Interview on March 28, 2008.
[17] Interview on February 1, 2008.

the Ban Mae Luang villagers and the WMU.

Local Coordination of Heterogeneous Views

The WMU and its forest conservation framework are designed for a simple mission of environmental conservation. However, Ban Mae Luang villagers usually face not only forest issues but also various problems in their lives to do with agricultural development, lack of infrastructure, and poverty. In these problems, village leaders seek holistic solutions to make the village's welfare better in their everyday life. To bridge the gap between necessities and to soften villagers' attitudes towards land use agreement, the village council and local officers who know these detailed problems and local logics in the community, take important roles in community decision making on forest management. They are informally expected to function as 'synaptic leaders' to coordinate various villagers' interests for operational compromises with the state's demands in Ban Mae Luang participatory forestry (Moerman 1969:547).

In the actual coordination of these activities, the village council utilises its customary position in local politics in the community. The council is officially composed of members elected by democratic voting by the villagers. However members are usually elected from well educated and middle aged adults from good families with assured income, experience of the outside world and a leading position in relative groups according to the local politics of kinship groups (Moerman 1969:538; Bowie 2008a). Therefore the council tends to be a local institution embedded within the local power balance among kin groups or hamlets. From the local community system, the village council benefits by persuading villagers to join in collective action for forest conservation. Ban Mae Luang villagers are basically mobilised in a unit called a *muat*. A *muat* means a customary group for collaboration seen in the villages of northern Thailand. Phonphilai and Arunrat (2003:115) reported that there are various kinds of

muat depending on the locality or its purposes.[18] A *muat* in Ban Mae Luang is a territorial group designated by the village, but it is also broadly overlaps kinship groups because some families tend to live close within their parent's house or kin head house. Ban Mae Luang has nine groups. Each group nominates a representative by agreement between members in the same group.[19] A reliable person is chosen from the group because the representative takes responsibility for mobilising members or collecting money for collective religious events in temple, funeral or public construction.

The Ban Mae Luang village council mobilises villagers on the basis of this *muat* network. If the WMU asks the village council to provide labourers for fire fighting, reforestation or checkdam building, the village council divides the duty into nine groups after discussion at the village meeting. Each representative considers the labour force needed and the conditions of individual households in each group and asks certain households for cooperation with village activities. The village council members and *muat* representatives from rich leading families often overlap or are closely related to each other. The mobilisation of villagers thus works because of deep communal ties and embedded understandings concerning communal activities.

However, this communal embedded management also causes difficulties for village leaders in regulating the community according to the state's laws. In 2006, the village decided the rules for forest conservation at a village meeting. The village forest management rules are as follows:

1. One should not cut trees in the headwater forest.

2. One should not invade the headwater forest for agricultural land or other business, because it endangers the watershed area that our community owns. Anyone, who violates these rules, should be called

[18] According to Phonphilai and Arunrat (2003:117), a *muat* has a variety of terms like: *muat*, *nuat*, *khum*, *pok* depending on the village.

[19] The duration of the representative is usually one year, but usually *muat* representatives continue for several years.

to attend at a village meeting called by the village council to explain the situation within a few months. The violator has to replant 5-10 times the number of trees which one cut down as compensation.

3. One who needs timbers to build a house should report to the village council before cutting trees each time. The village council can bring this issue to the village meeting and make a decision on it there.

4. One who needs timbers to build a house should replant 5-10 times the number of trees which one cut as compensation.

Since 2004, the rules have been discussed as solutions to forest problems such as encroachment, bush fire and commercial loggings at village council meetings. After several revisions, the rules were approved by village meetings. However, the village council rarely forces their villagers to implement these rules and rarely punishes violators of forest conservation in the community. The enforcement of rules and regulations in the village faces customary obstacles in the community. They usually do not accuse villagers of their crime in court, but prefer to speak to violators.[20]

In customary persuasion, village leaders usually use politically weighed words which imply to the villagers that the village is a quasi-family. In public speech, Ban Mae Luang village leaders refer to villagers as 'brothers and sisters (*phi nong*)' while the villagers customarily call a village chief a '*pho luang*' which means 'great father'. As a father of the village, village leaders prefer to convince villagers to cooperate in village activities and decisions through the broad heart which family members should have. In a village meeting with local officers in the WMU on February 10 in 2008, the village chief warned young villagers committing timber exploitation about forest conservation.

[20] An example of punishment in Ban Mahoi—a drunken young man bought fish at an unreasonably high price at a shop. Next day he and his parents asked the fish seller to pay back his money, but the fish seller did not pay him back. The angry Ban Mahoi villagers decided to punish the fish seller by boycotting his business and nasty gossiping.

> I heard that there are young villagers who went into the forest and cut trees. You shall not do that. It is almost like opium. If *pamai* (RFD officer or forest police) capture you, it would cause bankruptcy in your family. Nowadays, it is very difficult to do corruption [giving money to officials to overlook logging]. When you want to get married to girls in the village, how can I introduce such a guy who made his family bankrupt to the girls' parents? You cannot get married with anyone.[21]

In fact, the village chief does not forcibly prevent the young men from going to the forest because the village chief has sympathy for the younger villagers' lives and village customs. In addition, he is also afraid of hostility from villagers, which can be caused by standing too close to the state's side. Thus, the village chief tries to bind the villagers through morals and customs by using the rhetorical symbols of typical family and matchmaking to remind them of their communal ties.[22]

Another reason why village leaders hesitate to punish villagers on forest issues is their desire for unity in the village more than attention to forestry. Village chiefs do not see a simple solution to natural conservation matters. Village leaders are always afraid that deterioration of human relationships in forest matters puts other activities into disorder. Phonphirai and Arunrat (2003) reported on the settlement problems of the chief manager of the customary irrigation system in the Kan River basin in northern Thailand. The chief manager put priorities not on the sanctions but on the persuasion of violators with sympathy or mercy not to make trouble in village life. The village community is interwoven with complex relationships among the villagers. If the village leader makes trouble with some villagers on one issue, it also affects other issues of collaboration in the small village community. Therefore, the village leaders sometime

[21] Village chief's speech at village meeting on February 10, 2008.

[22] Village chiefs sometimes take roles as matchmakers or witnesses of betrothal money in village weddings.

overlook some illegality in the village, such as the small scale utilisation of trees and wild animals, or fire settings in the forest, to achieve a harmonious better-off village community.

One of the reasons why Ban Mae Luang village leaders encourage villagers in forest conservation even though this means facing villagers' complaints is that it can improve their prospects of a political career. In this way, village leaders see the forest differently to that of the WMU and ordinary villagers. In local politics, involvement in forest conservation becomes a political resource to provide a chance at gaining a better political post like that of sub-district administrative organisation representative or a higher position. To be a village council member is the first leadership step in political life in the village. To get to the next highest post, the sub-district administrative organisation representative, the person is screened very carefully by the villagers; 1) in the way they manage troubles the village faces including forest conservation; 2) their connection to local politicians or entrepreneurs; and 3) their characteristics of morality or compassion. In the election of the sub-district administrative organisation representatives in 2008, all of the candidates have a stereotypical form where they can write their public promises on issues. Environmental awareness is one of the requirements for a prospective leader on the election posters. One of the candidates, for example, put on their poster 'to support the community forest of the village and sub-district' and another candidate promised conservation of the local landscape as well as water conservation and garbage control.

Similarly, local officers in the WMU also work as a conduit with local leaders and their community. Local officers are usually hired from well educated locally-born villagers, so they are familiar with both local political thinking and the state system. They know the local dialect and customs very well and the state's laws. In addition, they have a good relationship with village leaders and some officers are actually their

relatives. A local officer working at headquarters is a son of a village chief. They work to bridge between the villagers and the unit in the everyday communication with village leaders about bushfires, illegal logging, water conflict or other management issues. They sometimes join village meetings and consult with villagers about forest conservation matters.

As is the case often with village leaders, these local officers also hesitate to implement harsh legal action on violators of the rules in the watershed forest. According to an officer at the WMU, it is rare to capture violators of the forest laws. Local officers in the WMU are more interested in encouraging community participation. Because they are hired as facilitators to promote participatory forestry, it is in their best interests to establish cooperation with the villagers. To keep good relationships with sympathetic village leaders who understand the importance of forest conservation, local officers also avoid conflict with villagers by ignoring minor violations.

Figure 3.12 Tree Planting in the Headwater Forest and Banner

Rather, the local officers actively cooperate with village leaders in

demonstrating the results of village participation or village efforts to the outside public. For example, when village leaders had communal forest activities such as tree planting or fire break building, local officers brought a large banner with a message on nature conservation to the village and took pictures (Figure 3.12). Through these banners, the local officers help in promoting the simple and strong message of the community's environmental concerns and the villagers' activities to the Thai public. And, on the other hand, the reputation of the village benefits local officers who work as coordinators of the events. The pictures are used for reports of the unit or for publication in the district or to show their efforts in establishing communal collaboration on nature conservation to their supervisor. As a result, it creates co-benefits between local officers and the village. It is good for the local officers' careers while the village community also have important records to prove their good forest management.

Despite the local officers' contribution to the village and good relationships with village leaders, the ordinary villagers' attitude toward the local officers is ambivalent. On the one hand, villagers appreciate the officers' intimate knowledge of the local community and their being able to talk with the villagers in the local northern Thai dialect. In the WMU, local officers have never caught local villagers for violations of forest law, but only give out warnings. Arrests are the responsibility of the forest police who sometimes come to the village in the dry season. Ban Mae Luang villagers also know that the officers sympathetically overlook their small illegal activities and seek a good relationship in forest management with them. On the other hand, the villagers are, to some extent, fearful of local officers because of the lingering shadow of state power. They usually refer to the local officers as '*ton nam*' or '*pa mai*' which means an officer of the WMU or the RFD office, even though they know the local officers very well. They feel some anxiety in having direct contact with them, so most of them only contact the officers through the village chief or other leaders in the middle.

In conclusion, the village leaders and forest officers share an objective in coordinating the local villagers on nature conservation and as a connection between the WMU and village community in Ban Mae Luang. Since, they have detailed knowledge about local politics and the way of thinking in the community, they play an important role in coordinating the villagers an participatory forestry. Flexible persuasion like overlooking small illegal behaviours or using customary quasi-family images for forest conservation become necessary tools for villagers and local leaders to create unity among the villagers in supporting conservation. And at the same time, they achieve their own benefits at different levels by coordinating the community in natural conservation methods.

Conclusion

Through Ban Mae Luang village leaders' compromises with the Thai state or companies attempts to control the forest and the people here, they have developed their own participatory forest management system involving the WMU, a state institution and the village council, a local institution. The state has officially succeeded in bringing control to the forest and people who use it by involving the village council in their forest management. At the top level, the WMU plans, educates and consults on forests management. Then, on the lower level, the village council works to coordinate the interests of the Ban Mae Luang villagers with their knowledge of local customs thus bridging between the village and the WMU. Participatory forestry was developed as an institution to absorb small conflicts between the state agencies and villagers in the negotiation process. The state attempted to involve villagers' efforts to conserve the forest under the state policy.

On the other hand, local villagers attempt to ally with state power at the local level to keep their livelihood through this system. Ban Mae Luang village leaders and the WMU officers have increasingly worked together within the participatory forestry

framework. There seems to be an explicit rule among the stakeholders that as long as they are sharing some respect for forest conservation, they can negotiate with each other even though they seek forest conservation for different purposes. The conflicts that have arisen because of different interests have been transformed through negotiation and demonstration inside this system. Based on this relationship, village leaders and local staff especially work well to mediate between the villagers and the WMU officers in the negotiations. They reduce the gap between villagers and state policy and persuade villagers through using local customs or thinking.

In conclusion, the Ban Mae Luang forest management system has succeeded in its operations in establishing conservation using participatory forestry methods in the forest and among villagers with diverse interests. An amiable situation exists between the state agency and the village. However, there are still some tensions which they cannot resolve completely surrounding the villagers'utilisation of the forest. The seemingly peaceful situation has been largely due to the village council and local officers making efforts to compromise with each other according to local politics.

Chapter 4 Village Livelihoods on the Edge of the Forest

Increasing interaction between the rural village and the city has transformed the life of Ban Mae Luang villages. Various studies on social changes in northern Thai rural villages have observed the dramatic expansion of the market economy and the power of the central state administration influencing development in rural villages in these decades (Rigg 1996; Ritchie 1996; Anan 2000). During the 1970s and 1980s, rural development through expanding cash crop production actually caused rapid deforestation all over the country (Sato 1999:68-70). However, after the 1980s, the state gradually enforced control of land use and curtailed villagers' ability to gain new arable land from the forest by reinforcing forest environmental policy. Northern villages faced the dilemma between development and forest conservation.

This chapter further focuses on Ban Mae Luang villagers' adaptation of forest management in their livelihood system from a socio-economic aspect. From general observation in the village, it can be seen that the lifestyle of the rural villagers is being increasingly diversified by external influences. Rigg analysed this change in northern Thai rural villages using the concept of a 'new rural world', which encompasses the hybrid livelihoods occurring beyond the boundaries between the urban and the rural and between the farm economy and the non-farm economy (Rigg 1996). By using this concept, Rigg shows that all villagers are not only passive recipients or sufferers of the influence of urban sectors that attempt to enmesh, penetrate and break down the rural system, but rural villagers may also be positive recipients when they adapt modern social changes into their livelihoods. This hybrid livelihood view on the rural village is also supported by Yos. Yos (2008) talks about contemporary farmers adapting hybrid lifestyles as flexible peasants. The flexible peasant creates multiple identities in a lifestyle mixing urban society and non-farming industries, including forest conservation.

In Ban Mae Luang village, such social and political changes also affect the villagers' livelihood system. Villagers now have a closer relationship with external society and new lifestyles through connections with the external economy through cash crop cultivation, wage labouring and other village business. These changes have led villagers' livelihoods to be more capital intensive, diverse, and affect the villagers' adaptation of forest conservation policy. These shifts of a new rural world help villagers to adapt state forest conservation policy in the village more easily by creating various sources of income and decreasing their dependency on forest land. However closer observation of village life shows that the new rural world is not utopia where people equally get benefits from these changes. There is a broad diversity of adaptation to access modern lifestyles and technologies depending on the social and economic conditions of individual villagers.

Differences in villagers' livelihoods have an impact on the villagers' practical and ideological attitudes towards the forest surrounding the village. Village leaders from rich households can more easily depend less on the forest because they are involved in running vegetable plantations, village businesses and trading. They take a central role in promoting forest conservation in the village council. On the other hand, other villagers are more vulnerable in adapting the forest conservation policy. Ordinary villagers need to keep their dependency on the forest land to be involved in village business. They produce cash crops in upland fields and commoditise forest products from the forest and face difficulties in balancing their livelihood and forest conservation at the periphery of the village, on the edge of the forest. These differences in the same village become significant in forest conservation management and affect environmental politics in the village.

This chapter will attempt to examine Ban Mae Luang villagers' livelihoods and their attitudes towards the forest. The first section gives an overview of the village

economy. The second section further focuses on villagers' diversified strategies depending on their economic class and socio-economic relationships in village society. The last sections show the relationship between adapted livelihoods and forest conservation in the village: the third section examines cash crop cultivation and wage labouring from the point of view of the relationship between rich and ordinary households and these effects on forest resources, and the fourth section shows the developing connections between the external and internal market and the commercialisation of natural products in the village as a new income source. Through the discussion, this chapter reveals the socio-economic struggle and the negotiations that exist between village leaders and ordinary villagers in conserving the forest.

Village Economy

In the past few decades, the northern Thai economy has seen a constant increase following the rapid development of the Thai economy even though the growth rate of regional production in northern Thailand is not as high as the average for the whole Kingdom. The Nominal Gross Regional Product (GRP) per capita from 1981 to 2006 in northern Thailand increased 5.2 times while the whole Kingdom increased 6.8 times.[1] This northern Thai economic growth was attributed to the drastic transformation of the economic structure in the northern Thai economy: a growing agro-industry and manufacturing sectors. Many researchers have pointed out that the rural village faced various changes of economic structure in this half century, especially in cash cropping and wage labouring. Ritchie (1996) looked at the rural villages surrounding Chiang Mai in 1991 and found increasing cash crop cultivation, wage labouring and mechanisation compared to that in the 1970s. He noted that there were only a limited number of local villagers committed to cash crop agriculture in 1974, but by 1991 all households were

[1] In Northern Thailand, nominal GRP per capita was 10,039 baht in 1981 and 51,745 baht in 2005, and in the whole of Thailand, the nominal GDP per capita was 15,933 baht in 1981 and was 108,956 baht in 2005.

engaged in some forms of cash cropping. Furthermore, during the same period, the percentage of villagers working as wage labourers increased from 30 to 44 per cent. These shifts in livelihood activities in the northern village were, on the one hand, probably triggered by the increasing intrusion of the external economy into the village, and on the other hand, it was probably a result of the villagers' struggle to generate income by utilising the economic, social and ecological settings inside and outside the village.

In Ban Mahoi village, a hamlet in Ban Mae Luang village, village livelihoods are mainly composed of cash crop agriculture and wage labouring. Income data in the village showed that fourteen per cent of incomes were from rice, thirteen per cent from maize, nine per cent from peanuts, seventeen per cent from other vegitables and fruits, thirty-four per cent from wage labouring and thirteen per cent from other sources in 2007.[2] This high percentage of cash crop cultivation and wage labouring is also supported by data on income structures in rural village communities in northern Thailand in 2007, according to *the Thai Life Quality Report 2008* (People's Quality of Life Development Committee 2008). Figure 4.1 illustrates similar problems of income sources: eight per cent from agriculture for self consumption, 33 per cent from agriculture for selling, 43 per cent from wage labouring and eight per cent from trading. Cash crop cultivation and wage labouring are now the two largest sources of income in Northern Thai villages.

[2] The income from rice production was calculated at the price of 6.6 baht/kilograms.

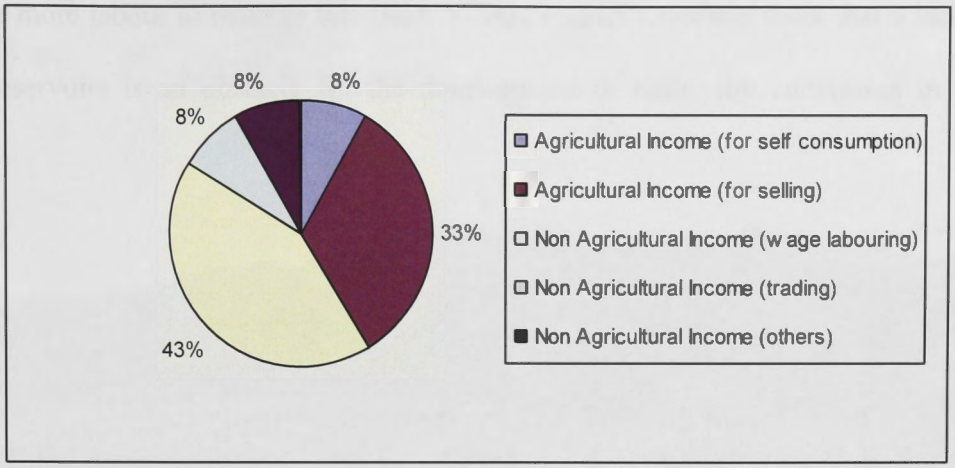

Figure 4.1 Categories of Income for Household Rural Communities in Northern Thailand in 2007

In Ban Mahoi, there are two kinds of agriculture based on the location: upland field cultivation and ricefields (Figure 4.2). Ricefields are located on the flat basin of the river. Villagers grow rice in the rainy season and maize or peanuts in the dry season because of good water access. Some ricefields are converted to more capital-intensive fruit gardens or vegetable gardens such as eggplants, chillies and onions. In these fields, villagers practise double or triple cropping systems with combinations of rice, maize and peanuts (Figure 4.3). In the rainy season from May to October,[3] villagers usually have sufficient water for rice or cash crop cultivation. Glutinous rice is produced in the ricefields, and peanuts and maize are grown in the upland fields on the hill. In the dry season from November to May, some fields with water access can produce supplies of peanuts and maize. Other neighbouring villages that have a plentiful supply of water in the dry season can produce rice twice a year or practise multiple cropping of cash crops. Upland fields are located on the slope of the hill beside the forest. The upland fields are economically less important than the ricefields. Maize or peanuts are grown in fields only once in the rainy season because the soil is not fertile and there is difficult access to water. Also, it is difficult to bring machinery into the fields and this results in the

[3] The rainfall in northern Thailand is affected by the unreliable monsoon, so the year-to-year fluctuations sometimes have damaging effects on village agriculture (Tanabe 1994:14, 174; Walker 2003:955).

need for more labour to manage this field. Village council members think that a lack of water reservoirs is an obstacle for the development of cash crop cultivation in this village.

Figure 4.2 Ban Mahoi's Farmlands and Forest at the Beginning of the Rainy Season

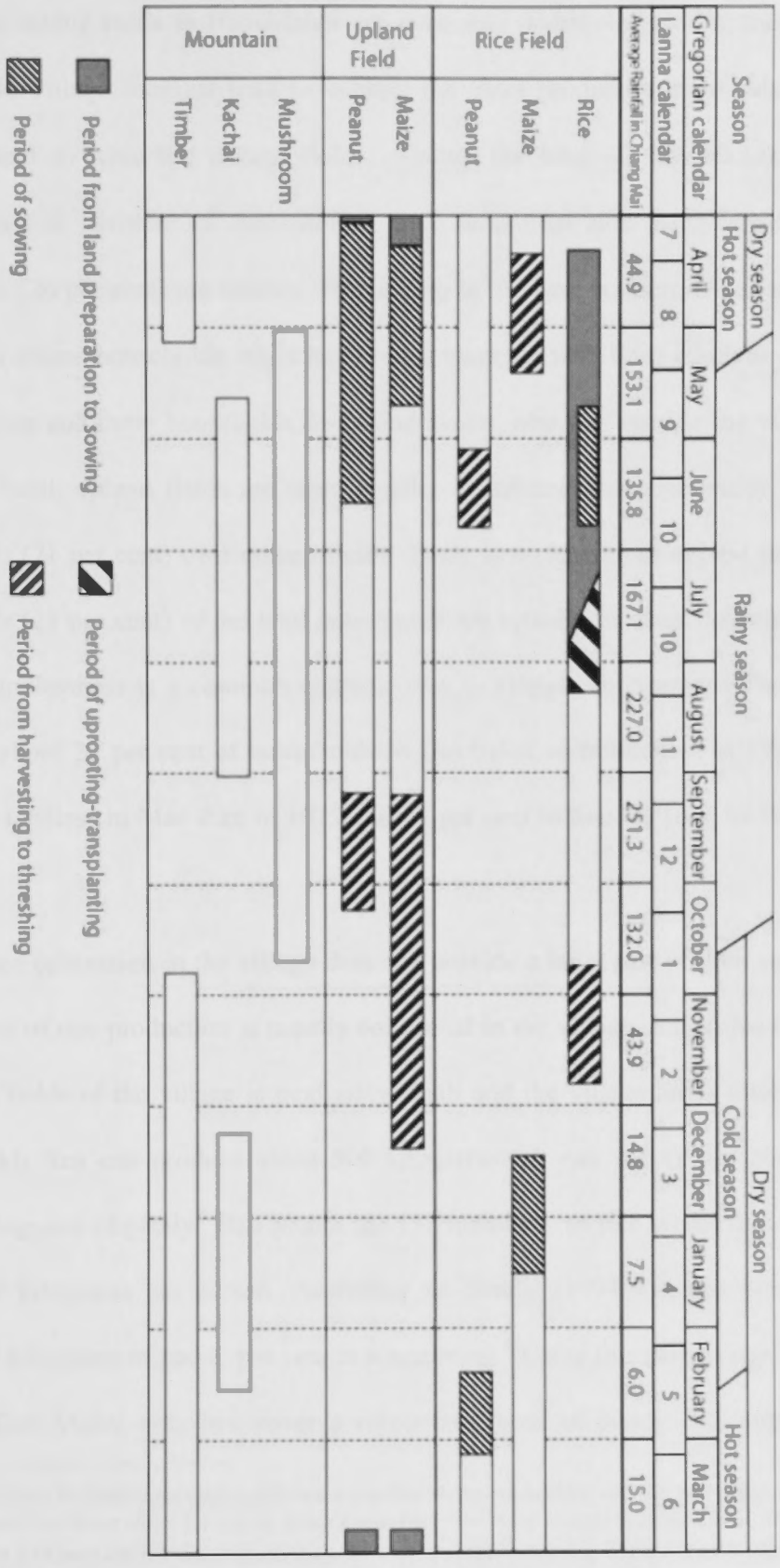

Figure 4.3 The Seasonal Cycle of Agriculture in Ban Mahoi Village (April 2007–March 2008)

The arable lands in Ban Mahoi are unequally distributed among the villagers. Usually old village families tend to occupy the most productive ricefields and new families tend to have the upland fields. Among the total 42 households, only 15 households (36 per cent of households) have their own rice paddy fields and 11 households (26 per cent) are tenants. The leasing of the land is often related to kinship: in these 11 tenant households, eight households lease the land from relatives or parents in the village and three households from landowners who live outside the village.[4] On the other hand, upland fields are more equally distributed than rice paddy fields. 30 households (71 per cent) own upland fields. There is no leasing of upland fields. Nine households (21 per cent) of the total households are actually landless households. This level of landlessness is a common characteristic in villages in Northern Thailand: for example, about 20 per cent of households in Doi Saket were landless in 1980, 34 per cent were landless in Mae Rim in 1975 and 40 per cent in San Pa Tong in 1978 (Anan 2000:85).

Rice cultivation in the village does not provide a large part of their income and the amount of rice production is usually consumed in the village. Since rice cultivation in upland fields of the village is negligibly small and the village has a total 89 *rai* of paddy fields that can produce about 500 kilograms per *rai*, the village can produce 44,500 kilograms of paddy.[5] Ban Mahoi has 132 members, so rice production equates to about 337 kilograms per person. According to Tanabe (1994:66), one person needs about 300 kilograms of paddy per year at a minimum.[6] Using this calculation, the paddy fields in Ban Mahoi only just cover a subsistence level of paddy consumption. This

[4] The price of rent for leasing the land is different depending on the relationship with the landowner. Generally the landowner takes five *thang* of rice for one *rai* of rice paddy field. One *thang* is equal to 20 litres or 10 kilograms.

[5] Interview on 17 March 2007. Other villagers spoke of a lower production saying that they get 100 thang from 3 *rai* (June 8, 2007).

[6] Tanabe estimated the minimum consumption by multiplying daily rice consumption. According to the FAO (2000), the yearly rice consumption per capita of Thailand was 166.2 kilograms in 2000. Since in the rice milling process rice loses approximately one third of its weight, the figure becomes 237 kilograms of paddy. However, since this figure also includes urban citizens who have a diversified variety of staple foods, rice consumption in the village is much higher. Tanabe's estimation of 300 kilograms, which is equal to about 30 *thang* in the northern Thailand measuring scale, seems plausible since villagers in my researched village eat rice on most days.

productivity of the land is quite low compared with other studies noting paddy production from 600 kilograms per *rai* to 900 kilograms per *rai* (Tanabe 1994:37; Phonphilai and Arunrat 2003:146-149; Walker 2003:958). However, in northern Thailand, some of the villages sometimes face a situation with an under subsistence level in rice cultivation because of water or soil conditions. Ban Mae Luang can be one of such villages.

Wage labouring outside and inside the village produces a significant portion of their income. A report on Ban Mae Luang village indicated a high percentage of wage labourers—119 out of 302 households (39%) were involved in wage labouring (Ban Mae Luang Village Community 2007).[7] Many farmers are actually working as wage labourers in the village or outside villages at contract vegetable farms, house construction sites or on road or water drainage, or in small factories such as cement brick factories or wooden toy factories. If the households conducting temporary wage labouring are also considered, the percentage will be higher. The National Statistical Office also reported a diversification of income sources in the northern region during the period from 1993 to 2003. The number of households receiving income from non-agricultural sources dramatically increased from 53.0 per cent to 78.6 per cent (NSO 2003:29).

Village businesses are still a small percentage of income but they have also started to increase in importance as income sources in the village. Rich families have started to be involved in trading and village business by improving transportation to the city. They produce vegetable and fruits to sell in the market in Chaing Mai city. The state government or development organisations have promoted this through funding village projects and investing in infrastructure. Expanding communications and trading

[7] This statistical data survey was undertaken by the village council in 2007. However, its accuracy is unreliable on some points. They counted wage labourers in unit households and did not take into account differences between primary income sources and secondary income sources.

are, furthermore, developing the whole villagers' commoditisation of natural resources like that of wild herbs and animals in the mountains in the village. There is a small internal market of local products among the villagers but the local market has been gradually increasing due to its connection with external markets. The utilisation of natural resources in Ban Mahoi is significant not only for subsistence, but also for the sale of commodities for market, as many scholars have reported (Uravian, Anan et al. 1988; Poffenberger and McGean 1993; Phonphilai and Arunrat 2003:6; Shibahara 2004; Somphot 2004). Uriavan et al. found that Thai lowlanders in the Samoeng district in Chiang Mai had high access to natural resources which were used for daily consumption. According to their research in the district, 98 per cent of the Thai lowlanders' households gathered wild plants from the forest, 76 per cent gathered wild fruit, 56 per cent for small animals, 55 per cent big animals and 55 per cent insects. The villagers bring these products to the markets. The natural resources gathered from farmland or the forests surrounding the village are a supplementary source of food and income in the villages in the Mae Kham river basin in Chiang Mai (Uravian, Anan et al. 1988; Phonphilai and Arunrat 2003). This income is gradually increasing due to the rich families' trade routes. Their products are brought to the Chiang Mai market and are further connected to Bangkok. Due to this increasing availability of markets, the villagers are starting to create a new relationship with forest resources as market commodities.

Livelihoods in the northern Thai village economy are mainly composed of cash crop cultivation, wage labouring and participation in village businesses, and are resulting in a gradual diversification in income sources in the village economy. Changing village livelihood situations indicate a gap between their identities and socio-economic reality as 'flexible peasant(s)' (Yos 2008). The local villagers still have the identity of farmers and their villages are characterised as agricultural villages through

village rituals or discourse about the village. However, the villagers are not only farmers, but they have various faces as wage labourers, business entrepreneurs or traders.

Diversity of Livelihoods

The previous section showed how villagers earn their income from cash crop and non-agricultural sectors including through wage labour and village businesses, but the gaps in adapting such measures among the villagers needs to be focused on by examining the differences in livelihood strategies and socio-economic relationships. The following analysis divided Ban Mahoi villagers into four income classes depending on their yearly incomes and examined their livelihoods: high, upper-middle, lower-middle, and low-income household groups. The high income class is composed of households which declared more than 60,000 baht as their annual income, the upper-middle class has 60,000 baht or less and more than 35,000 baht, the lower-middle class has 35,000 baht or less and more than 15,000 baht and the low class has 15,000 baht and less (Figure 4.4).

Income class	Number of households	Average owned rice paddy (*rai*)	Average owned upland field (*rai*)	Average income from wage labouring (baht) (% in average income)
High (60,000 baht<)	7	1.93	4.21	45,942 (35)
Upper-middle (35,000 baht <)	12	1.25	3.58	25,416 (56)
Lower-middle (15,000 baht <)	15	1.13	4.35	6,833 (27)
Low (≤15,000 baht)	8	2.06	2.13	4,353 (32)
Average	-	1.44	3.68	19,098 (41)

Figure 4.4 Income Class by Annual Income in Ban Mahoi

From interviews with household heads or their partners, the average annual income was calculated to be about 46,000 baht per household in the village[8]. According to the data from the *Thailand Development Report 2007* in the UNDP, the average

[8] Average household member is three.

yearly income per household in Chiang Mai Province was 149,268 baht in 2004 (UNDP 2007:117).[9] The annual income in the village is quite low compared to this average income, but this data is distorted from the economic situation of rural villages because it includes the population in Chiang Mai city, which earns higher income from sources including industry, business or trading. Instead of this data, the MOI set up a target for the minimum annual income per worker as 23,000 baht for their research on poverty in the whole kingdom (People's Quality of Life Development Committee 2008; Community Development Information Centre 2009).[10] According to a brief calculation of Mahoi village, their average yearly per worker income at working age is around 23,000.[11] According to the data on Saeng Thong district, only ten per cent of the whole 3,500 households had a yearly per worker income below 23,000 in 2007 (Community Development Information Centre 2009). Comparing this, the data for Ban Mahoi may be higher than the amount I estimated. There are several reasons why the income levels appear lower. The data for Ban Mahoi does not reflect some extra incomes from selling goods or receiving donations in village festivals, illegal logging, and daily small trading among villagers. Villagers also usually tend to downplay their incomes.

The rich class in Mahoi have succeeded in adapting to capital-intensive agriculture or village business, and are positioned at the centre of the village economy and politics. The household which earns the highest income in the village is Mr Somphon's household. Mr Somphon is a sub-district representative in Man Mae Luang (Chapter Two). The household's main income comes from fruit orchards, cash crops and his monthly salary as a civil servant. Mr Somphon's household is composed of a middle-aged couple and their two children who live in Chiang Mai city. Mr Somphon

[9] Household income in 2004 in Chiang Mai Province was 12,439 baht per month (UNDP 2007:117). To calculate the yearly income, this was multiplied by twelve.

[10] Working age is the age from fifteen to sixty years old.

[11] Total income in the village is 1,938,930 baht and the number of labourers of working age is 84 in the village. This equates to about 23,000 baht.

earned 4,900 baht of monthly salary as one of two representatives of the village and also managed to establish four *rai* of lime orchard by buying ricefields in the bottom of the valley. In the orchard, he regularly employs two or three wage workers from amongst his relatives. This lime orchard started in 2004 after several trials at growing high market value vegetables. A pickup truck is utilised to ship the limes to the market of Chiang Mai city and the limes actually generate 300,000 baht per year in the market. His wife furthermore borrowed the use of productive ricefields upstream from her sister-in-law free of charge and grows rice, peanuts, and maize by triple cropping.

Mr Somphon's household also has an important role as one of the centres of a kin group economy. Merchants and brokers from outside often come in and go from this house for trading purposes. The front space of the house is also used as a cargo terminal by several households in the same kinship group for distributing cash crops to brokers. Other income also comes from their two children. They are independent and have been working in companies in Chiang Mai city. The son is working as a regular officer in a housing company and the daughter is working as a manager of an international trade company. They send 60,000 baht as remuneration to their parents.

The second richest household is the core household of the 'fourteen houses' which is the largest kin group in the village and which is in rivalry with Mr Somphon's kin group. The households depend on private business in the village. The household gains half of its income from the sale of maize from upland fields like other old families in the village but the other half of its income comes from various small businesses, wage labouring and a village shop. [12] This household secures their income by diversifying their business. The number of the household members is five including a middle-aged couple, two children and one senior female. In the farming season, the household cultivates rice with other families and grows maize in the daytime. In the

[12] This family did not give me the income of this shop, but it is estimated to be about 18,000 baht per year similar to another village shop of the same size.

evening, the wife opens a village shop to sell ready-made meal side dishes, liquor (*lao khao*) or daily necessities to villagers. The stocks for her shop are directly brought from Chiang Mai city twice a month by car. Her husband also has another business selling bamboo as construction materials for vegetable greenhouses to farm owners. He drives a pickup truck with two or three employers to cut bamboo in the mountains and sell them to neighbouring villages in the agricultural off-season.

The common features of the rich households are based on their initial accumulated material capital like productive land, pickup trucks, and political connections to access markets or to coordinate wage labourers. Utilising these resources, they position themselves at the centre of the village economy. As for their land, the size of the arable fields of rich households is not as large as those of the other income classes. However, they have productive ricefields that can produce dry-season crops and have invested in vegetable gardens. The fertility of the soil and water access more significantly affects income from cash cropping in the village than does the size of the land. Inequalities in the quality of land have caused envy among the villagers towards those households who have good lands. These lands tend to be possessed by a few old families. A villager, a male head of a household of a relatively new family in the village, expressed his envy to me towards other old families when I was talking with him at his house. He said that old families own better ricefields upstream of the river, while his ricefield located on the hill far from water resources cannot produce dry-season crops. If he wants better land, it is very difficult for villagers like him to encroach upon the forest or to find opportunities to buy land in the village.

The middle class has less access to income sources compared to the rich class because this class has less productive arable lands and less material capital to invest in the transformation of agriculture. Usually, their arable lands are located beside the forest area or in newly developed remote area south of the village. A few families have pickup

trucks or agricultural machinery but most of the families share these or are lent them from their rich relatives. Their labouring incomes also tend to be influenced by their relationships with relatives in the rich class. Figure 4.4 shows an interesting contrast between the size of arable land and income from labouring between upper and lower middle class farmers. Even though the upper middle class farmers manage a smaller area of arable land, their income is much higher than the lower middle class. They have achieved this by adapting to wage labouring better than the lower-middle class. The upper middle class, on the one hand, tends to involve their young members in regular jobs in farm or non-farm work. These classes are also politically connected because job opportunities of wage labourers are provided mainly by village leaders in their private business or outside the village through their personal connections. On the other hand, the lower-middle class's strategy to increase income more was to increase their own upland fields and rent lands. Some of them actually rent less productive paddy fields from landowners for a low price. This strategy enables the villagers to improve their income with less risk and cost by utilising their own material and human capital. However, this cannot be expected to give them high returns. Because they cannot buy new seeds, fertiliser and sprinklers to produce agricultural products of a high value, they just increase the area they have to produce peanuts and maize which give lower profits. This results in less of an improvement in their income.

The middle class families' attitudes towards the forest are highly affected by their social and economic connection with the rich families as mentioned above. There are two different attitudes between the upper and lower middle class families. The upper middle class families tend to follow the nature conservation policy. Because of their econo-political relationship with rich families who as leaders of Ban Mae Luang village have the responsibility to conserve the forest, they also have to be supporters of nature conservation. On the other hand, the lower middle classes tend to have negative feelings

towards conserving the forest. Their livelihood strategy to increase their income depends on expanding the upland fields into forest area because they do not have the political connections to find alternative income generating occupations such as wage labouring on the farms or construction sites.

The low-income households in the village are composed of senior members or single landless males. There are some households with seniors only in the village. The income of senior households is little, but enough to survive in the village. Most of them are landowners with small lands and survive by receiving a small amount of rent from their tenants.[13] In addition, they also receive a monthly remuneration from the sub-district administrative organisation of 500 baht per month when their age exceeds sixty years. They also can get a little income by helping in farming, or doing side jobs like bamboo weaving or drying banana leaves. Some seniors also live next to their children's households and they take care of them. However, some seniors' children are living far from the village. In these cases, neighbours help them to survive in the village but they do seem to live in poverty.

Single male households without any connection with village leaders tend to rely on a small income earned through temporary agricultural wage labouring or helping with rice cultivation. Apart from agricultural cultivation, they also seek necessary income through forestry, wage labouring, cattle grazing and hunting or fishing in the village forest. The single male households do not have enough productive means and connections with village leaders to get regular jobs as wage labourers in the village. However, they do not have to worry about food as long as they belong to the Ban Mahoi village community. In rice cultivation in Ban Mahoi, the villagers maintain a labour exchange system mixed with rice-based wage labouring. In principle, this custom is basically an equivalent labour exchange among households to manage seasonal labour

[13] After the rice harvest, landowners bring a bamboo-woven measure (*thang*) to tenant houses and measure their rent (*kha hua na*).

shortages in activities such as uprooting seedlings, transplanting and harvesting and threshing in rice cultivation. This custom is called '*au mue tok mue*' (ask a hand, give a hand) (Potter 1976:44) (Figure 4.5).[14] However, the landless labourers cannot exchange labour with each other because they do not have lands. Therefore the villagers allow the landless workers to be part of the system as agricultural wage labourers. Landowners pay landless participants a certain amount of rice at harvesting time. This additional labour system is called '*rabop chuai kin khao*' (the system to help eat rice) (Kimura 1998:16-17; Phonphilai and Arunrat 2003:192).

Figure 4.5 Labour Exchange in a Rice Paddy Field

The system is regarded as a social safety net in the village to distribute rice.[15] The system has been reported in community studies since the 1960s and 1970s. Landless labourers were hired as wage labourers to receive either a fixed rice wage or

[14] Villagers precisely record the days and the number of labourers in the exchange of collaborative activities. In Ban Mahoi, the number of labourers is usually about sixty. Almost all adult villagers work together at the same time. They sometimes divide members into two or three working groups to work at different rice paddy fields. After working, the host has the duty to provide food and bottles of rice whiskey for workers. Usually, the wives of the households arrange the collaboration at their informal chatting in the evening before the working day and attendance is severely checked by everyone.

[15] According to Kimura, he estimated participants received a rice distribution equivalent to two times the average labourer's wage of 70 baht in 1994 (1998:16).

money during harvest time mixing in with the labour exchange system (De Young 1966:79; Potter 1976:45; Phonphilai and Arunrat 2003:191).[16] According to an interview with a landless household, the three middle-aged and one twenty year-old farmers in the household, get 1,000 kilograms of paddy in a year. 1,000 kilograms is equal to almost 250 kilograms per person which is enough to survive in the village with some wage labouring. Villagers apply this labour system with relatives in the village, but seldom with members of other villages. Furthermore, this harvest distribution is actually not so attractive for farmers with regular wage labouring because the communal duties of replanting and harvesting continue for more than four months. If the landless labourers can get regular work, they can get more benefits. However, poor households without regular wage labouring find benefits from the system. They supplement the distributed rice with going to the forest and ricefields to hunt small animals and gather plants to make extra food for everyday life.

In summary, the economic gap between the people in the village shows the diversification of livelihoods. Rich households position themselves at the centre of village politics and economy and as village leaders in the field of cash crop cultivation, wage labouring and village commercial activities. Because adaptation to new agriculture and the labour market needs capital and political connections to coordinate money, labour, new technology and trading routes, only a few villagers are able to undertake a capital-intensive agricultural system in the village. Other villagers join in rich farmers' agricultural businesses as wage labourers after establishing good connections with wealthy families to gain labour opportunities.

[16] Landowners sometimes took over the debt in a village shop as payment for a person's help according to my interviews. The times of payment and amount was not stipulated. Villagers briefly explained that payment was done by rice distribution or money in the harvesting season. Kingshill observed that the payment in harvesting season for landless participants was one *thang* per *rai* or 6 baht, equivalent with the market price of 1 *thang* at that time (1960:34).

Livelihood Adaptation and Impact on the Forest

As seen in the previous section, Ban Mahoi villagers adapted different livelihoods due to their different economic levels. This section looks at the villagers' strategies regarding cash crop cultivation and wage labouring and the impact of these on the villagers' attitudes towards the surrounding forest. The encroachment of the forest land for cash crop cultivation has been thought to be one of the major reasons for deforestation in Northern Thailand (Anan 2000). However, cash crop cultivation was introduced into the northern Thai village by development projects as a method for generating income for poor villagers. Since the 1970s, the state government, agricultural banks and international organisations supported the farmers in introducing cash crop cultivation for external markets by installing new cash crops, capital-intensive techniques, irrigation facilities or agrochemicals as development projects (Anan 2000:88-96; Walker 2003:953-954,957). Intensive land use with cash crops spread to mountain areas and undermined the forest land converting the fields to maize and soybeans in northern Thailand (Tanabe 1994:175; Kimura 1998:11; Anan 2000:33)[17]. Cash crop cultivation was further developed with more intensive growing technologies such as building irrigation systems or green houses through connecting with emerging capitalist farmers or agro-industrial companies. Phonphilai and Arunrat (2003:156-157, 244) reported more intensive multiple cropping cycles planting two seasons of rice and combinations of other crops like tomato, onion, peanuts, maize in northern Thailand in the 1990s. These agricultural products are part of the agricultural food supply chains in Thailand and some agricultural products are exported from northern Thailand.

Ban Mae Luang villages introduced cash crop cultivation following this change in agriculture in the whole of northern Thailand. However, deforestation is not always

[17] For example, Anan reported in 1978 that few households in Ban Sam Pong, Sam Pa Tong district practised triple cropping, but the number increased to 40 per cent of whole households by 1980–81 (Anan 2000:94).

connected to cash crop cultivation. This issue is more affected by politics related to the location of lands and strategies due to the economic gaps in the village. Around Ban Mae Luang, the cash crop cultivation of the rich farmers has less conflict with forest issues than that of the poor farmers because most of the irrigated farms growing cash crops are located on the bottom of the basin far from the forest. Rich farmers in the village have several farms producing high-value agricultural products such as lime, *som o* (citrus fruits), tomatoes, eggplants flowers, or red peppers (Figure 4.6 and Figure 4.7). These farms have to be located on the flat lands of the basin in the village because of the need for close access to the river for irrigation, electricity for electric light facility in the green houses and the road to ship products to market. Rich villagers buy the land titles on the bottom of the valley for intensive agriculture. Mr Somphon, as described above, is one who has taken this strategy and thus has little conflict with forest conservation. Rather he argued the need to have access to the water, so he supported the construction of a dam and the conservation of the forest to keep the water flowing constantly.

Figure 4.6 Mr Somphon's Irrigated Lime Garden (left)

Figure 4.7 Eggplant Plantation (right)

The impact on the forest is higher on the upland fields of the middle class villagers on the slope of the hill. The village middle class who cannot invest in intensive agriculture has tended to take strategies to increase the size of upland fields to grow

maize and peanuts. So they have encroached on forest land little by little using redundant labour and agricultural machines which they already have. Some lands were acquired in recent development projects, when they used some connections with officials to allow the deteriorated land on the slope to be used to increase crop growing. As a result, these middle class households have contributed to forest degradation around the village.

However, they could not easily have transformed their agriculture to capital-intensive agriculture with less impact, on the bottom of basin because of their economic and political vulnerability in village politics and economy. They face high costs and market risks in introducing new cash crop cultivation. These become barriers for the poor villagers. Villagers at first explained that they do not have good flat land to cultivate cash crops. Productive lands in the village have been already occupied by the old families. It is quite rare for such land to be sold and it is expensive. Villagers also explained why they do not choose other cash crops or fruit trees even though some other neighbouring villages have done well in growing longan or garlic. They answered that the instability of market price and the necessity for expensive investment would be too risky. Their decisions are due to their accumulated experience and observations of experimental planting by some rich villagers. One villager explained that one rich farmer planted runner beans a few years ago. In the first year he got a good profit from them. However the market price of the runner beans went down in the following years. After the discussion with a relative in Chiang Mai city, the rich farmer finally decided to stop producing them. The farmer concluded that the market fluctuation was not manageable. Rich farmers may be able to afford to be involved in this risky business but the initial cost is not affordable for poorer villagers. Phonphilai and Arunrat (2003:158) also noted similar statements by villagers who were alarmed by the high-risk speculative characteristics of onion cultivation in Mae Nam Khan Basin. Villagers said

that the onion is a kind of 'crop depending on fortune star' (*phuet wat duang*), which means if one has a good star, one can get good benefits, otherwise one can lose much. Onion growing is very sensitive to the quality of soil and is affected by instability in its market price (Kimura 1998:11; Phonphilai and Arunrat 2003:158). In everyday life in the village, stories of success and failures of new crop cultivation or various kinds of livelihood strategies are shared when gossiping in the evening gatherings or when working in communal rice cultivation. From this shared information, they undertake severe cost-benefit analyses by themselves.

Also, their vulnerable positions in the village economy and village politics mean they are at the periphery of the village and must live with forest problems. For them, forest issues become one of the obstacles in increasing their income. Ban Mahoi village shows this environmental gap due to the economic gap in the village. Rich families are more likely to be able to afford to support the forest conservation policies. By contrast, middle class farmers who remain in upland fields on the slope of the hills, have to face forest problems and tend to feel more negative about forest conservation. However, this situation is complicated by the interrelationship with each other through wage labouring. Wage labouring in both agriculture and non-agriculture sectors have nowadays become a large source of income for the villagers, as seen above. For ordinary villagers who do not have enough capital to start their own venture, wage labouring for the successful rich families is one of the low risk strategies available to them. In the village, rich families govern the village labour market. Chilli or flower farms surrounding the village hire young landless villagers or redundant labourers in the middle class families for 120 baht to 200 baht a day. Regular job opportunities in the village are limited and usually only provided for relatives of plantation owners. [18] However, temporary job opportunities are sometimes provided for all villagers without regular jobs at some

[18] Ban Mahoi has only one farm of *Manao*, which can employ two or three villagers regularly.

vegetable farms in the harvesting season. For example, a contract farmer of soy beans in Ban Mae Luang main village invited all members of Ban Mahoi to join in the harvesting.[19] They paid money to the participants depending on the weight of soy beans harvested at the rate of two baht per kilogram. Then, the soybeans were sold at fourteen baht per kilogram to a food-export company by the farm owner. The seasonal labour demand sometimes exceeds the supply of labour from the village. Another farmer of chillies hires Burmese seasonal labourers for harvesting.[20]

In the wage labourer market, village leaders have an important role in coordinating labourers and job opportunities. In Ban Mae Luang, various wage labouring opportunities are provided by state agencies and outside companies. In such a case, village leaders become the first inquiry agent to contact villagers. The sub-district office often seeks temporary wage labourers for road and dam construction at 145 baht a day.[21] The WMU constantly hires fifty temporary labourers for forest management at 125 baht for males or 120 baht for females from neighbouring villages. Other government offices hired other regular local staff from villages as assistants measuring land or carrying materials for governmental projects. In the case of private entrepreneurs, rich villagers tend to be owners of factories or farms. They hire workers from their relatives or neighbours. One woodcarving factory supported by the OTOP (one sub-district one product) program hires five or six wage labourers from one hamlet.[22] One cement bricks factory hires four or five workers from family members in Ban Mahoi. There is one resort hotel owned by a private person in Chiang Mai hiring

[19] A contract farm of the main village in Ban Mae Luang invited thirty villagers to harvest soy beans on July 12, 2007.

[20] In the village shop, I met an English speaking Mymmar seasonal worker around thirty years old who came from Kachin State in October 3, 2007. He has no passport but working permission. He had already come to the village for working on the chilli farms several times.

[21] According to a notice from the sub-district office on May 21, 2007, the sub-district office wanted 22 wage labourers in 18 days for road construction from Ban Mae Luang to the neighbouring village. I found a group of young villagers in Ban Mae Luang succeeded in gaining the jobs later. Their leaders directed the group in the construction site.

[22] OTOP program was founded by the Thaksin government in 2001 to promote local production using local knowledge and human resources.

three or four regular staff from one family to maintain the facilities. Village shopkeepers also hire wage labourers from their kin group to cut bamboo or to construct a house for around 120 baht per day.

The labour market in the village is mostly affected by the relationship between village leaders and their followers in the village. Ordinary villagers actually can find job opportunities outside the village without the help of village leaders, but unskilled villagers usually prefer working in the village with the village leader's coordination more than in the unskilled labour market in Chiang Mai. One young man explained that unskilled labour cannot get a profitable job in Chiang Mai. If he goes to find a job in Chiang Mai, he probably can find a job at the minimum wage only because educated Chiang Mai city workers have already occupied the profitable jobs. [23] In addition, many Burmese labourers came into the city and this has resulted in a decreased wage for unskilled labourers in Chiang Mai.[24] High living costs like house rent, water fees or transportation will decrease his profit. Another female villager who worked in a food processing factory of the Charoen Phokphan group pointed out other aspects. She could get a high wage at 160 baht per day five years ago. However, she came back to the village since she could not bear the demanding requirements on hygiene in the company and it was boring working there not like working in the village with close friends.[25]

For these labourers in the village, village leaders sometimes become a conduit to connect their labour supply and other villagers' demands. The vice village chief runs a temporary staff agency as his side job in the village using his connections with government agencies in the main town of Saeng Thong district.[26] When he receives notice of jobs, he goes to talk with his young villagers, who live very close to this house,

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[23] According to the Ministry of Labour as of June 1, 2008, the minimum wage in Chiang Mai is 168 baht per day.

[24] Burmese workers take on labour jobs in construction sites in Chiang Mai. There are a large number of illegal migrant workers amongst them. They accept a job below minimum wage and this decreases the wage of the unskilled labourers.

[25] Interview on 6 October, 2007.

[26] On the front door of his house, there is a sign saying 'construction service agency'.

about being temporary workers. Using his pickup truck, he brings them to the construction sites every morning and evening. Through his connections, for example, some villagers have obtained jobs as part-time gardeners in the Queen Sirikit Botanical Garden.

Because of the village leaders' position at the centre of the village economy and employment organisations and the importance of wage labouring in the villagers' income, villagers reach compromises following rich households' lead. The forest conservation issue is also considered. Maintaining a good relationship with village leaders can provide job opportunities and improve the political and economic position of village society.

Emerging Market from the Village

Ban Mae Luang villagers also increase opportunities to generate more income by strengthening the connections between the village internal market and the external market. Rich households take important roles in village trading through running village shops or negotiating with merchants from Chiang Mai. The trading network connects people in the village, creates bridges between villages and goes further to the big cities like Chiang Mai or Bangkok and even extends to foreign countries.[27] In addition, not only rich families but also other class villagers are also increasingly developing their small market products by commoditising forest resources like wild herbs or bamboo and sending them to external markets following improving communication with urban markets. In an effort to improve on the low agricultural productivity of Ban Mae Luang, a market economy in the village is developing both internally and externally. Ordinary villagers have started to create a new dependency on forest resources.

For a long time, Ban Mae Luang villagers have maintained and improved the

[27] Some products such as soy beans from the contract farm in Ban Mae Luang village are exported by food companies to Japan.

trading relationship within and outside the villages. According to their history, many young villagers of Saeng Thong district had worked as hired traders or guardians of the ox-train in the dry season before a road system was established.[28] The ox-train trading network connected the large cities all around northern Thailand, the Shan states in Burma, Laos and Yunnan in China before the modern road transportation system was established. Rulers of the Lan Na Kingdom and other vassals had supported and protected these inland trading routes by collecting tax for using them (Ongsakul et al. 2005:88, 90). The inland ox-train network was further connected with another river trade network reaching Bangkok on the Ping River in Chiang Mai and Lampung (Chatthip 1984:42; Chusit 1989; Phonphilai and Arunrat 2003:43-44). Along this trading route, village traders carried their products on their back from village to village. Among the northern Thais, the leaders involved in the ox-train route gained a good income in the dry season and the reputation of being brave.

The times of old style inter-village trading before the installation of the road system are still vividly remembered by old villagers. The late Mr Kam, 82 years old, remembered his young days when he shouldered a backpack and walked from the village to Chiang Mai. 'If I hurried to Chiang Mai, I could arrive there in one day. If I went slowly, it took two days. I slept in the forest with a bonfire on the way to Chiang Mai. I carried rice, bamboo baskets and bananas from the village. On the return, I carried salt and other things from Chiang Mai'. Mr Phut, 67 years old, was also involved in trading by going to Chiang Mai when he was young. 'Before the installation of roadways between the village and Chiang Mai, villagers went over the mountains to Chiang Mai on foot. I carried banana, various beans and bamboo shoots in my backpack to Chiang Mai and carried back salt and rice from Chiang Mai'. In those days, even

[28] King Phraya Kawilorot (who governed Chiang Mai during 1856-1870) used this route via Saeng Thong to fight with the Burmese army. During World War Two, the Japanese army that was stationed at the military base of Mae Rim in Chiang Mai used the route as a logistical route to the base of Mae Hong Song (Saeng Thong District Office 2003:34-35).

though they faced the difficulty of transportation, inland trading was frequent. The young men carried their local products on their back from village to city. On the way back, they carried salt, food, industrial products, kerosene which the rural villages could not produce in the village (Phonphilai and Arunrat 2003:44).[29] Young men spent two days walking to Chiang Mai with heavy loads along the mountain pass. This kind of walking trading was also seen in the neighbouring districts of Saeng Thong (Tanabe 1994; Walker 2003).[30]

Through improvement of the modern road network, the mobility of people increased markedly and the village had increased opportunities to access the market in the city. Nowadays, the connection with Chiang Mai is a much more comfortable and easier one than that of the old days. A small bus shuttles twice a day from Ban Mahoi with villagers doing businesses in Chiang Mai. A large number of young people from the village now study in the high school or university or work as clerks or professionals in Chiang Mai, Bangkok or other main cities.[31] Various merchants from Chiang Mai like agricultural brokers, Chinese meat bun (*salapao*) sellers, cutlery sellers, medicine sellers or insurance companies etc., come into or out of the village.

When venturing into new agricultural businesses, rich farmers have the advantage in their political connections with merchants and governmental officials because they have been governing the trading and labour market in the village as the village middlemen. Their knowledge on selling products and hiring labours decreases the risk of failing in the new venture. The brokers visit the village leader's house to buy cash crops like peanut or maize or to sell fertilisers, seeds or pesticide. They come by pickup truck from Chiang Mai. Several families deposit their crops at the village

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[29] Phonphilai and Arunrat (2003) reported local trading on foot between San Pa Tong in Nam Khan basin and Chiang Mai. It also took one or two days to go from place to place.

[30] Walker (2003) reported trading on foot in Mae Chaem District.

[31] In 2008, eight students graduated from the village elementary school. Two went to a junior high school in Mae Sompoi District close to Chiang Mai, two went to one of the Saeng Thong centres. The other four graduates became monks in a village temple.

leader's house to help the broker's shipment. Utilising this control of village society and economy, the village leaders take advantage to negotiate with these brokers. In Ban Mahoi, since villagers know the brokers very well, these brokers and villagers discuss shipping times or prices by mobile phones. However, villagers sometimes bargain the price of products between brokers. In 2008, the price of peanut increased from 90 baht per basket in 2007 to 130 baht per basket.[32] At that time, farmers brought their mobile phones to their farmlands where they were harvesting peanut and exchanged information with the rich households who had peanut fields. At the same time, they negotiated to increase the price of peanuts with the brokers by using mobile phones in the field. The close connection between brokers and networks of rich households secure their incomes from trading.

Following the increasing amount and importance of trading, those from the rich class who owned a village shop or pickup truck started to venture as local brokers into trading to provide a link with internal and external markets. There are ten shops in Ban Mae Luang including two in Ban Mahoi village (Ban Mae Luang Village Community 2007). Village shops usually sell daily necessities, food essentials or ready-made food dishes to villagers. Two shops also work as brokers dealing with various local products such as vegetables, mushrooms, bamboo products, medicinal herbs, medicinal woods, red ant's eggs, tamarind or finger-roots. The villagers who want to sell such commodities go to the shops, measure out their products and receive money from the shop owner. Then, the shop owner ships the products by pickup truck when he goes to buy stock for the shop in the *Mueang Mai* market in Chiang Mai. Villagers get a supplementary income by doing this trading, especially in the off-agricultural season.

The emerging trading has also affected the internal market of the ordinary villagers. Villagers have started to commoditise their forest resources for the external

[32] This basket called a *thang* is actually a 20 litre plastic agrochemical can.

market. The villages have always used a rich variety of forest resources in their everyday life. While farming outside the village, Ban Mae Luang farmers collect river snails, swamp crabs, bamboo shoots, mushrooms, eels, or bamboo worms [33] to supplement their diet each day. River snails are easily found in the mud scooped up with a hoe in the rice paddy fields. Farmers collect them in plastic bags or the pockets of their trousers. River snails are collected throughout the year even in the dry season. They collect bamboo shoots, mushrooms and bamboo worms in the rainy seasons. Villagers go into the clumps of bamboo on the ridges of the forest with iron hatchets or iron diggers during intervals from their working. Their children also enjoy finding tadpoles, swamp crabs and fish for their lunch or dinner in the streams near the rice paddy fields. Villagers always return home with a bag full of river snails, bamboo shoots or small fish etc. after working. The village does not have any professional hunters but some villagers often go and hunt wild animals with guns during the intervals from farming or forestry [34]. Davis (1984:170-178) reported that almost nearly all domestic and wild animals are regarded as edible by northern Thai people. [35] Considerable numbers of game such as wild chickens, rabbits, squirrels, snakes, bats, frogs, monitor lizards are also used for food [36] and palm civets [37]. As for hunting equipment, apart from guns, they use slingshots to hunt small sized animals and small crossbows to hunt frogs.

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[33] Bamboo worm (*omphisa fuscidentalis*) is a small white worm, an edible bamboo parasite.

[34] Some villagers have unregistered handmade guns. Their bullets are made by casting lead from the terminals of used motorcycle batteries in the village.

[35] Davis (1984:171) gave a short list of foods that Northern Thai lowlanders refused to eat. However, some of these listed animals are eaten in Ban Mae Luang.

[36] Bengal monitor lizards (*varanus flavescens*) are a terrestrial lizard of about one metre in length, whose meat was also traded in markets at an expensive price. A hunter sold these at 200 baht per kilograms to villagers.

[37] The Palm Civet (*paradoxurus hermaphroditus*) is locally called '*i haen*'.

Figure 4.8 Bamboo Shoots (*no mai*) (left)

Figure 4.9 Finger-roots (*krachai*) (right)

These wild animal and plants products are nowadays sold in the internal and external market as one of the strategies to absorb idle manpower in the agricultural off-season and to generate more income. Sometimes selling wild animal meats and plants in the neighbouring village makes the villagers more than 120 baht per day as well as their daily wage in labouring on the farm. There has become a close relationship between the ordinary Ban Mae Luang villagers' livelihood in the forest and the market with a new relationship to outside markets.

Some wild animal and plant products are commoditised in an intensive and specialised way to sell in the external market. Ban Mae Luang villagers organise several groups to gather high-value wild animals or plants during the agricultural off-season. The gatherings include finger-roots,[38] *dok kan,*[39] red ants' eggs,[40] mushrooms, bamboo shoots, bamboo or firewood.[41] The commoditisation of forest resources are focused on by other scholars. Uraivan et al. also describe the boom of *na gor* (tree bark) in the

[38] Finger-root (*boesenbergia pandurata*) is called '*krachai*' in central Thailand, and '*krachai*' or '*hua la eng*' in Northern Thailand.

[39] *Dok kan* (*amorphophallus brevispathus*) has a large flower with a long stem. The flower and stem are edible. It is called *kahaeng* in central Thailand.

[40] Red ants (*oecophylla smargadina*) make their nest on the branch of trees and are very fierce. Eggs of red ants are sold at high prices in the village shops.

[41] Phonphilai and Arunrat (2003:231-234) also discuss the varieties of non-timber products in Mae Nam Khan basin.

1970s and 80s in Samoeng district which happened because the price of *na gor* increased enormously in the market (Uravian, Anan et al. 1988:147-151). Phonphilai and Arunrat emphasise the increasing demand for wild local products in the market. They analyse that people still like the taste of these products and like to have them even though they have new lifestyles which now do not include gathering wild products in the forest (Phonphilai and Arunrat 2003:226).

In Ban Mahoi hamlet, finger-root is one of the most remarkable market products. Finger-root is a root vegetable.[42] From both rich and poor households, women gather together with three or four relatives or close friends to collect finger-roots. They usually start to collect the finger-roots from the surrounding forest at the beginning of the rainy season, but they go deeply into the headwater forest to look for ones of good quality in the prime season for finger-root's collection. The result of the collection is not shared among the group, but each individual in the group gathers their own collection. A villager usually takes home about two rice bags per person of finger-roots after a hard day's work.[43] Gatherings are sold in the village shops at 15 baht per kilogram or 16 baht per kilogram after villagers wash them in the stream by the village. The shop owner takes these to the market in Chiang Mai and sells them for 18 baht per kilograms. Groups with motorcycles get more income from this than ones without motorcycles because a motorcycle gives better access to more production sites of the finger-roots in the far forest and makes it easier to carry more down from the forest to the village.

Several rich households in the Ban Mae Luang village act as brokers to trade these forest resources to the external economy. However, these shop owners are rather competitive with each other in trying to gain their familiar village customers. Shop owners tend to attract the villagers through both friendship and pricing. Ordinary

[42] Some wild plants are domesticated and planted in the upland fields or in the garden of the house. Some villagers plant finger-roots or wild gingers in their upland fields.
[43] This gives them about 320 baht at the village shops.

villagers usually go to sell their product to their familiar shop but they can sell them to another shop if it has a better price. Therefore, if the shopper wants to have enough to sell in the city, they sometimes ask village friends to sell the commodities or suggest a better buying price. In case that the shop owner does not have enough commodities to take to Chiang Mai at a certain time, the shop owner informs the villagers when they want the commodity and the date of leaving for the market.

Because of the improvement of public transportation or increasing possession of motorcycles, some villagers, also directly join together to sell in the markets. In case of peddling, the villages have the peddlers bring products to the villages. The peddlers go down to the villages by motorcycle or car to sell fermented pork sausage, chilli paste, various fruits, and fermented tea. Motorcycle peddlers referred to as the 'mobile market' have prevailed in the village (Phonphilai and Arunrat 2003:209, 221-222). There is a regular market in Saeng Thong Tai, a central town in Saeng Thong district and a scheduled market in Ban Mafai, a sub-district in Mae Sompoi district. Local villagers and venders surrounding the village get together in one place to trade their products two or three times a month. Villagers know the schedule for when the market will open.[44] They go to buy vegetables, sweets or daily necessities. Some farmers sell their products in the market. There are also other temporary markets during temple festivals. During the festival, not only shop owners but ordinary farmers also can open temporary shops to sell food and local products such as Thai salads, Thai noodles, beer and miscellaneous goods, if they resister themselves with the temple committee or village council and pay a fee.[45] Several individuals or villager groups including village women's associations in the village sometimes open their shops to earn some money to pay for their activity expenses.

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[44] Saeng Thong district town has one large building for the market in the town. Another close town like Ban Mafai in Mae Sompoi district also has a market but it is a scheduled market in the open space without any buildings, only with some tents.

[45] One villager got a profit of at least 1,000 baht for selling rice noodle soups in three days during the *poi luang* festival.

In this way, rich households tend to take on an important role in increasing the trade of the forest commodities to the external markets. Since they have the shops, pickup trucks and the connections with traders in the city, the main trading route in the village is controlled by the village leaders. Ordinary Ban Mae Luang villagers also use this market system to create new income sources from forest products. This new extra dependency on the forest has created a vulnerability to the forest conservation policy for the ordinary middle class households.

Figure 4.10 A Shop in the Village

Conclusion

This chapter focused on the livelihood strategies of Ban Mae Luang village which has limited farmlands surrounded by conservation forest. Village households select cash crops and appropriate agricultural technologies to generate income by considering costs and benefits, their political position and their experiences. However, villagers differently adapted livelihoods depending on the amount of capital available to them. Rich villagers have the advantage in introducing new agriculture and adjusting to the

socio-economic constraints of the forest conservation policy. They intensify land use with cash crop cultivation in the bottom of the basin and diversify their sources of income by venturing and organising new village businesses using their political influence and the capital they have. On the other hand, ordinary villagers have to face various obstacles due to either the lack of initial capital like the possession of motorcycle or cars, the size of their farmland, the lack of manpower or the connection with politically influential persons. Risky businesses with fluctuations in market price for their commodities or those that are highly capital intensive should be avoided because of their vulnerable financial foundation, even though the business is expected to give a high return.

Different economic levels amongst villagers also produce gaps in their ability to adapt to forest conservation, with the middle class and poor landless labourers having inferior positions in the village structure because of their more limited livelihoods. Different livelihoods influence villagers' attitudes toward forest management. The diversified incomes of the rich famers may mean they can afford to participate in forest conservation activities more easily while the livelihoods of ordinary villagers are affected more by forest policy because they have a less flexible choice of livelihoods. Poor villagers have to tackle more difficult dilemmas with the forest conservation policy of the state to secure their livelihoods from forest resources. Social interaction between the rich and the ordinary villagers in the political economy finds compromises to continue their different livelihoods in the everyday life of the village.

Chapter 5 Environmental Governance and Villagers' Consciousness

With increasing state attempts to control forest land and local villagers' access to forest land, villagers in Ban Mae Luang differently transformed their livelihoods and attitudes toward the surrounding forest depending on their social and economic situations. Rich farmers succeeded in intensifying cash crop agriculture and governing the village business of natural resources. On the other hand, poor villagers who tended to work as landless labourers in agriculture and whose utilisation of natural resources for daily use was affected by limited arable land and access to the forest, also attempted to find income generation by increasing wage labouring and joining in the village business of the village leaders. This wave of the state's territorialisation and the transformation of the villagers' attitudes towards the forest is one side of the social transformation related to the forest in the village; on the other side is that the environmental consciousness among villagers is also transforming due to the influence of outside environmental policy and education by the state and the Thai public. This situation has created another new political arena between villagers and outsiders, and among villagers with different backgrounds.

Environmental education, which creates disciplines and morality for natural conservation in the consciousness of people, has been promulgated all over the country by various leading actors. Not only state agencies, but the urban middle class, NGOs, media and local villagers themselves have contributed to creating environmentalism, a new value system which accepts environmental values from the nature-centred view, among Thai citizens. The emergence of environmentalism in Thailand has been a remarkable phenomenon in the increasing civil environmental movement occurring in the Thai urban middle class and the state's elite officials educated in leading Thai

educational institutions or abroad (Stott 1991; Hirsch 1997; Pinkaew 2002). Following this social trend, the state agencies in Ban Mae Luang like the WMU, land development office, and elementary schools have advocated environmental conservation through posters, village message boards or announcements in village meetings. In addition, village elites in Ban Mae Luang also took on an important role in developing environmentalism among local villagers. Both village leaders and state agencies are gradually enforcing environmental regulations in particular nature conservation policy on villagers' behaviours. In addition, the media also broadcast environmental programs, the messages of the royal family on environmental conservation, and video clips or pictures of tree planting to educate villagers through radio or television[1]. In the everyday life of the village, villagers have increasing opportunities to face environmental advocacy and join environmental conservation actions such as official events or meetings with village leaders and local officers of state agencies. These increasing experiences have resulted in the promulgation of the concept of environmentalism and the legitimacy of environmental conservation among northern Thai people.

However, environmental education also creates a distortion between actual life in the village and the idealistic environmentalism present in the environmental education in the process of adaptation in village life. The urban middle class and state elites have a special tendency to appeal to idealistic environmentalism with the global environmental crisis, scientific ecological knowledge and Buddhist morality (Stott 1991; Hirsch 1997; Pinkaew 2002). The idealistic environmental education appreciates the coexisting relationship with both village community and forest in a harmonised way, while it seems to have little interest in livelihoods in the village. Therefore, the forest

[1] Ban Mae Luang villagers have watched television through the satellite system which the Thaicom public company has provided since 1993 in Thailand. Several wealthy houses have installed 1.8 metre diameter dish antenna in their gardens.

policy encouraging appropriate natural resource management tends to restrain the villagers' desire for economic development which involves exploiting natural resources. The state agencies taught villagers about benefits from environmental conservation, which does not directly relate to economic benefits for villagers, such as risk reduction from drought or disaster, conservation of micro-climate in the village or preservation of natural resources for the next generations. However, with regard to the real livelihoods of the villager, Ban Mae Luang villagers need more realistic solutions for income generation in the forest policy because a considerable part of their income comes from forest sources such as upland cultivating, logging, hunting, gathering wild herbs, and cattle raising in the forest. The villagers cannot survive in the village without utilising natural resources. In these distortions, villagers face the problem of how to adapt the environmental discourse in actual life and how to justify their livelihoods in the context of an environmental politics of knowledge.

Thus, this chapter focuses on the political power balance formed by environmental education in the local environmental political structure. This aspect views the village community as a political arena composed of individuals who are interpenetrated between modern environmentalism and local knowledge at different levels depending on different social backgrounds. To resolve the distortion described above and create community consensus on collective environmental action, Ban Mae Luang villagers seek a compromise between the official political space in public and the unofficial space inside the village. For example, they admit legitimacy for the dominant environmentalism of the state's order. In exchange for subordination to this, the local officers of the WMU use their discretion to allow villagers to utilise forest resources or sometimes overlook villagers' livelihoods in the forest. Villagers also form underground alliances to seek compromise among villagers and with the powerful state agencies on informal access to natural resources. In the everyday life, villagers are mixing official

education and local knowledge as an alternative source to justify their livelihoods. Villagers utilise customary recognition of logging, local relationships or social punishments to form informal alliances in order to secure access to forest resources in the modernising social context of the village.

The first section in this chapter reviews the institutional development of formal environmental education which external state agencies and the urban middle class were promoting in the village. The second section illustrates how state agencies attempted to influence Ban Mae Luang villagers' environmental consciousness through actual environmental education in the village. The third section focuses on the distortion and compromise between external environmentalism and local environmental knowledge in relation to bushfires in Chiang Mai. The final section illustrates the formation of underground alliances inside village politics according to local custom among all members in the community as one of adaptations of official environmentalism in the village.

Institutionalisation of Environmental Education

Institutionalisation of public environmental education was gradually developed through increasing environmental consciousness by the middle class and state officers in Thailand. Then institutions including schools, higher educational institutes and the state agencies promulgated environmentalism to Thai citizens as part of their educational programs. The main functions of this education was to establish standardised environmental knowledge among people in the various fields and levels, to create common agreement on the legitimacy of forest conservation and to involve rural villages in nation-wide official networks of natural conservation education.

Before the state's public education on environmental conservation developed, the first public consciousness on environmental conservation in Thailand emerged from

the environmental movement of the middle class. Increasing economic status and interest in environment conservation among the highly educated middle class developed an environmental movement with social education of local villagers. Around the 1970s, Thailand faced a dramatic increase in political power and voice in the middle class and NGOs on environmental issues. Around this period, the industrial structure in Thailand rapidly shifted from agriculture to industrial and service sectors. The primary economic sector including agriculture, forestry and fishery dropped from 26.7 per cent of GDP in 1975 to 15.8 per cent in 1985 (Suehiro and Higashi 2000:6). The urban middle class working in urban white collar sectors emerged as a new leading class in Thai society (Suehiro and Higashi 2000:8). Furthermore, because the middle class were educated in universities and had access to ideas from overseas, this class was highly motivated by the global environmental conservation movement and the 'threats' of deforestation that Thailand faced. Thai forests, at that time, faced rapid degradation: the forestland covering 53 per cent of the total land in 1961 decreased to 30 per cent in 1982 (Thongroj 1990:48). University students, NGOs and the urban middle class became involved in solving environmental problems to save the forest and local people from suffering from the establishment of the state's large projects or the corruption of natural resources.

These environmental movements also started to educate villagers about environmental knowledge. University students, social activists, monks and university professors visited the local community to educate them about environmental conservation and they also organised numerous environmental movements all around Thailand, including those concerning Nam Choan dam, Phuket Talantalum mining, and the landslides in Southern Thailand. Some of these leaders in the NGOs and social movements in Thailand participated in the bloody student movement of 1976 or in the Thai communist party in the mountains in northern or northeast Thailand after 1976

(Baker 2000:18; Funatsu 2000:319). The leaders learned from the experience and shifted their strategies on environmental movement from fighting to social education and advocacy in public. Major Thai newspapers and TV programs started reporting a large number of the opinions of NGOs and the middle class (Forsyth 2007:2118). Responses to these movement also expanded to international society (Rigg 1991:50).[2] As a result, awareness and interaction on environmentalism among local communities, national agencies or international agencies increased.

The increasing commitment of urban citizens and local communities to the environmental movement awakened the state to the necessity for participatory management and environmental education. The state also gradually shifted from centralised forest management to participatory management of environmental issues around the 1980s (Funatsu 2000). The government established legal systems and institutions to promote standardised environmental education to Thai citizens by collaborating with NGOs, universities or international organisations. The state's increasing awareness of the need for public environmental education can be seen in the introduction of policies at that time. The National Educational Scheme of 1977 stipulated that 'the state shall undertake to inculcate the awareness of the importance of natural resources and environment as well as population education' (Poranee 1991:136). Following the scheme, public environmental education spread and environmental educational curriculums from elementary school level to university level were created in the next decades. Other environment-related laws and policies also gradually involved the provision of promoting environment education and participation. For example, the 1985 forest policy also involved policy to promote environmental education and villagers participation into forest management (Thongroj 1990:52). The 1992 Environmental Quality Act, furthermore, strengthened the role of NGOs in

[2] Rigg (1991:50) noted that the British-based journal *Ecologist* published an editorial on the Nam Choan dam and some European royalty send messages to express the need to preserve the wildlife sanctuaries.

environmental education with provisions of various rights including telling correct information to people and financial support to registered environmental NGOs.[3]

The state also installed environmental research institutions to create a new type of governmental office to manage local participation on resource management, with foreign assistance. According to Pinkeaw (2002), environmental education with local participation, for domestic Thai foresters was started in Thai universities around the early 1980s by the Royal Forestry Department (RFD) and international organisations like the FAO. For example, the FAO also established community forestry programs in the Faculty of Forestry at Kasetsart University in 1984 (Pinkaew 2001:95). A community forestry program was developed by the Regional Community Forestry Training Centre (RECOFTC) in 1987 which enlarged their activities of research, training and education on community forests as a regional centre of Southeast Asia. The RECOFTC contributed to promoting environmental education to government institutions and higher educational institutes and supported capacity building to adapt new situations through both local participation and public environmental education.

On this base of legal framework and official education institutions, the state further established centralised administration systems for public environmental education in the 1990s. The Department of Environmental Quality Promotion was, for example, established in the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment to provid environmental education and build a network for environmental conservation in 1992. In 1994 the department expanded their activities by establishing environmental education centres at the provincial level (Hitsumoto 2005:86). Their activities included collaborative environmental campaigns expanding to grassroots organisations,

[3] The formal name of the 1992 Environmental Quality Act is 'The Enhancement and Conservation of National Environmental Quality Act in 1992. This Act is a revision of the Act in 1975. Article 7 and 8 clarified the position of private organisations relating to environmental conservation. Article 7 regulates the registration of the organisations in the MNRE. Article 8 provides the various rights such as seeking volunteers, providing correct information to people, conducting the projects, researching or reporting, and seeking donations. In addition, it stipulates that the environmental fund support the environmental organisations with financial difficulty by free aid or loans.

community NGOs and international NGOs (England 1997:63-65).

Environmental education in Ban Mae Luang village is nowadays mainly implemented by the state's agencies after the development of the public educational system at state level. NGOs only play a minor role in environmental education in Ban Mae Luang because they do not have a constant project site in the village. The village has three state agencies—the WMU, the district and sub-district office, and the elementary school. Among these three state institutions, the WMU takes the main role in promoting environmental education. In addition, the district office and sub-district office also provide environmental educational programs such as tree planting or environmental events. The district office also holds village chiefs' meetings to educate village leaders about environmental issues. Furthermore, the village elementary school also educates children through textbooks which include environmental topics. These three institutions sometimes get together to support environmental events in the district or sub-district. As for NGOs, they function as a supporting organisation for environmental education in Ban Mae Luang since Ban Mae Luang villagers do not have constant interaction with NGOs. Some NGOs occasionally come to help with environmental education for villagers such as in the teaching of the concepts of community forest movement, eco-friendly agricultures or wild herb medicine making.

Environmental Education in the Village

In Ban Mae Luang, state agencies are promoting environmentalism among villagers by holding environmental events or educational programs. In social education for environment conservation, local leaders, school teachers and the local officers in the state agencies employ several ideologies to justify environmentalism to villagers. The environmental education in the village means not only promoting nature conservation but also requiring villagers to pursue correct behaviours as Thai citizen and show loyalty to Thai nationalism. The state agencies and village leaders attempt to lead

villagers' consciousness to modern environmentalism by overlapping loyalty to the national order, and symbols of the king and queen. The following section examines their actual education in the village from three points of view: education through participatory forestry, school education and social education via the king and state images.

(a) Education in Practices of Participatory Forestry

At first, participatory forestry in Ban Mae Luang became a significant tool for the state agencies to use to regulate local people to fit the image of a proper eco-friendly Thai village with a communal mind. Following the state order, village leaders and local state officers organised the watershed forest management committee and conducted a lot of forest conservation activities such as firebreak building, bushfire elimination activities, bushfire monitoring, illegal logging monitoring, check dam building, tree planting and managing of the village community forest. In annual events, villagers provide adult labour in the forest work as one of their communal duties.[4] The village chief admires the unity and voluntary spirit of the villagers in environmental activities as that of good Thai citizen that 'even though the state does not provide enough funds for our activities. Our villagers are keeping on participation in constructing firebreaks'.

In forest conservation events or village meetings, Ban Mae Luang village leaders repeatedly ask villagers to cooperate in the environmental activities. With such encouragement and appreciation by the leaders, many villagers are happy to be involved in environmentally 'good' activities. One young female villager proudly said that 'we manage and conserve the forest very well. We discussed in village meeting with village chief and the WMU many times and finally decided to manage the forest collectively. We agreed to protect the forest as long as we can manage by ourselves'. As she referred

[4] In Ban Mae Luang other communal duties include works like seasonal installation of communal irrigation pipes, festival preparation or funeral ceremonies. Village leaders keep a name list of whole households and check the attendance during the work. The state agencies and sub-district administration office sometimes provide a meal or small wage for participants.

to, the village council also decided village forest management rules in 2006 and continued activities for forest conservation. In this way, and as Agrawal (2001a, 2005a, 2005b) saw in the Kuamon village in India and called it 'environmentality', the participatory forest management system helps to integrate villagers' consciousness toward natural conservation and increases their pride in environmental morality.

However, social education from participatory forestry needs to be considered in the light of the demands of village leaders and local officers. Some young leading villagers in Ban Mae Luang especially village council members were worried about the political appearance of the village. They also taught villagers to demonstrate the villagers' united will to conserve nature, or an image of voluntary works as being proper Thai citizens through environmental events. Village leaders encouraged some unenthusiastic villagers to join in environmental activities as communal duties. The local officers also directed villagers to promote voluntary events in the village. At the beginning of one such activity, they gathered local people at the temple and took collective photos with a banner cerebrating firebreak building for forest conservation. In another year, they supported the village ceremony for the mountain guardian spirit in Ban Mae Luang before firebreak building following the village leader's idea to demonstrate the villagers' voluntary contribution. Education in nature conservation and the coordination of local village leaders and local officers in the WMU has created the appearance of subordination to environmentalism to some extent.

Figure 5.1 One of the Message Boards for Forest Conservation (left)

Figure 5.2 Advocacy of the WMU during the Temple Festival (*Poi Luang*) (right)

Local state officers and village leaders also emphasise the importance of communal unity on forest conservation through message boards in the village. On the crossroads at the centre of the village, there is a large message board to advocate forest conservation to passengers passing through the village. It has two pictures: the left picture has an image of green forest with a message: 'Rich forest; the soil will be fertile if there are surrounding forests and the locals helped to protect the forest'. The right picture has an image of a bushfire and dead trees with a message: 'Dried and burnt forest; It will not rain, and the rivers and the watershed will dry up if villagers burn and cut the forests' (Figure 5.1). This message board made by the village council of Ban Mae Luang shows the connection between villagers' unity and forest conservation. This connection also can be seen on other message boards at several places in the village. Another message board, this time advertised on motor vehicles and made by local officers of the WMU also emphasises the unity of the community as a solution to environmental issues: 'Robust community, collaboration, unity of minds, mutual aids that protect forest from fire' (Figure 5.2).

Local leaders and local officers consistently tried to persuade Ban Mae Luang villagers to participate in forest management as a consensus among all villagers. By emphasising communal unity, the villagers were encouraged to do two things: One to be

good village members and join in participatory forestry with good intent, and two to avoid violating forest conservation by interpreting that a violation on forest issues results in a challenge to the unity of the whole community. The message boards were the tools of village leaders and local officers to arouse Ban Mae Luang villagers' consciousness on participatory forestry by utilising local morality.

(b) Environmental Education at the Village School

The village elementary school is also utilised as another tool to form forest conservation consciousness as good Thai citizens. The elementary school is a formal institution of the state and directly influences young village education. All teachers are local state officers who commute from the central town of Saeng Thong or neighbouring towns. Their salaries are paid by the state. Official inspectors are sometimes sent from the provincial office to observe the results of teaching or school activities. Teachers are respected by Ban Mae Luang villagers, but their unfamiliarity as outsiders informs the relationship between teachers and ordinary villagers. It is rare for them to come down to the agricultural fields or to participate in evening chatting with village friends. School and teachers are regarded as state agents to infuse state policy onto villagers.

The curriculum of the elementary school includes several environmental conservation programs for students even though it does not have an independent subject on environmental study. The school textbook features some environmental topics in several subjects such as Thai languages, social science or fieldworks of science. Environmental education was introduced after two curriculum reforms of elementary school education in 1990 and 2001. Hitsumoto (2005) noted the recent situation of environmental education in Thai textbooks. For example, a textbook of elementary Thai language contains writing and listening sessions on environmental topics. In addition, a social science textbook contains citizens' responsibility and duties on environmental conservation (Hitsumoto 2005:89). In Ban Mae Luang village, elementary school

children sometimes have assignments to find several species of plants around their houses and ask names of animals from adult villagers or read textbooks about social environmental activity in textbooks with parents or senior students in the village. Thus, environmental education was dispersed in many subjects as an important topic.

The boy/girl scout movement also contributed to environmental education in the village. Boy/girl scouts is part of the main curriculum at elementary schools in Thailand. In the history of Thai scouting activity, the scout has been used as a tool to infuse nationalism and loyalty to the king in rural people directly. King Rama IV established village scouts in 1911 in order to plant nationalism, loyalty to the king and Buddhism into peoples' minds.[5] The activities became a national wide organisation with royal support from 1971, to cultivate further nationalism against the communist movement (Muecke 1980; Bowie 1997; Handley 2006:222).[6] In the late 1970s, the village scout movement became a large loyalist and anti-communist movement involving millions of members all over Thailand. In areas of northern Thailand known as 'pink zones' because of their suspected relationship with communist activities, villages joined the scout movement to distinguish themselves as loyal to the state and the king (Bowie 1997). After the demise of the communist insurgency at the beginning of the 1980s, enthusiasm for the scout movement also disappeared. However, their basic framework and the spirit of activities still remained, mainly in the curriculum of schools. Now, the activities involving environmental education are educating children in the good morality of forest conservation, as 'good' Thai citizens. In class, village children wearing a khaki uniform with a scarf in several teams go to the forest with teachers to learn team-working, first-aid, techniques and environmental knowledge. They also have annual camping expeditions nearby in the national park with neighbouring schools in the same

[5] King Rama IV (1881-1925) is the first Thai king who studied abroad and proceeded to modernise Thailand.

[6] According to the Bowie, the village scout movement had been directly linked with the Boarder Patrol and the Ministry of Interior (Bowie 1997:2).

district as a school activity.

Teachers also promote environmental education to students through school trips. School students annually go to the nearby botanical gardens, the Queen Sirikit Botanical Garden (Figure 5.3). The botanical gardens provide free entrance and lectures for students although school teachers have to collect money from parents to hire two pickup trucks for the school trip for their students. This trip also involves several symbols of the royal family and the state. At the gate of the reception building, staff of the botanical garden give small flowers to the students. The students offer the flowers to a large image of the Queen in the entrance hall before they move into a lecture room. In the lecture room which has high quality presentation facilities like a university, a lecture and promotional film are provided for students to showcase government efforts in scientific research into botany and natural conservation.

Environmental education in Ban Mae Luang is actually taught as one of the obligatory teaching topics and through special occasions, boy/girl scouting activities, school trips, and by overlapping with nationalism, the loyalty to the state and the king. School teachers teach not only environmental education for environmental conservation, but also as a way to behave as good Thai citizens.

Figure 5.3 School Trip for Environmental Education to the Royal Botanical Gardens

(c) Environmental Instruction by the Royal Family

The royal family also functions as an effective tool in the state's environmental governance program to promote environmentalism and nationalism among local villagers. The king plays a special role in unifying Thai society, even though the king officially does not participate in secular politics. The royal family, state, morality and environment conservation are symbolically connected with each other. Forest conservation has been promoted in speeches by the royal family, especially the king and the queen. Considerable numbers of villagers including the WMU local officers and village leaders in Ban Mae Luang said that they learned the importance of forest conservation from the king, even though most of villagers have never seen the king directly.[7] The Queen visited Ban Mae Luang's community forest and WMU in 2000. At the front gate of the community forest project in the village, there is one tree she planted and message boards with the royal words that 'people can live with forest (*khon yu khu kap pa*)' to celebrate her visit.

[7] Some villagers still remembered King Rama IX came to see a water reservoir and a rest house in neighbouring villages a few decades ago.

The media and events involving the royal family significantly influence the villagers. The royal speeches on environmental conservation have been often broadcasted on radio or in the newspapers, and especially in the evening news on television. They broadcast the royal family's participation in environmental conservation activities through Buddhist events, donations or tree planting. Through the media, the words of the king and the queen have become one of the significant symbols justifying nature conservation. The queen is very interested in environmental conservation. In her speech commemorating her birthday on August 12, 2008, she highlighted the environmental crisis as the 'country's threat as well as the southern Thai conflict between Buddhists and Muslims' (Ekachai 2008). The commitments of the royal family to nature conservation give forest conservation a sacred value among Thai citizens. The royal symbolism of environmental conservation is also emphasised by special events. For example, 'Thai environment day' was established on the day before the king's birthday on December 4, based on the king's special interest in environmental issues in Thailand in 1991 (Naruemon 2006).[8] Since then, considerable numbers of environmental conservation activities have been held around the king's birthday in Thailand.

On the king's birthday, a lot of ceremonial events involving tree planting were held all over Chiang Mai Province (Chapter Six). In the Royal Floral Gardens in Chiang Mai on 5 December 2007, the gardens were opened to the public. Here, various panels were also arranged to showcase the environmental conservation programs of the Royal Projects (Figure 5.4). They showed pictures and messages of the king about watershed forest management, firebreak or tree planting and explained about new scientific forestry and water management based on the king's ideas in the Royal Projects. Actually,

[8] The royal message of King Rama IX on December 4, 1989 encouraged Thais to make efforts to solve environmental issues in Thailand and international countries. Reflecting this royal message, the National Environment Board ordered the Ministry of Science, Technology and Environment to work to establish 'Thai environment day'. On November 12, 1991, the Office of the Prime Minister decided that 'Thai environment day' should become a national observance (Naruemon 2006).

the main event of the flora festival had been held the proceeding year. The 'International Horticultural Exposition for His Majesty the king' was held from November 1, 2006 to January 31, 2007 to celebrate the sixtieth anniversary of the king's accession to the throne (Project Management Office of Royal Flora Ratchaphruek 2006). For this exhibition, 32 nations including Japan, Malaysia, South Africa and Canada were invited to exhibit as part of the International Garden Section.[9] The Thailand Tourism Authority had a large commercial campaign to attract travellers from over the world. Many villagers from Ban Mae Luang also attended this magnificent event to see the gardens and attractions.

Figure 5.4 Exhibition of the Royal Projects at the Royal Flora Festival

The interest of the king has also connected nature conservation with religious morality. Along with the king, the government promotes Buddhist thought in forest conservation and since 2006 has activities which used the idea of the sufficiency

[9] The participating thirty two nations included Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, Malaysia, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Indonesia, India, Nepal, Bhutan, Pakistan, China, Brunei, Turkey, Spain, Belgium, Netherlands, Bulgaria, Mauritania, Kenya, Nigeria, Gabon, Sudan, Morocco, Tunisia, South Africa, Burundi, Qatar, Iran, Yemen, Trinidad & Tobago, and Canada.

economy which the king advocates. The sufficiency economy concept introduces the morality of Buddhist thoughts to the economy as an effort to cease the endlessly maximising desire for self-interest. The idea has been increasingly applied to forest conservation issues. According to the *Thailand Human Development Report 2007*, which the Thailand office of the UNDP proposed under the supervision of the central Thai government, forest degradation is analysed as 'a prime example of a lack of moderation and insight' from the aspect of the sufficiency economy (UNDP 2007:47). The sufficiency economy concept attempts to protect the forest by introducing controls on the market economy.

Thus, royal symbols work to justify environmentalism through events or mass media. The activities of the royal family for environmental conservation overlap with Thai nationalism, loyalty to the king and the state and Buddhist morality. In the village, the involvement of the king and queen in environmental conservation provides a sacred meaning and unifies peoples' consciousness on environment conservation. Therefore, Ban Mae Luang villagers often refer to the king's speeches and cite his words as reasons for their environmental activities and to show they are proper Thai citizens.

In summary, the state advocates to local villagers, an ideal model of the ecologically friendly lifestyle as a proper way of life through the public administration system, TV programs, and schools. They have also overlayed environmentalism with national ideology, loyalty to the king and Buddhist morality as a means to disseminate these ideas to the villagers. In this way, the state attempts to strengthen the moral obligations of rural villages to undertake forest conservation. For Ban Mae Luang villagers, environmentalism has been established as one of the ways of life of Thai nationality.

Localism and Environmentalism

Under the state's surveillance of environment conservation in village events, school or village meetings, it is rare for Ban Mae Luang villagers to deny the necessity of environmental conservation directly. Rather they appreciate it as the moral obligation of a Thai citizen. However, the local community also functions as another institution which educates villagers in everyday life. The outside environmentalism and local views on the environment interactively influence villagers' consciousness. Most villagers keep carrying out local practices passed down for generations, in their everyday life with some adjustment to external environmentalism.

In some cases, Ban Mae Luang villagers justify their livelihoods because it is their local custom or done according to local knowledge that has been accumulated through a different route than the state education system. Villagers have their own local history and custom of contributing to the development of village which allows them to accept their efforts of logging and expanding agricultural fields on forest land as a positive thing. Old villagers still believe in the virtue of contributions to the development of the village and family in making them a diligent village person. They proudly talk about their past efforts such as building houses and raising their children by logging and encroaching on wild forest land. Young villagers also seem to appreciate these elders' efforts. Several scholars sought the origin of this pioneership of the northern Thais in northern Thai customary codes of law, *mangraisat*.[10] Lan Na Kingdom which governed from the thirteenth century AD to the sixteenth century AD promoted the clearing and cultivation of forest and deserted land with an exemption of tax for three years (Pinkaew 2002:67; Phonphilai and Arunrat 2003:43; Ongsakul,

[10] According to Ongsakul et al. (2005), it is believed that *mangraisat* was compiled by King Mangrai (AD 1261-1311), the first king of Lan Na Kingdom, and his successors. It may have been influenced by the legal code of the Mon of Haripunchai Kingdom (estimated to be around AD767 or 768-1292), a previous Kingdom in Lamphun. The *mangraisat* survived under Burmese control. It was officially replaced by the Siamese centralisation policy in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

Millar et al. 2005:94). According to Pinkaew (2002:67), local villagers unofficially maintained a consensus to encourage the conversion of forest to arable land until the mid-twentieth century. Through a long local history, villagers have taken the customary law in the old Kingdom and reproduced it as local logic through generations as part of their customary behaviour and attitudes toward nature.

However, it is necessary to think about further transformations of customary laws in the changing social environment of the Ban Mae Luang village. Local villagers reinterpret their communal history of logging and forest encroachment to fit the present situation by reproducing it with small transformations of meanings. A case of bushfire management in the village shows the difference and interconnection in daily practice between the accumulation of local knowledge and the modern environmental knowledge of official environmental education. Bushfire was a source of conflict between environmentalism and local custom in northern Thailand. In the dry season of 2007 and 2009, black smoke from bushfires in the mountains covered the sky of Chiang Mai city. This smoke caused health problems for Chiang Mai's citizens and negatively affected the local tourism economy. Chiang Mai's urban citizens and the media argued strongly for tight bushfire control in upland fields and mountains. In this case, however, bushfire is a social problem with different educational bases and perceptions between urban citizens and rural villagers. The state agencies or Chiang Mai citizens' discourse is based on the view that bushfire is hazardous for health and tourism while villages think that bushfire is beneficial for their upland farming and increasing non-forest products in the forest.

For the urban citizens of Chiang Mai, bushfire is recognised as a hazard which damages tourism and people's health. The citizens, state and mass media blamed upland farmers for the damages. Therefore, the MNRE ordered the provincial office to strengthen the prohibition of local villagers starting bushfires or burning the upland

fields. Also, the state campaigned to stop bushfires and organised fire fighters, villagers and volunteers. The director of the forest-fire control division, under the National Park, Wild Life, and Plant Conservation Department, also blamed the bushfires on local villagers. He argued that villagers caused more than 90 per cent of the bushfires (Hoare 2004). At that time, the Chiang Mai mayor also expressed difficulty in controlling bushfires because it is 'their way of life' (Cheewin 2009). Their way of life in the mayor's statement shows the existence of long seated local custom and that thinking about bushfires is different from those of urban citizens.

Ordinary Ban Mae Luang villagers' attitudes to bushfires were passive in terms of obeying the order of state but were in great contrast to the immense awareness of urban citizens and the state agencies. Even though village leaders and adult members were sometimes mobilised to extinguish fires in the mountains by state agencies, red bushfires could be seen in upland fields or mountains every night during the dry season. Interviews with Ban Mae Luang villagers show a contrasting view of bushfire from that of the state's and city dwellers' views. The bushfire, which annually occurs in the forest, is not seen to be destructive at all for villagers. It is instead viewed as being rather helpful for fertilising soil and for maintaining the forest to produce proper forest products for villagers. Some scholars also emphasise anthropological aspects arguing that bushfire does not necessarily have a negative impact on people's livelihoods (See Mingsarn 2001:134; Atchara 2002; Yos 2003:34).

The utilisation of bushfire is regarded as an essential part of Ban Mae Luang villagers' local knowledge and livelihood. From knowledge accumulation in long-term everyday practice, villagers use fire techniques considering micro-climate, micro-topography and the production style of the village. Three reasons to set fire to the forest are argued by villagers. At first, annual bushfire reduces the risk of an even more hazardous and large bushfire, which can burn the whole forest. Annual litters

accumulated in the forest make only a moderate fire which clears up the forest ground. If the bushfire does not occur for four or five years, burnable litters accumulate in the forest and this accumulation of litter causes a large hazard which could result in a fire that would burn all the trees in the forest. The WMU hires local villagers to sweep out litter on the floor of the forest and to build firebreaks to limit the spread of fire. However, these activities are done only in the upstream forest with which the WMU is mainly concerned. In other areas, bushfire is usually used to remove litter from forest ground.

Secondly, bushfire is closely connected with the village production system. Ash from the bushfire fertilises soil in the agriculture fields and forest. Fire frequently occurs in the dry season before the rainy season when Ban Mae Luang villagers start to prepare agricultural fields in the mountain forest and upland fields. In case of the upland fields, it is also an effective way to fertilise and weed in the broad upland fields before cultivation thus saving labour power from the village. They set fire to litter and weeds in the upland fields which have been left fallow since the harvesting season of last year. After the fires, white ash remains in the upland fields. When the rainy season comes, rain flows down into the arable lands with the ash. Even though chemical fertiliser is increasingly being used for upland cultivation, ash fertiliser is still complementarily used in village agriculture.[11] Villagers also know that the ash fertilises the soil of the forest and becomes the best incubating bed for some mushrooms and wild vegetables. The *het top* mushroom (*astraeus hygrometricus* or earth star mushroom) especially grows well under ash. Most villagers go out digging this mushroom with a small iron shovel or a bamboo stick at the beginning of the rainy season. Villagers make a soup with this mushroom because of its good fragrance. Villagers not only consume

[11] In Ban Mahoi, chemical fertilisers were used for beans, maize or sweet corns as main fertilisers, but not for peanuts. They just burn the weeds or rice straws or do nothing before planting peanuts, because villagers know peanuts can use nitrogen fixation to grow well without chemical fertiliser.

mushrooms in the house, but also sell them in the market at a good price as a source of seasonal income. An officer in the WMU also blames villagers for setting fire to forest to increase production of the mushrooms.[12]

Thirdly, bushfire also has a cultural aspect which is embedded in the life cycles in the village. 'After the fire settled down' is one of the signals for Ban Mae Luang villagers to start activities in the forest. Bushfire helps villagers to access the forest more easily for gathering herbs or hunting animals. Before bushfires, the litters and weed under the forest grow very high. They become obstacles for villagers to climb through and become nests of dangerous animals. Ban Mae Luang villagers still have several old narratives that they tell of seeing tigers, elephants and bears, but the most dangerous animals are now poisonous snakes.[13] Bushfires thus clear the bush and nests of the snakes and make villagers able to climb the mountain forest safely. The pass way is also used for wondering monks in the forest. In Ban Mae Luang village, one wandering monk usually comes down to the village pavilion on the hill from the next district to spend a few nights using the pass way after the bushfire season.

The villagers' bushfire practices fit within their social systems, economic structure and life cycle. Ban Mae Luang villagers admit the efficiency of the practical knowledge gained from village life while at the same time they know the fire caused problems in urban cities from the warning by Chiang Mai citizens and the state officials. In an imbalanced power relationship between urban and rural areas, the village society is urged to take action by the state agencies. Therefore, in actual bushfire control, villagers must adjust their local knowledge and create new knowledge to meet external and internal village demand.

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[12] Interview with an officer of the WMU on March 13, 2008.

[13] The forest surrounding the village has a lot of snakes. I saw two kinds of snakes in the village. One snake is called *ngu phit*. It is a green small snake, poisonous and edible. The other is *ngu hau*, a large dark-coloured poisonous snake. Villagers usually do not eat *ngu hau* because it is not tasty, but it is edible. The length of a large *ngu hau* can be more than 1.5 metres. When a snake comes down to the village, anyone who sees the snake calls people and they kill it for safety.

Villagers cannot completely deny the state's bushfire control measures which the village leaders and local officials promote, and they also learn to compromise with external environment conservation by participating in the practice of fire prevention activities. In the dry season, the WMU sets up several field stations for monitoring in the forest. The budgets for fire prevention are provided by the WMU. The unit hires local villagers for twenty-four-hour monitoring at 125 baht for females and 150 baht for males.[14] When a bushfire is detected, they call the WMU and the village council by mobile phone. Then, the village council sends male villagers belonging to the watershed management committee in the village to extinguish the fires. Female villagers are rarely summoned to respond to urgent fire fighting. However, since the evaluation on whether to report or not was delegated to the monitors, small size fires are usually not reported. Only if there is a large hazardous fire, the WMU is called because it may damage large trees and villages. In the dry season of 2008, village council members and male villagers were sent to extinguish large bushfires only a few times even though bushfires could be seen everyday in that period. Thus, village monitors also adjust their local knowledge to balance the benefit of a fire alert system and the benefit of monitoring the fire for the local village community by using the fire warning selectively.

Village local knowledge is not a closed educational system just accumulating customary knowledge through the generations, but an open system transformed slowly by modern environmental knowledge. Several tensions between external education and local education have been kept in everyday life. These two systems are intermingling with each other. For example, in the evening when my host family was watching TV programs and talking with each other after dinner, their eleven year-old boy was watching his favourite wildlife program translated from a western program into Thai on television. The program was about a bear. The boy asked his grandfather what a bear is.

[14] The WMU hires female villagers only for the day time and males for night time.

He explained some names of bears and their behaviour in Thailand. Then, he said that 'we have not hunted them for long time'. He explained how he had hunted bears in the forest and their grandson listened excitedly to this story.[15] The talk between the boy and his grandparents shows how villagers are creating multi-vocal stories on environmental knowledge mixing customary experience and standardised knowledge from official education. Village knowledge is accumulated by mixing modern education and local education in everyday practice.

Underground Alliance of Localism

Local knowledge and customs are transformed by modern education, but the local villagers' sharing consensus 'custom' also penetrates into modern society and systems of forest conservation. Localism in forest utilisation legitimatises the villagers' own livelihood in the village community and establishes an underground alliance among villagers and between the local state officers to secure the local villagers' livelihood in the forest. As Scott (1985:328) pointed out, 'people find another logic in the small social space from the presence of sanction and influence by others in the same community' outside the state's surveillance. Inside village communities such as friend groups, kin groups, coworking groups or family members are ruled by their own way of thinking and the customs of the local community with influence from modern forest thoughts and recent situations. The village community educates all members of the community including the village leaders and local officers by binding people in communal ideas with social punishment, rumour, and sympathy creation in village life. This micro-political structure in the village builds an informal institution of social education among villagers and creates alternative voices. Logging by the villagers, for example in actual practice, creates implicit agreements among villagers and forms customary alliances and

[15] In this family, the grandfather was the teacher of the grandson about hunting for small animals, gathering edible herbs or making play tools like wooden swords, crossbows for hunting frogs, slingshots and kites.

networks to secure the official and unofficial logging industry in the village.

In the northern Thai villages, villagers can legally cut trees for communal use and traditional house building (Figure 5.5). The self-sufficient use of logging as a means of livelihood is allowed by the Forest Law 1941 and its operational laws. According to article twenty five of the Forest Law 1941, people can cut trees which are not prohibited by the state if people pay an appropriate government fee. However if people use the trees for self use in the same province, they do not need to pay the fee (Kingdom of Thailand 1941). The village produces wooden boards or poles from *pradu* (*pterocarpus indicus*) or other trees, but the high-value teak (*tectona grantis*) has already almost disappeared from the forest surrounding Ban Mae Luang village. *Pradu* and *takhian* (*hopea odorata*) have been designated as protected tree species according to the Law, so a special permit from the WMU is needed for it to be cut.[16] However, economic reasons still strongly motivate local villagers to commit to commercial logging. Some villagers undertake commercial logging without a permit because of the high demand by merchants or carpenters.

[16] *Pradu* and *takhian* is registered as category-ko by the state needing a special permit or royalty to be logged. In 1989, 158 species were registered by the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives 1989).

Figure 5.5 Processing Using Chain Saw and Hatchet with an Official Permit

Logging is still an important source of livelihood for Ban Mae Luang villagers. The villagers sometimes sell timber to merchants in city. Usually, this timber is not directly cut logs, but the used wooden boards of old houses. House building in the traditional way is permitted by village leaders and the state agency.[17] In addition, selling wood from an old house is legal. Therefore, villagers store the wooden boards until a time when they will need money like saving money in a bank. During the dry season, young male villagers usually get together and go logging in the mountains of northern Thailand. Cut timbers are processed to wooden boards in the forest to a constant size. Villagers bring them back on their shoulders to the village and nail them on the walls of their houses or store houses, called *hang* (Figure 5.6). The small houses are usually used for an easy dwelling, a working place or a storehouse to keep rice, maize, and farming tools until it is time to trade the timber. If the villagers need a large amount of money, the wooden houses or storehouses are dismantled and sold out to timber traders as scrap.

[17] According to village regulation, Ban Mae Luang villagers need to report to the village chief before cutting trees for house building and must plant new seedlings to compensate for the loss of those cut down.

After the sale, they build a new house again.

Figure 5.6 Wooden Storehouse (*hang*)

This local logging has been bolstered by economic structures surrounding the village. The village is connected with an economic system which has a severe demand for cash from both inside and outside the village. If villagers need money, they ask timber merchants to come to the village and give an estimation for the timber. Sometimes timber merchants come and ask villagers to sell a beneficial large tree or timber they stored in the dwelling because the price of timber has increased recently.[18] For Ban Mae Lunag villagers, there are several reasons to sell the timber. For example, one family received about 400,000 baht by selling their wooden storehouse at one time. From this, they spent 200,000 baht for payment of a new pickup truck and saved the remains for school tuition for their eldest son who will start studying in Chiang Mai next year. Another family also got a pickup truck by selling a wooden storehouse. Education, cars and new demands for necessities in modernising village life are

[18] Some villagers reported that a Chinese merchant sometimes comes to the village to buy the timber from the trees.

increasing the demand for money. The custom of logging connects the village with the market and urban merchant.

In interviews with the Ban Mae Luang villagers, villagers expressed complex feelings about forest conservation between obligations to the state conservation policy and their village customary livelihood. A woman ironically said that 'Logging is bad. Do you also think so, too?' She further argued that Ban Mae Luang villagers just lived in the forest as their ancestors had done. Her statement shows that the state forest policy discredits village livelihoods under the name of environmental conservation. A powerless villager cannot obviously disagree with the dominate discourse embedded in politics as a Thai citizen. However, she also tried to find a compromise in the local history of their community. The tendency to create counter-discourse according to local village custom to balance with the dominant environmental discourse can be seen among the Ban Mae Luang villagers. Mr Kham, 53 years old, who is working logging in the forest, also stated at first the legitimacy of the state nature conservation: 'Yes, the forest should be protected. We cannot deny the state policy'. But, he also emphasised the importance of local village customs in justifying the utilisation of forest products: 'However, we have conserved the forest with cooperation among the villagers and utilised the tree to survive in this village from ancestor's generations. This is the 'customary' way to survive in the village'.[19] In the village, there is an ideological and political arena intermingling between the legitimacy from the modern environmentalism of the state forest policy and the one from local village customs.

Responding to the increasing demands of village society and localism among villagers, the village community educates members of the community including village elites in local village customs and norms which create underground alliances securing logging. Friendship, communal punishment, rumour and sympathy building are utilised

[19] Interview on January 31, 2008.

to create a common consensus for a 'local custom of logging' and to justify the villagers' logging.

(a) Village Alert Network

Village friendship alliances organise information networks for alerting others of the visits of forest police. This is to prevent arrests and to secure income sources. Logging is high-risk work because of state surveillance and punishment. Forest police are regarded as one of the dangers in the forest. The conversations of Ban Mae Luang villagers show that they are very fearful of the forest police. During the dry season, the forest police usually come to the village and camp beside the village. Villagers stated that the forest police from Bangkok have no mercy and are hard to bribe to overlook their activities. The village chief also does not have the right to ask pardon for any arrest. In addition, the police are dangerous because they are armed with guns. During this monitoring by the police, young village men change their working time to midnight, and in the darkness they bring the timber to the village. One young man said to me that 'if you see a forest patrol police come forward in the forest, you should run away even if you lose your sandal behind'. According to older villagers, the number of those arrested is decreasing. Old villagers recall the sour memories of being jailed. Thus, when forest police come to the villages, the villagers immediately inform each other by using mobile phones or by chatting in the evening. Usually, the forest police stay in the forest to avoid contact with the villagers. Each villager takes note to watch the behaviour of the forest police when they come to monitor the illegal loggers. In their chatting, the villagers talked much about the forest police: where did they stay and what did they survey today? How did they catch villagers? Are they skillful or not? Using this information, the loggers escape from the forest police by changing the sites or time for logging.

(b) Social Sanction

Secondly, the villagers' informal alliances create social pressures to keep quiet

about the informal logging by the villagers. The villagers avoid talking about logging to outsiders. This also prevails over and beyond the villages. Children in the village are also educated not to talk about the logging. Villagers agreed that they just say 'I do not know anything' when forest police come to ask anything. Some of the male villagers believe that every mature young village man should join in the logging with an iron hatchet in his hand as is the custom (Figure 5.7). I was told that 'if you can go to the logging with us, you can be a village man'. Villagers dislike trouble within the local community, they keep quiet about logging. Villagers have severe social punishments for violators. When one old man was arrested by forest police, villagers tried to identify who informed on him to the police. The informant was regarded as a betrayer of the whole rural community in Saeng Thong. One villager expressed that 'if one informed forest police, such a person will get expelled from Saeng Thong district absolutely. If the person did it once, everyone knows what one did. Nobody trusts such a person'. Villagers widely accepted the norm that they should keep quiet on logging and punishment.

Figure 5.7 Iron Hatchets (*mui*) and Long Hand Saw Used in Logging

(c) Warning by Rumour

Thirdly, rumour sometimes was used for warning those who may threaten the communal rules of alliance. In Ban Mae Luang village, there were several rumours of murder related to illegal logging. When I interviewed the villagers, I was told that there was a rumour that the dead body of a foreigner killed by illegal loggers was found at a mountain temple deep in the forest. According to several villagers, several young village men went there and found that he was a foreigner because he had a notebook filled with a foreign language. That person must have been shot by illegal loggers or upland Hmong villagers because he tried to take photos of illegal logging. The same rumour prevailed amongst village shop owners, customers, and several villagers with little variation. I hired a villager to investigate the suspected place where the dead body lay, but I could not find a body and or a forest temple. According to a hunter from the next village, the forest temple had been vandalised by someone a few years ago. However, Ban Mae Luang villagers still talk about the rumour of the dead body and the mountain temple. There are maybe two possible meanings for this. On one hand, the rumour impresses villagers how dangerous it is to obstruct logging in the village. It also strengthens the unity of their silent alliance. On the other hand, it, whether intentionally or not, clearly warns a foreign researcher, maybe me, not to inquire about logging too much.

(d) Alliance through Sympathy

Finally, this underground alliance is a public 'secret' known not only to the ordinary villagers of Ban Mae Luang but also to the leaders. Village leaders know of the existence of the villagers' alliance and how this alliance functions in the village, but they seem not to want to correct the situation. Rather, they ignore the existence of the alliance altogether. In effect, their behaviour just sets them apart from both the villagers

and the forest police on this issue. Ban Mae Luang village leaders usually do not come to the logging sites. If they accidentally come across these villagers' practices in public, they may warn villagers only. They also keep their actions regarding the forest police as neutral as possible. According to state regulations, the village chief must provide any assistance that the forest police require, but no more than this. The Ban Mae Luang village chief believed that arresting illegal loggers was not his responsibility but that of the forest police who come from outside the village. Conversely, he clearly explained to his villagers in the village meeting that he could not do anything even if they were arrested by the forest police. This gave him an excuse not to be involved in illegal logging issues. This ignoring strategy is connected with the customary social structure that supports the legitimacy of the village leaders as long as they are nice negotiators or sympathisers who maintain the villagers' benefits. For village leaders, the state agencies or forest police may provide small benefits and support to them for a short while, but to be a whistleblower places them at the high risk of losing the social and political support of the villagers. Keeping silent and ignoring the existence of an alliance is a better strategy for village leaders who live in the small community of the village.

Likewise local custom also often results in local officers compromising and being sympathetic. The local officers in the WMU usually do not arrest local villagers, but tend to respect local custom and overlook minor crimes only issuing a warning. Villagers also know local officers do not arrest villagers because of their community ties. Some local officials are born in and belong to the village community. They express anxiety about arresting villagers who they know in the village life. The same community ties and local customs bind the state officers. In addition, local officers also compromise or overlook some illegal logging in order to avoid friction with villagers because they want a participatory forestry policy in the village with villagers' cooperation. Therefore, hostility toward the officers is not high in Ban Mae Luang even

though some fear and suspicion on local officers does still persist in the village. This overlooking also works in the officers' favour. From 1999 to 2005, twenty-two environmental activists were murdered in Thailand (Vasana 2009). In one of them, in 2004 in Nan Province, one monk, who worked for nature conservation, was allegedly killed in a conflict with villagers. When tension runs high, it can lead to dangerous situations because of the economic importance of logging in the village.

Inside the village, communal networks, local thinking and violence make people ally together to support local livelihoods. Ban Mae Luang villagers are organised into underground alliances based on local custom which is mixing localism and modern economic life in the village. State policies and environmentalism are being compromised by their communal custom and livelihoods in the everyday life of the village. In contrast to the increasing relationship with state institutions in the village expressing environmental protection policies, an underground alliance is also developing inside village society.

Conclusion

The discussion shows how Ban Mae Luang villagers' environmental consciousness is underlaid by both external environmentalism and local knowledge. The villagers' attitude towards external environmental education depends on the environmental politics between the official and unofficial situations. In the official situation, Ban Mae Luang villagers just accept the dominant narratives or images of environmental conservation created by the village council, school, message boards, circulated booklets, TV programs and royal messages. They appreciate nature conservation, join in participatory forestry as a good Thai citizen and regulate themselves by communal rules for environmental conservation as Agrawal observed as environmentality. The dominant discourse of environmental education is structurally overlapped with the hegemonic

power structure of nationalism and morality like loyalty to the state or the king. Most villagers seemingly follow environmentalism.

However, in unofficial everyday life inside the village, villagers had a different logic and social education reinterpreting official environmentalism. Villagers took the localism accumulated among the villagers, as an excuse to justify their stigmatised livelihood in the forest. Villagers struggle to gain compromises from the state agencies or the public for mixing localism with environmental practice. In the case of bushfire or illegal logging, they formed local alliances with communal ties for hiding illegal activities by the villagers so creating counter-discourses to balance with hegemonic power structures in unofficial everyday life. The villagers keep looking for new ways to compromise and negotiate with external powers in the village politics of consciousness.

Chapter 6 The Emergence of a Nature Conservation Ritual

Local villagers increasingly connect with the state forest management system. Nevertheless, village leaders are not just subordinated to state power, but act as synaptic agents bridging the interests of both villagers and state agencies, and creating alliances. In the allied relationship, the state agencies also showed some acceptance of villagers' participation in forest management as long as the villagers agreed to respect the state-led forest conservation policy. This sort of social negotiation occurs officially or unofficially in the everyday practices of forest use.

In this negotiation process, the villagers' demonstration of cooperation in forest conservation is used to appeal to state agencies and the Thai public to recognise the legitimacy of local people in managing their forest. Local knowledge, *phumpanya*, has started to gain bargaining power as a tool in negotiation in northern Thailand. Local knowledge originally meant just a set of practical information accumulated over generations in a specific area. The knowledge covered, for example, local agricultural techniques, the knowledge of edible or medicinal plants, the religious skills of rituals, or the knowledge of local social systems. However, NGOs and local communities have begun to use 'local knowledge' as an argument to support their claims for the superiority of local people's natural resource management over the state's (Scott 1998; Anan 2000; Pinkaew 2002; Yos 2003). The superior nature of local knowledge was claimed as a solution to the failure of large state projects, which caused ecological destruction and damage to local society. Local knowledge supporters compared the shortcomings of the state's use of simplified scientific knowledge with the complex and detailed knowledge of local people. They sought for a holistic approach with detailed knowledge from the local community for keeping a fragile system of local resource

management (Anan 2000:7-13). The argument has been used by local knowledge promoters and local villagers since the 1980s, and has gradually resulted in the state's recognition of the legitimacy of local participation as an alternative form of management.

This chapter will examine the social negotiation of using nature conservation rituals as symbols. In the village, local leaders are exploring the customary rituals which may be related to nature conservation in order to utilise them to demonstrate the local community's efforts in nature conservation. In Ban Mae Luang, for instance, a 0.88 hectare sacred spirit forest was transformed as a showcase for a well-managed forest in the village. The forest was reorganised by village leaders from a customary taboo forest to an experimental community forest to demonstrate their unique forest management using local knowledge. With the state agency's approval, the spirit forest became a communal symbol of nature conservation and loyalty to the state forestry policy.

The first section examines the local concepts of the relationship between village and forest. It shows that these local concepts were originally based on their own logic which differs from modern environmentalism. The second section suggests that recent social changes caused transformations in the local relationship between the village and the forest and deterioration in spirit beliefs. The third section focuses on an example of the utilisation of religion in the nature conservation movement describing a case of tree ordination by an environmental NGO and environmental monks. The ritual has been newly invented in an effect to blend Buddhism and modern environmentalism in order to slow down the rapid development of cash crop cultivation and commercial logging. The Buddhist monks' attempt used local religious knowledge with modern conservation ideas to make natural conservation rituals. This succeeded in gaining recognition for the ritual from state agencies, international institutions, the Royal projects and the Thai public. The fourth section examines the state's adaptation and transformation of the

natural conservation rituals in Saeng Thong District. Through the state-led ritual of tree planting, the district office and state agencies mobilised the local villagers and symbolically involved them in nationalism and the state natural conservation policy. Finally the fifth section examines village leaders' adaptation of the nature conservation rituals in Ban Mae Luang. Responding to Thai society's acceptance of nature conservation rituals, villager leaders flexibly reorganised their local knowledge of the sacred spirit forest to symbolise the whole village's nature conservation consciousness in social negotiations between villagers and the state agency. By using these symbols of localised environmentalism, community villagers demonstrated the uniqueness of their nature conservation consciousness, their ability to conserve the forest and their loyalty to state policy and thereby strengthening the alliance between the outside powers and villagers.

Village and Forest

Several patches of forestlands around Ban Mae Luang village have been customarily not touched by exploitation. Kham (64), a grandmother of my host family, sometimes worried about my frequent research on the spirit forest, the largest forest land conserved because of spirit beliefs. She would ask me about spirits in the forest: 'Aren't you scared of the spirit forest? How about spirits? I am scared of them'. Ban Mae Luang villagers usually avoid going into the spirit forest. Except for festival days or certain events, the spirit forest is not a part of their daily activities. Bunmi, a middle-aged female villager, explained that 'no children play in the spirit forest. Adult villagers also keep away from the forest because they are afraid of passing through the dark forest'. Most villagers believed that this forest has village spirits that reside in it and they will curse anyone who cuts large trees in the forest, with incurable sickness and misfortune. Most villagers both young and old half believed in the spirits and that it would be terrible if hasty behaviour did insult the spirits and cause terrible misfortune, so it is

safer to keep away from them. A few villagers expressed their doubts about spirit beliefs such as one man who claimed, 'I do not believe in spirits because I am Buddhist'. Nevertheless, he did not dare vandalise the spirit forest. His opinion, however, is rare in the village. Tan (67) said, 'I cannot cut down a tree in the forest. Maybe we can cut it, and no problem, maybe nothing happens. But I just keep it because our ancestor kept it safe from cutting and it is waterhead forest we should keep'. Tan's reasons for keeping the forest can be attributed to both ancestral behaviour and environmental conservation. Thus these avoidances of cutting down trees in the spirit forest seem to come from not only nature conservation thought from outside the village, but also the religious beliefs and social demands of the local villagers.

There are several discussions about the relationship between forest and village in the Thai cognitive map in the existing literature. In the spatial order in village rituals, local villagers conceptualise the relationship between the village and the forest as being in a competing balance between the centralised civilisation power in the village and the fierce power of nature in the peripheral forest. Rhum (1994) illustrated the centrally oriented structure of the village polity in this spatial order. From the aspect of the binary social concepts of culture/nature and centre/periphery, he argued that northern Thai lowlanders basically regarded the village as a centre of civilisation with order and values superior to the peripheral forest with its disorder and wildness (Rhum 1994). As shown by Tambiah (1970) and Davis (1984), Rhum also interpreted the northern Thai spatial concept of internality and externality: the centrality of the Thai village is holistically conceptualised by the sacred powers mixing various religious elements like the Buddha, *thewada* (celestial beings) and guardian spirits; on the other hand, externality is conceptualised as malevolent spirits with the embedded characteristics of disorder and wilderness.

Ban Mae Luang village as well as being a centre of civilisation and social order

is also the geographical centre of the basin of the Mae Luang River. Both Buddhism and guardian spirits indicate the spatial concept of village centrality. Northern Thai Theravada Buddhist villages usually have one prime temple, called the head temple or *hua wat* which is the highest point of centrality within the village community (Phonphilai and Arunrat 2003). [1] Most of the collective activities such as annual Buddhist rituals, village meetings or voting for national elections are held in the village temple. The temple is also a centre of administration covering all households in a network of nine groups (*muat*), which can send one representative to meetings of the village committee and the temple committee or collaborate to raise funds for a village festival as one unit. The system functions as the centre of a communal web to combine the village members into one community. Similarly, village or house guardian spirits are also believed to protect the villagers at various levels including the whole village, hamlets, kinship groups or individuals. At village level, there is a village guardian spirit called *phi suea ban* or *chao pho*, which is a benevolent spirit who protects the village and villagers from misfortune, epidemic or enemy attack from outside the village. Villagers gather annually to worship at the village spirit shrine on certain days around the Thai New Year, at a day in the northern Thai fourth and ninth month and at the beginning and end of the Buddhist Lent. Villagers ask guardian spirits to protect the peace and prosperity of the village from evil spirits, bad luck or diseases from outside the village (Davis 1984; Stott 1991; Rhum 1994). A house similarly becomes a centre of the village kinship groups in village society. In the same matrilineal kinship group, members basically worship the same ancestral spirit called *phi pu nya*. *Pu nya* literally meaning grandparents, are regarded as the spirit of ancestors of the kin (*phi banphaburut*). However, this spirit does not directly address a specific ancestor of the

[1] Ban Mae Luang village has two temples. One temple, Wat Mae Luang, has a *sema* permit from the state, which allows it to have an ordination ceremony of monks in that temple. The other is Wat Mahoi, which is ranked at a lower level of temple as it does not have monks. Ban Mae Luang and Ban Mahoi were once different villages centring on their own temple. After the integration, Wat Mae Luang became a prime temple in the village, but Wat Mahoi has been also used for some festivals of the hamlet.

kin (Davis 1984:59-60; Walker 2006:198). It may be a unified spirit of uncertain numbers of kin ancestors or a familiar spirit belonging to the blood line. The spirit has come from the matrilineal line among the eldest females in a matrilocal worshiping group even though some controversy on male participation or local diversity has been discussed among scholars (Cohen and Wijeyewardene 1984; Rhum 1994). In the kinship group, only the most senior woman has the spirit on an altar in the bedroom of her house called *ban gao* which means 'core house' or 'stem house' in the northern Thai dialect. The cult members gather at the core house to offer a pig's head to the spirit on the day of the annual festivals such as Thai New Year, a day of the northern Thai ninth month and at the beginning and end of the Buddhist Lent.

The Buddha and the village guardian spirits and ancestral spirits help to maintain the moral centre of the communal order. The temple is a public institution designated to promulgate Buddhist moral codes. In addition, the site of the temple itself exerts a moral influence over the villagers. Any insult to the temple is strictly prohibited by Buddhist moral and local injunction. Immoral behaviour in the temple causes bad reincarnation, the transformation to an evil hungry ghost (*pet*), or sanctions from the temple guardian spirits. In the spirit beliefs as well, offending the guardian spirits, called *phit phi*, causes illness or bad luck to the perpetrators. For example, villagers believe that *phi pu nya* protects kin, but irreverence to the spirit through adultery, immorality or abandonment of worship induces the spirit to give up protecting kin members or to even punish kin members (Tambiah 1970:314-315; Davis 1984:280; Mani 2005:111-112). These beliefs are utilised by the villagers to support the morality and social order of the community. Bad illness, misfortune and hurt are sometimes interpreted as the result of being impious to the Buddha or the spirits, so those who have inauspicious events tend to go to the temple for merit making to seek forgiveness or perform a spirit belief to expel misfortune. In addition, it is also politically used to attack other village members to

discredit their morality by gossiping. Ban Mae Luang villagers gossip about the loss of sacred protection and the haunting of evil ghosts to blame those who are suspected of immorality, murder or hiding money without merit making.

The idea of religious protection is strong at the centre of village, but it gradually recedes with distance. While the village is the place of official order and sacred activities, the peripheral forest is a place with a fierce power of wildness and disorder. Davis (1984) noted that Thai people generally have negative overtones towards forests. The forest is usually called '*pa thuean*', but this Thai term is also utilised to express illegality or being out of order. Therefore, illegal whiskey or unregulated firearms are also called 'thing of the forest wilderness' (*khueang pa khrueang thuean*) (Davis 1984:81). In old northern Thai folk tales, called *tamnan*, the forest was also written as a place of wildness, disorder and the residence of the evil and cannibal ogre (Sommai and Dore 1992:242-256; Swearer, Sommai et al. 2004; Pathom 2005).[2] Old villagers have various magic spells and amulets to avoid danger in the forest. Tattoos and amulets, for example, are used to ward off evil spirits and bad luck. In addition, Ban Mahoi villagers still remember that villagers practised an offering to the mountain guardian spirit or *chao khao* before they went to travel into the forest. They asked the mountain guardian spirit to guard them from dangerous animals or evil spirits. Conversely, when villagers went hunting in the forest, they avoided giving offerings to the guardian spirit. They believed that hunters could not hunt good game if they gave offerings to the mountain spirit before hunting because the spirit would protect hunters by chasing dangerous animals away from them. In the forest, villagers, even now, make small offerings at resting places to ask the territorial spirit (*chao thi*) for protection in the forest. Thus the local beliefs in the forest seem to illustrate that the forest was generally conceptualised

[2] The most famous story of an ogre in the forest is of an ogre couple, *pu se* and *ya se* in Doi Kham mountain. Phatom noted various stories about the legendary visit of Buddha to northern Thailand. The couple of ogres tried to catch him to eat. But they saw the majesty of the Buddha and changed their mind to become disciples of the Buddha (Sommai and Dore 1992:242-246; Chalatchai 2002:66-68; Pathom 2005).

as a place of danger and wildness, so they had to protect their lives in the village by utilising rituals or magic. The order and civilisation in the village had been constantly threatened by the strong disorder and wildness of the forest. Villagers use religious techniques to allay the threats from the forest.

To repel any disturbance from forest wildness, the boundary between the forest and the village is symbolically demarcated by village rituals. Annual collective rituals segregate the village from a vast extension of forestland and control the harsh wild power of the forest by strengthening the religious protection inside village or by expelling evil spirits out of village. For example, Ban Mae Luang villagers annually practise a ritual called so*ng kho ban* behind the wall of the village temple on one day of the Thai new year (Figure 6.1).[3] *Song kho* means 'expelling adversity' (Davis 1984:102).[4] On 16 April 2008 in Ban Mae Luang village, the ritual was performed as usual by a male officiant who was an ex-monk called *nan*. At first, the officiant propitiated the celestial guardian spirits called the four direction guardians (*thao tang si*), the god of the sky, and the goddess of the earth.[5] Then, he invited villagers to symbolically transfer evil, impurity, illness or misfortune to bamboo baskets by washing their hair on the baskets with lustral *sompoi* water.[6] In the basket, there are sweets, dolls or some offerings to the spirits so that they are appeased and evil spirits are expelled. After this, the village monks recited Buddha sermons (Figure 6.2). While the monks were reciting, all the villagers held a long white cotton string connected with a Buddha statue and the monks to purify the area inside the village by channelling the Buddha's

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[3] In Ban Mae Luang, the ritual is held on the first day of the year or *wan pak pi*. I attended the ritual on April 16, 2008.

[4] Davis used the term of *song khau*. *Khau* is the northern Thai form of the Sanskrit word *graham*, which is adversity. In his explanation, *khau* denotes the celestial bodies which are responsible for human misfortune in Thai astrology (Davis 1984:102, 104).

[5] *Thao tang si* or four direction guardians' ritual is offerings to ask protection by the Brahmanism and Buddhism gods. Four directions lords (*thao tang si*) are regarded as follows; *dhitrastra* in the north, *virudhaka* in the south, *virupaksa* in the west, *kubera* in the north. In the rituals, the priest also gives offerings to *indra* (sky) and *mae thrani* (earth) (Davis 1984:76, 105-106).

[6] Lustral water is the water in which fruits of *sompoi* (*acacia concinna*) are soaked. The water is used as soap in south Asian countries.

sacred power. After the ritual, some villagers took the baskets to the boundary of Ban Mae Luang village by pickup trucks and motorcycles. The four of baskets are dropped on the roads at the edge of the village in the four directions of the village—which are beside the crematorium, the garbage dumping site or the gates of the village. Thus, villagers delineated the boundary between the village and the forest (Figure 6.3). Evil and bad luck was chased away to the periphery of the village.[7]

[7] These expelling rituals are multilayered being practised at the village, house and individual levels. Villagers also practised these rituals for personal reasons. Similarly to the village's case, the bamboo baskets or banana leaf baskets (*kuwak*) with evil or misfortune are also brought to the periphery of a house or a hamlet. The directions are calculated using the animal of the birth year.

Figure 6.1 ***Song Kho*** **Ritual**

Figure 6.2 Monk's Purification after ***Song Kho*** **Ritual**

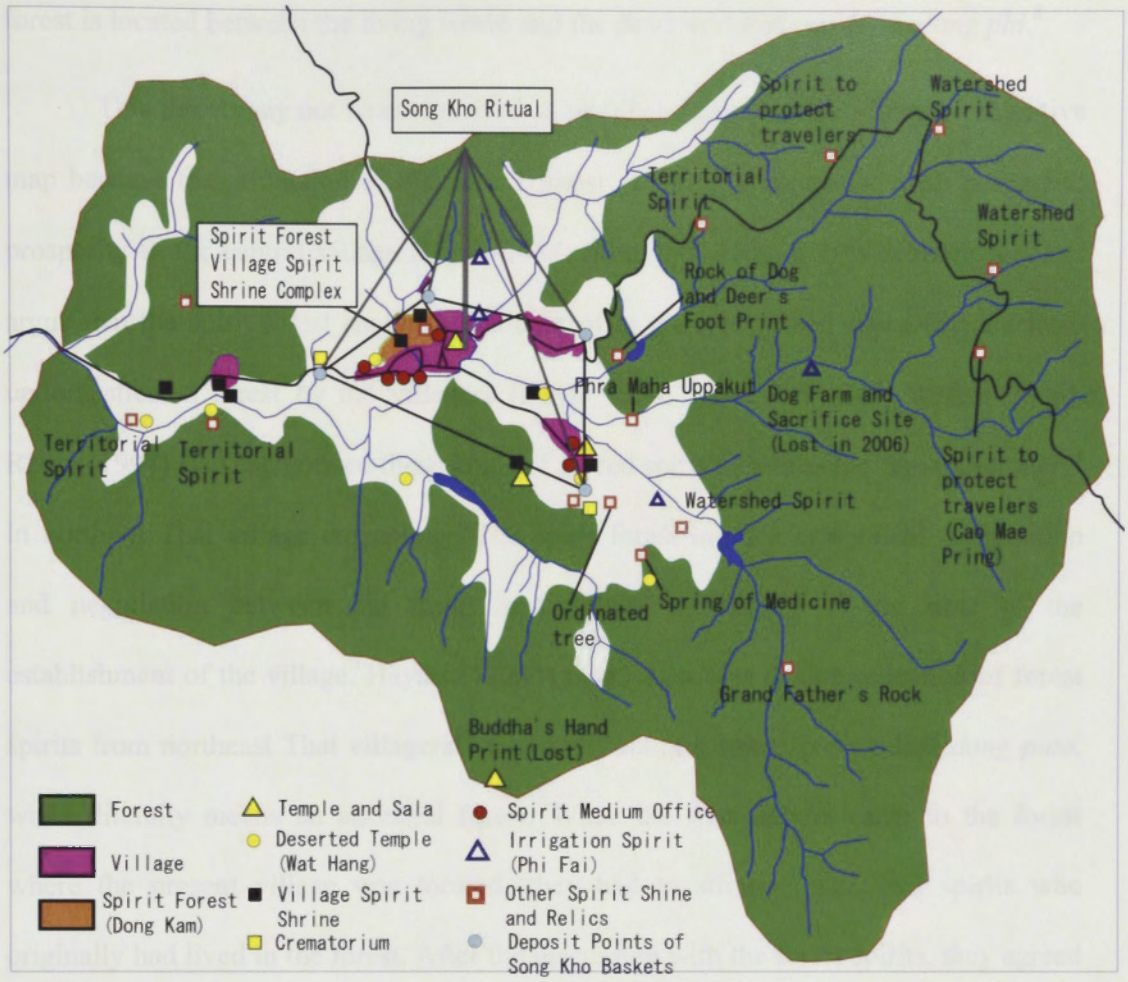

Figure 6.3 Location of Sacred Relics and Religious Centres

The sacred spirit forests become a controversial topic in this binary relationship of the village and the forest because the spirit forest has both characteristics of a religious centre and the forest location. The Ban Mae Luang sacred spirit forest is located in the west of the village and sustains lowland evergreen vegetation with rich biodiversity containing various gigantic trees, shrubs, birds, snakes and insects in just an 0.88 hectare area. It also includes religious facilities at a clearing at the east edge of the forest. There are eight shrines to village guardian spirits. Villagers call the sacred forest *dong kam*. The term *dong* means 'place' or 'forest'. The word *kam* does not have any fixed definitions among villagers, but some believe that *kam* was taken from *kammaphan* (reincarnation) or *kam* (karma). From this term, it could be thought that the

forest is located between the living world and the dead world of spirits, *mueang phi*.[8]

This forest may not be categorised as peripheral forest in the villagers' cognitive map because the protection of the sacred forest is strongly connected with peace and prosperity in the central village (Davis 1984; Stott 1991; Rhum 1994). Some scholars argue that the spirit forest should be thought of as a domesticated space divided from undomesticated forest by the villagers (Davis 1984; Iwata 1991:225; Walker 2006). Rhum (1994) also categorised these kinds of sacred spirit forests as the 'inner periphery' in northern Thai village cosmology. The spirit forest implies symbolical competition and negotiation between the forest and village community at the time of the establishment of the village. Hayashi (2003) notes a process of domestication of forest spirits from northeast Thai villagers' interviews, about a spirit forest called *dong puta*, which literally means an ancestral forest. When the first settlers came to the forest where the present village was located, they had to struggle with evil spirits who originally had lived in the forest. After the discussion with the forest spirits, they agreed on a compromise to divide their residences with each other. The villagers promised that they would build a spirit shrine with a small forest around it before clearing the forest to establish the village (Hayashi 2003:84,93). Through the ritual, forest spirits and their power of wildness are domesticated by the village to become guardian spirits for the village community.

This connection between the village and the spirit forest can also be seen in the system of rituals in the Ban Mae Luang spirit forest. Ban Mae Luang sacred forest has an institutionalised shrine system whose spirit shrines are thought to be associated with several hamlets. Figure 6.4 illustrates the design of the shrine complex of Ban Mae Luang's sacred forest. The forest has a pantheon of village guardian spirits, which imitates the old feudal system of Lan Na Kingdom. Most villages in Saeng Thong

[8] Davis (1984:257) briefly notes that *mueang phi* is one way of denoting 'the land of the dead'.

district have only one or two village guardian spirits but some villages have this kind of institutionalised village guardian spirits system.[9] The largest, Shrine 3, is that of *chao pho khwaen*, who is regarded as having paramount power over all the other village spirits.[10] According to Ongsakul et al. (2005:209), *khwaen* refers to the title of the sub-district head in the Lan Na administration system.[11] All other village spirits are regarded as vassals of *chao pho khwaen* and these are related to each hamlet in the village. Shrine 1 is the village spirit of Ban Mahoi. The Ban Mahoi also has an annex shrine outside the spirit forest.[12] Shrines 2, 3, 4 and 6 do not clearly represent their hamlets any more because the expansion of the Ban Mae Luang main hamlet has integrated these old hamlets. Shrines 7 and 8 still represent the northern hamlet and the southern hamlet which have also nearly combined together with the main hamlet of Ban Mae Luang now. Shrine 5 is for *chao pho kho mue lek*, who was a legendary warrior worshipped by people around Chiang Mai (Chalatchai 2002:43-54). He is an attendant of the *chao pho khwaen.* The village guardian spirits receive offerings by male priests of their hamlets as taxes in exchange for their protection of the hamlets and the village.[13] Thus, the symbolic association between spirits and hamlets makes the sacred forest a symbol of the unity and prosperity of the village. Therefore, insults against spirits in the spirit forest or the forest itself are interpreted as a challenge to the village community. People who insult the forest are expected to receive punishment, such as a pain or fever which does not heal or, at worst, death by the village spirits. For example, in the spring of 2008,

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[9] Davis (1984:264) noted that some northeastern villages have institutionalised village guardian spirits systems. Further studies about the institutionalised spirits system in Northern Thailand were done by Rhum (1994).

[10] Rhum (1994) also notes the paramount status of *cau pho khwaen* in the spirit pantheon at Landing, Northern Thailand. Davis noted the paramount status of the Great Lord *Tin Taa* over other lesser spirits (1984:268). Other villages in Saeng Thong district also have a similar high spirit called *chao hua nua* (literally, 'head of north prince' which means 'king') or *chao pho kamdaeng*.

[11] There are differences between *khawaeng* and *khawaen.* According to Ongsakul et al., *khawaeng* was larger than *khawaen* in the categories of local administration in Lan Na Kingdom in 1900 (Ongsakul, Millar et al. 2005:209). In the present administration system, *Khaweang* is similar to a district and *Khawaen* is a sub-district.

[12] Ban Mahoi annex shrine and shrine complex in the spirit forest are recognised as one united facility in the ritual. On festival days, offerings were gathered from all hamlets for the spirit forest. Then, the offerings are equally divided into nine portions. While officiants were offering eight portions to the eight shrines in the spirit forest, one officiant went out by motorcycle with the remaining one portion to put at the annex shrine of Ban Mahoi.

[13] A male priest is usually called *khon tang khao*, which literally means 'a person who offers rice'. There are nine male priests and one spirit medium who join in the spirit rituals in this forest.

the dead body of a villager was found hanging from a tree in the spirit forest. Ban Mae Luang villagers gossiped that the village spirits probably ate him because the person was a bad drinker bothering both villagers and village spirits.

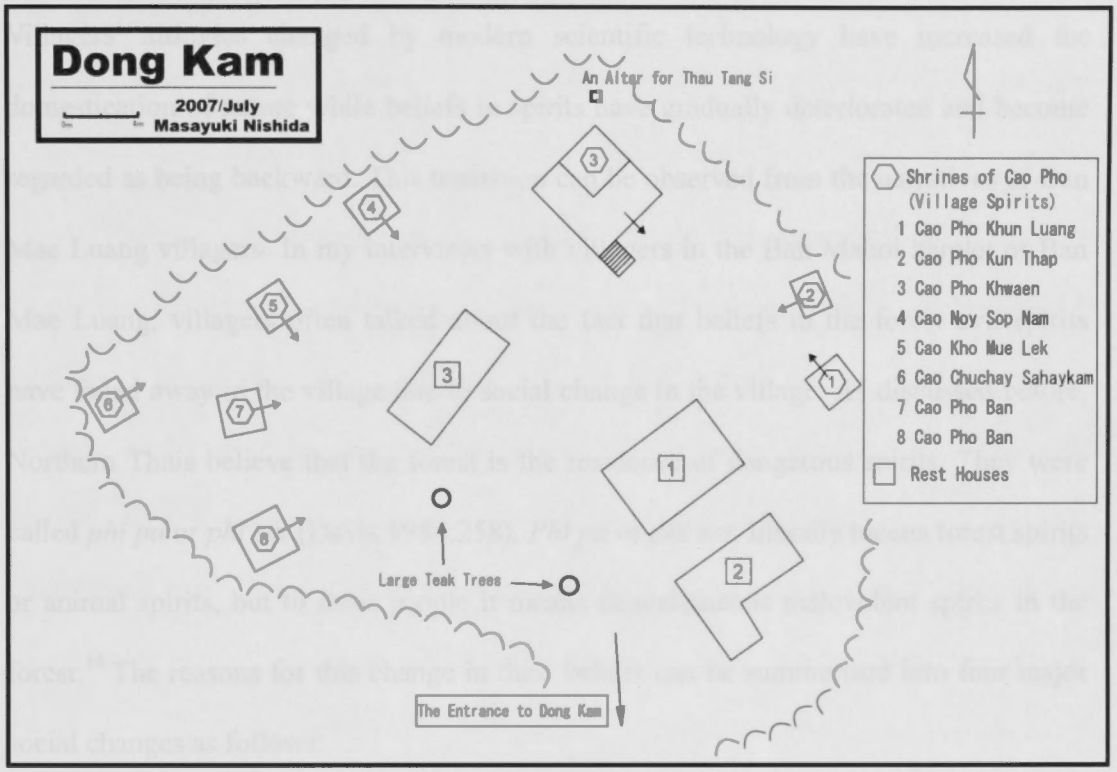

Figure 6.4 Location of Village Spirit Shrines in the Spirit Forest (*dong kam*)

Figure 6.5 Villagers Making Offerings to the Spirit Forest (left)

Figure 6.6 Conversation between Female Medium (*khon song*) and Male Priest (*khon tang khao*) (right)

Transformation of Spirit Beliefs

Recent deterioration in natural resources and increasing interaction with modern urban society are gradually transforming the relationship between the village and the forest. Villagers' attitudes changed by modern scientific technology have increased the domestication of nature while beliefs in spirits have gradually deteriorated and become regarded as being backward. This transition can be observed from the narratives of Ban Mae Luang villagers. In my interviews with villagers in the Ban Mahoi hamlet of Ban Mae Luang, villagers often talked about the fact that beliefs in the forest evil spirits have faded away in the village due to social change in the village. As discussed before, Northern Thais believe that the forest is the residence of dangerous spirits. They were called *phi pa* or *phi sat* (Davis 1984:258). *Phi pa* or *phi sat*, literally means forest spirits or animal spirits, but to most people it means miscellaneous malevolent spirits in the forest.[14] The reasons for this change in their beliefs can be summarised into four major social changes as follows:

Type I: *Modern Life*: modern technology such as cars, motorbikes, electric lights changed village life resulting in it becoming noisier and brighter. According to the villagers, the unfamiliar flashes and noises frightened the forest spirits which favour darkness and silence, and chased them away to the inner forest. In fact, electricity was introduced in the village in 1989.[15] Until that year, kerosene lamps had been mainly used for lighting in the village, but the weak light of the lamp still left the periphery of houses and village in darkness after sunset. This peripheral area surrounding the village became the residence of evil spirits. There are evil spirits called *phi dai hong* which were believed to be the dead who were killed accidentally or with intent, who became malevolent spirits (Tambiah 1970:315-316). In Ban Mahoi, for example, a *phi dai hong*

[14] Davis noted that some local evil forest spirits were called *phi pa* in Landing, Nan Province (Davis 1984:258).
[15] Interviews with villagers in Ban Mahoi on April 16, 2007.

in a small bush at the T-junction in the village was famous among the villagers for its ferocious nature. Some villagers believed that this evil spirit was the manifestation of the soul of a wife who was secretly killed and buried under that bush by her husband. The spirit sometimes talked to people passing by and cursed them with an incurable disease. Some poor victims were believed to have been killed by the spirit. The spirit at the T-junction was finally exorcised by a monk visiting the village.

The darkness of the forest and the bush near the village made the villagers feel that it was the residence of supernaturals or mysterious beings. From other different families, I heard about several minor *phi dai hong* ghost stories concerning three different bushes near the village. One story was about a man assassinated by someone and the other stories are about other men who were lynched by young men. Sometimes the mystery in the forest provides mysterious good luck to the villagers. Nii, a middle-aged female in the village, related, 'if you see a corpse candle in the forest, you should dig the ground under it. You may find great treasures because the soul of the owner cannot forget about any hidden treasure and remains by its location even after his death'. Nowadays, several outdoor lights have brightly lit the junction where the spirit appeared in the past, and the bushes and forests surrounding the village have been slashed.

Other villagers emphasised the influence of motorcycles on the forest spirits. The Ban Mae Luang vice village chief talked about a malevolent spirit at the headwater forest, which was broadly known as *phi kongkalong* among Ban Mae Luang villagers.[16] The appearance of this spirit was well known among villagers: long nose, black skin and long nails. The spirit usually sat on a rock near a spring and ate green frogs.[17] The spirit sometimes called to travellers passing by the headwater forest and treated them

[16] Lanna-Thai dictionary has the name of *phi pokkalong* as a savage forest spirit with long hair hiding its face (Udom 1994:471).

[17] *Phi kongkalong* was mentioned by a group of villagers at the village shop in Ban Mae Luang on June 18, 2007. I also did interviews with another village group in Ban Mahoi about this spirit on the same day. The interview with the vice village chief was held on February 10, 2008. In addition, one spirit medium interviewed on February 12, 2008 in Ban Mae Luang talked about the *phi kongkalong* as the headwater spirit of a river in the village.

maliciously. To exorcise the spirit, villagers made their dogs chase away the spirit or squirted water at it because the spirit did not like to get wet. However, some villagers said that the motorcycle changed all this. The vice village chief said, 'Since villagers started to use motorcycles to commute between their upland fields and houses, the spirit could not stop villagers rapidly passing by on their motorcycles, to trick them any more. The noise of the motorcycle also drowned out the spirit's calling voice'.

Type II: *Deforestation*: the population has increased in the village. Following the expansion of the village, the forest surrounding the village was cut for building houses or for selling. The frontier of the forestland was shifted back to the mountains. Therefore, some villagers believed that spirits living in the forest hardly came down to the village because they had moved into more dense forest far from the village. According to interviews with village elders, the number of households in Ban Mahoi hamlet in the 1940s and the 1950s was less than half of that in the village today. Almost twenty households were located on the north side of the hamlet called *muat* 9, the present centre of the hamlet. The southern part of the hamlet was then covered by an abundant forest full of monkeys and bears. In the 1970s, the southern part was cultivated as upland ricefields and new couples separated from the parents' houses started to live in temporary houses (*hang*) in the fields. Around the 1980s, villagers converted the upland ricefields in the southern part to a residential area now called *muat* 8. Their upland fields were moved farther inside the forest. In the period of the 1990-2000s, the southern part of Ban Mahoi hamlet expanded to another river basin. Thus, the hamlet continuously sprawled into the forest expanding its residential area and arable fields. Therefore, the spirits moved into the dark forest far from the development to seek new residences where they could survive.

Type III: *Economic Improvement*: following the economic development of the village, the standard of villagers' income and nutrition improved. Villagers also

achieved a sufficient surplus to give offerings to the spirits or the dead. Spirits are now believed to be satisfied with villagers' offerings and live with ease in the forest. According to the villagers, when the malicious spirit bothered the villagers, villagers usually gave offerings to alleviate the anger of the spirit at the location where the spirit medium or village priest suggested.[18] However, in the old days, Ban Mae Luang village and surrounding villages were too poor to offer food to the spirits, so it sometimes caused the spirit to be angry. The economically hard situations of the old days resulted in stories about evil spirits in the village. For example, a young man came to a Ban Mae Luang villager's house from outside the village and claimed that he had been possessed by an evil spirit or *phi ka*.[19] The *phi ka* is a well-known evil spirit in northern Thailand, which makes the possessed person mentally deranged, but northern Thai villagers believed that it also gave prosperity if treated well by a propitiating ritual called '*liang phi ka*' (Yos 2003:110).[20] Therefore, he demanded an offering to be made for him. However, the villagers finally found out that he had just pretended to be *phi ka* because he was hungry. He was expelled from the village, but the story shows the relationship between a belief in evil spirits and poverty. Anan (1984) noted that an accusation of *phi ka* was sometimes used by landowners to expel poor villagers from their land because of increasing social conflicts about land distribution issues in Thai rural villages. The poverty in the village probably contributed to the use of accusations of evil spirit possession in the village. Improvement in the economic situation in the village may gradually lead to a decrease in the belief of the occurrence of evil spirits in the village.

Type IV: *Ideological Change*: orthodox Buddhism and public education that the

[18] There are a number of methods to find the location of the cursing spirit in the village. Asking the spirit medium is the most popular in the village. A magical technique, whirling a rice ball (*wian khao*), was another popular way to find the spirit. The ritual performer swings the rice ball on a clay pot with string, and asks the location of the evil spirit of the familiar spirit called *phi mo nueng* in the rice ball.

[19] *The phi ka* is well known as an evil spirit but has various origins and forms. One *phi ka* is an ancestral spirit (*phi phu ya*) which is neglected or abandoned (Cohen and Wijeyewardene 1984). Another is a kind of floating spirit with a horse shape or *phi ma bong*. The other is an evil spirit travelling with an owl (Anan 1984). *Phi ka* comes from the ancestors in the family. In sum, *phi ka* may mean a general term for evil spirits possessing a victim.

[20] The households that have *phi ka* have success in trading. The female keeper of *phi ka* becomes beautiful and these features are passed to the daughter, the next keeper of the *phi ka* (Yos 2008:110).

central government is promulgating all over the country has gradually dominated local belief systems and made villagers not believe in spirits. The centrally institutionalised village temple, mass media through satellite TV and the education system of the village school generally taught villagers that the spirits were illusory or old traditions of the village. These organised social education processes also introduced a formal system of life without spirits. This can be seen in the change in funeral ceremonies. Some villagers explained the disappearance of forest spirits by the change in funeral ceremonies in the village. A few decades ago, most villagers just buried the dead in the forest without a formal funeral, or cremation because villagers were too poor to invite monks or to buy enough fuel for the cremation. The interment was carried out by a funeral specialist called a *sapparoe*. In the forest, the *sapparoe* would practise divination to decide the place to bury the body. This was done by throwing an egg. The dead spirit would tell him the right place by breaking the egg as a sign. Nowadays, most villagers belong to a funeral association in the village temple, which supports the minimum cost of the funeral ceremony in the village. The interment is not officially practised in the village any more.[21] Some villagers think that some dead probably became evil spirits because the poor funerals could not satisfy them. In addition, the ritual of Buddhism or Buddhist recitation also has the power to protect the villagers from evil spirits or misfortune (Tambiah 1970:199-222).[22] Ban Mae Luang villagers now practise proper Buddhist rituals for funerals. Therefore, the dead do not need to become evil spirits in the forest. Following the spread of national Buddhism and modern thought of life without spirits, the beliefs in spirits has faded away from village life and the minds of the villagers.

Following these changes, the forest once protected for the peace and prosperity of the village by local knowledge has lost importance. Spirit beliefs have become the

[21] The village still has some stories of burying a body to hide a murder case in relation to a *phi dai hong*, but ordinary interment is now uncommon.

[22] Buddhism also has some sacred chanting which protects oneself from evil. Tambiah (1970) noted about the term *paritta*, which is the term for Buddhist sacred words which are recited to seek protection.

symbol of backwardness. The local techniques of propitiating, expelling, domesticating the spirits or making merit in the sacred forest are being suppressed by the strong power of modernisation. Several deserted temples and surrounding forest have been protected by spirit beliefs in Ban Mae Luang (Figure 6.3). Ban Mae Luang villagers believed that a harsh spirit called *phi ka yak* protected the ruin of the old temple and its forest similarly to the spirit forest. Local villagers knew the locations of the deserted temples well because the site had many pieces of pottery and bricks scattered on the ground. However, farming now threatens the area around the deserted temples. Two of the sites have been already transformed into upland fields or residential areas. One spirit medium in the village stated that 'deserted temples are protected by *phi ka yak*. But people can cut trees with a chainsaw in a flash. There is no time for the spirit to stop them cutting'.[23] The local beliefs are gradually being marginalised in their role of protecting the decline of the forest. This deterioration of the forest spirit stories can be observed in the loss of connection between the forest and village prosperity.

In summary, stories about the disappearance of evil spirits from the village tended to be associated with the domestication of the peripheral forest by modernisation or development in the village. As seen in the beginning of this chapter, Ban Mae Luang villagers had been attempting to control the evil spirits or misfortune in the forest through religious rituals according to their local cognitive map. Recently, by replacing the reliance on spirit beliefs in dealing with nature from modern scientific techniques and thoughts including orthodox Buddhism, it seems that the villagers have succeeded in finding more effective tools to dominate the savage wildness of the forest and cultivate the deep forest for village prosperity. This has accelerated the change in the relationship between the village and the forest. Things symbolising modernisation and civilisation such as motorcycles, electric lights, cars, dense population, houses, logging,

[23] Interview with a spirit medium on February 9, 2008.

and Buddhism have tamed and civilised the wildness of the periphery.

The Origin of the Forest Conservation Ritual

The role of religion in mediating between the forest and Ban Mae Luang villagers' livelihoods is gradually being replaced by scientific knowledge and modern thought. This general conclusion leads to the following questions: if the spirit beliefs in the forest are weakened in the Ban Mae village Luang, why do the villagers still continue to mention the spirit forest in the relationship between forest conservation and spirit beliefs and practise spirit forest conservation? What makes the spirit forest special? To answer the questions, it is necessary to consider the trend of environmental politics and religion in Thailand. Since modern environmentalism initially came into northern Thailand during the 1980s, the marginalised religion was revived as a symbol of localism and coexistence between the villager and the forest. Natural conservation rituals, rituals for promoting environmental conservation or to demonstrate conservation consciousness to the public were newly invented and developed in a dialogical interaction between NGOs, villagers and the state agencies. The rituals emerged from the Buddhist monk's renovation movement using social work by involving local religions or changing their meanings to solve social problems.

A group of Buddhist monks, called environmental monks, took an important role in giving birth to nature conservation rituals and to promulgating the concept. An environmental monk is one who is interested in saving people and wildlife by combining the ecological order and the world order of Buddhism. Environmental monks emerged from the same doctorial line of a Buddhist group called development monks, involved in a social movement in the Thai monkhood or *sangha* around the 1970s. At that time, some monks declared themselves as development monks to involve themselves in social activities to resolve social problems such as poverty or lack of development which Thai rural areas had suffered (Darlington 2000). In the 1980s, their

interest shifted from development to environmental conservation following the rise of environmental problems in rural villages. The first involvement of a large group of monks in environmental issues in northern Thailand is thought to be the protest against a cable car construction in Mt Doi Suthep, Chiang Mai in 1985 (Darlington 2000). Environmental activists and *sangha* following Lan Na traditions and Buddhism in Chiang Mai openly protested against the cable car plan because they thought the sacredness of the mountain should be kept from secular development. Following the protest, some monks started to take an important role as environmental monks to protect the forest from encroachment by outside commercial interests or development projects in other areas (Swearer 1999:220).

Many scholars have recently focused on nature conservation rituals called 'tree ordination' which environmental monks introduced and which spread across northern Thailand (Darlington 1998; Tannenbaum 2000; Isager and Ivarsson 2002; Delcore 2004; Darlington 2007). The tree ordination ritual was invented in Nan Province in 1989 by Phra Manas Nathiphithak, an environmental monk, and NGOs with the enthusiastic support of the urban middle class (Darlington 1998:7). The ritual was intentionally associated with Thai Theravada Buddhism and environmentalism. The tree was symbolically ordained to prevent the tree from being cut by wrapping orange robes around it following a Buddhist ritual. Manas and the NGOs noticed that villages in Nan had been suffering from water shortages or forest degradation caused by commercialised agriculture and the state-led development projects. The tree ordination was introduced as a part of an educational program to emphasise the importance of the forest using Buddhist teachings. Manas along with environmental NGOs promoted the connection between nature conservation and religious morality to local villagers by using the tree ordination as a counter development movement.

After the tree ordinations in Nan, another environmental monk, Phra Phithak

Nanthakhun along with twenty monks, also carried out a larger scale tree ordination. This ritual in 1990 attracted a broader range of people including two hundred villagers, district officials and journalists (Darlington 2000). The ideas for this environmental ritual came from Phithak's experiences of travelling around Thailand in the 1980s, discussing environmental principles with several famous monks including Manas in Nan Province and Phra Buddhadasa Bhikkhu (1906–1993) in Wat Suwan Mok, a meditation centre in Southern Thailand (Darlington 2000). Phra Buddhadasa influenced many environmental monks. He criticised the state and private developers and sought to cease the greed and selfishness that led to the destruction of nature (Swearer, Sommai et al. 2004:10). This influenced the theoretical base of Phithak's environmental movement. Since the first tree ordination in 1990, he carried out several tree ordinations and educational programs in northern Thailand.

Phithak also reorganised Lan Na religious rituals into a more modern environmental context. In the *pha pa* ritual, which is one of the Northern Thai traditional rituals offering robes to monks originally by leaving the robes on a branch of a tree he recommended also including seedlings for afforestation as offerings to the monks in the rituals. In addition, he also adapted the *suep chada* ritual for nature conservation. The *suep chada* ritual is also originally one of the northern Thai rituals held to pray for a longer life for human beings, houses, villages or cities. He used it to draw people's attention to river pollution in 1993 (Darlington 2000).[24] Phitak utilised the concepts of 'good Buddha and fierce spirit' and through his rituals, the long village history of worshiping Buddha and spirits was symbolically connected to forest conservation. The ritual also symbolically reproduced the story that suffering villagers

[24] *Suep chada mae nam* was firstly invented by Phra Manas Nathiphithak in 1990. The ritual was held for the Mae Chai River in Phayao Province. Phithak Nanthakhun also attended this ritual as an advisor. Since 1993, Phithak has performed *Suep chada mae nam* for the Nan River (Banacit and Thanat 2006:57).

asked Buddha and spirits to recover order in this world.[25] Buddhist symbols were employed by environmental monks to stress the religious connection to conservation and were used to garner publicity and public sympathy (Darlington 1998:7; 2000; Banacit and Thanat 2006).

While the legitimacy of tree ordination was considered controversial in central *sangha* in Bangkok, the rituals met a favourable reception and sympathy from various levels of the Thai public and soon spread over all the Thai countryside. For NGOs, environmental Buddhism was reinterpreted in the context of deep ecological thought in modern environmentalism. Both Buddhism and deep ecology have this eco-centric and spiritual approach (Henning 1998; Swearer, Sommai et al. 2004). Following increasing numbers of supporters, the Thai state, the king, international institutions and companies also started to give the rituals official recognition and support as preferable nature conservation rituals. The state agencies sponsored large scale tree ordination rituals in northern Thailand. For example, the governor of Chiang Mai sponsored tree ordination along the road from Chiang Mai to Lamphun around the late 1990s (Darlington 2007:179). During the period of 1996-1997 the Northern Farmer's network organised to ordain fifty million trees in community forests in acknowledgement of the fiftieth year of the King's reign (Tannenbaum 2000). Companies also supported tree ordination as one of their corporate social responsibility activities. The Petroleum Association of Thailand (PTT), one of the largest Thai state-owned oil and gas companies rewarded Phra Manas Nathiphithak with a 'Green World' Award and Phra Phithak Nanthakhun with a model citizen award in 2000 (Darlington 2007:180). The media also broadly featured their environmental activities.

However, the boom in the tree ordination ritual started to have different purposes

[25] Buddhism teaches of a diminishing and a recovering of order in the world. This world is located in the last diminishing period of *gotama* Buddha and is waiting the reborn of *meitreya* Buddha as a coming saviour (Tambiah 1970:47).

to what was originally intended. As it became a popular activity of the Thai public, the state and companies, the tree ordination gradually lost its meaning as a protest against state forest policy or commercial agriculture, but rather gained a new meaning of demonstrating loyalty to state nature conservation. Darlington (2007:179) noted a complaint by Manas that 'the whole nation is going crazy for ordaining trees'. Despite Manas founding tree ordination as a criticism against deforestation and environmental education, the ritual was performed without consideration for the long-term care of the tree, in order to make an immediate and superficial political statement (Darlington 2007:179). Nature conservation rituals are being transformed from being an instrument of protest to an instrument of negotiation among stakeholders.

The State-sponsored Forest Conservation Ritual

In response to the increasing demand for nature conservation from the state, the king and urban citizens, the state agencies had to commit to nature conservation activities. For the state agencies, nature conservation rituals became a handy tool to demonstrate their good governance in nature conservation through newspaper, television, website, magazine or governmental reports. The syncretism of Buddhism and environmentalism succeeded in improving the reputation of the state's policy makers. A government officer in the local WMU recognised the important relationship between religion and nature conservation. He said that 'religion and nature conservation are related to each other. Even though I have never seen any tree spirits in my life, the tree ordination is a good psychological tool to persuade the villages to prevent them from cutting the tree.'[26] Every year, several sub-district or district councils in Saeng Thong hold a collective ritual of tree ordination as a part of a project to celebrate the king (Figure 6.7) (Saeng Thong District Office 2007a). Images of their efforts for natural conservation are distributed around Chiang Mai Province by the state agencies and mass media.

[26] Interview with an officer in the WMU on April 23, 2007.

Figure 6.7 Tree Ordination by Sub-district (Source: District Yearly Magazine, *Saeng Thong Samphat* 2007)

To examine how the state agencies practically and ideologically mobilise local communities for nature conservation rituals, this section will focus on one ritual held by two of the state agencies: Saeng Thong District Office and the WMU. On 2 December 2007 Saeng Thong district held a large ceremony of tree planting to celebrate the King's birthday in Pa Som temple, located on the top of a hill in Saeng Thong district. The district office and the WMU had created an official sacred forest for the king, Buddhism and the state, and demonstrated their responsibility for nature conservation to the public. The large collective ceremony included various events such as tree planting, the Buddha statue installation ceremony, check dam building and firebreak building. Through these rituals, the forest was symbolically made sacred.

Participants were brought from all the villages from all over the district to represent the district. Village leaders had a duty to mobilise about ten members and provided transportation from the village. On the morning of the ceremony, Ban Mae

Luang village council sent four pickup trucks with ten members including a village chief and vice chief. At the site of the ceremony, a large banner was erected on a gate with the words celebrating the king's birthday and the nature conservation activity of the day. At least six hundred villagers and school students wearing yellow shirts to show respect for the king, military men, Buddhist monks, government officers and NGOs assembled for the ceremony. Some companies and research institutions also had their tents in front of the temple gate to advertise new agro-technologies such as bio-fuel or fertiliser making machines to local villagers.

Figure 6.8 Distribution of Seedlings for Planting (left)

Figure 6.9 A Ceremony in Wat Pa Som Temple (right)

The nature conservation ceremony was symbolically constructed by Buddhism, the king and the state in the context of local community. Officers of the WMU brought 1,100 seedlings from their nursery and distributed them to participants climbing up the hill to attend the ceremony (Figure 6.8). When villagers and students arrived at the top, they planted seedlings at various spots one by one around the temple. In front of the temple, a large picture of the King surrounded by abundant flowers was set up on the

stage (Figure 6.9). Inside the temple, rows of monks sat on the carpet. After the planting, a group of military men formed a procession carrying a large metal statue of Buddha from the foot of the mountain. Accompanied to the lively sound of drums and the sprinkling of flower petals, the villagers invited the procession into the temple where the monks were waiting.

After that, the district chief made a speech to the audience. In the speech, he attempted to position their natural conservation activities in connection with two persons: the king and Khruba Siwichai (1878–1939), who was a famous and influential charismatic monk in northern Thailand in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The district chief stated that today's conservation activities including the tree planting, check dam building, and firebreak building were dedicated to the king. He emphasised that nature conservation activity followed the will of the king and that it was good behaviour to show responsibility and pass on fertile land and a headwater forest to the next generation. Through the image of the king, the district officer further emphasised state symbols. After his speech, participants sung a royal song for the king and a song for a 'Sufficiency economy' that the state government had distributed to the people. These songs signalled that the ceremony was dedicated to the king and the state. The time when Thai people could sing these songs was officially listed in the manual of important national songs which was distributed to the village chief by the district office, (Saeng Thong District Office 2007b). In the whole ceremony, the Saeng Thong district chief worked as an agent of the king and state.

Secondly, in the speech, tree planting was connected with Siwichai and his famous road construction to the Phrathat Doi Suthep temple in Chiang Mai. The image of Siwichai invoked both villagers' faith in Buddhism and their self-confidence as northern Thai locals. This charismatic monk was born in a peasant family in Ban Pang in the Li district in Lamphum. He is still respected by northern Thais because of his

public works and his charismatic miracles, as a source of merit, a *ton bun*. The *ton bun* has bodhisattva-like compassion and supernatural power to save the lay people according to northern Thai Buddhism's traditions (Keyes 1977, 1982; Tambiah 1984; Swearer 1999; Cohen 2001). He was committed to the communal construction and renovation of the Buddhist temples and religious monuments with lay people as a customary form of merit making in northern Thailand. One of his projects was the eleven kilometre road leading to Wat Phrathat Doi Suthep temple (Wat Prathat Doi Suthep Rajawara Wiharn 2005:51).[27] In Saeng Thong district, Siwichai renovated a pagoda, just a few kilometres south from the Pa Som temple, with local charismatic monks like Khruba Upala in 1929 (Saeng Thong District Office 2003:36-37, 77).[28] After his death in 1937, Khruba Som (1912-1993), one of the Saeng Thong-born disciples took over the religious or public construction in Saeng Thong area as the local *ton bun* (Wat Sala Miang 1999; Saeng Thong District Office 2003:59-63).[29] Som often visited Ban Mae Luang village to establish a forest pavilion and stupa in Ban Mahoi. Ban Mae Luang villagers knew him very well and still keep his amulets. The influence of Siwichai spread as a symbol of devotion to Buddhism in Saeng Thong and connected with local traditions and local networks of charismatic monks.

Furthermore, Siwichai's work and teachings are also a symbol of negotiation by northern Thai localism with the authorities of central state. Siwichai's work has double characteristics; it is a symbol of the pride in the autonomy of northern Thailand as well as a symbol of the northern Buddhist unity under the order of Thai national Buddhism. At the end of the nineteenth and the early twentieth century when Siwichai

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[27] He was also involved and is famous for the construction of the bridges on the Ping River, the renovation of Wat Suwan Dok, Wat Phrathat Doi Suthep and Wat Camadevi in the Northern Region.

[28] Khruba Upala was a founder of Ban Som O temple and the forest pavilion of Ban Mahoi, Ban Mae Luang. He was also one of the forest monks to practise meditation in the forest following the Lan Na tradition. He was famous for miracles and clairvoyance (Saeng Thong District Office 2003:77-78). According to the chief monk of the neighbouring village of Ban Mae Luang, he was born in Chiang Rai Province and then travelled around China and Burma and finally came to Saeng Thong District.

[29] Khruba Som was born in Mae Som O village in Saeng Thong District. He established Sala Miang temple, Mae Laei temple and a reliquary in the Ban Mae Luang temple, and renovated several temples in northern Saeng Thong villages. In addition, he built the elementary school of Ban Miang with Khruba Inta in 1963 (Wat Sala Miang 1999:5).

formed his zealous disciple and lay groups in northern Thai Buddhism, the king and the state government attempted to unify northern Thai Buddhist organisations, which had enjoyed autonomy under the order of the Supreme Patriarch by the *Sangha* Act of 1902 (Swearer 1999). From the end of the nineteenth century they faced several millennial uprisings, connecting the world saviour cult of *Ariya Mettaya* which is believed to be the fifth Buddha who appears to save people in the future, and the charismatic monks '*ton bun*' cult in northern and north-eastern Thailand (Keyes 1977; Chatthip 1984; Swearer 1999).[30] The popularity of Siwichai also led to suspicion by the Bangkok central government of a millennial and separatist uprising against central authority (Cohen 2001).[31] Siwichai was finally summoned by the central government, but he and the Supreme Patriarch from the central *sangha* reached a compromise. He was exonerated by the Supreme Patriarch in exchange for his submission to the order and superiority of national *sangha* in Bangkok (Swearer 1999:205). In this negotiation, the popularity of Siwichai was symbolically subsumed into the hierarchical structure of *sangha* by gaining an official recognition of the state as a saint of Thai Buddhism. However, he also, to some extent, succeeded via negotiation to keep an independent position for northern Thai Buddhism. This increased his reputation as a staunch supporter for northern Thai Buddhism among northern Thais. Thus, the district office is using the image of Siwichai with the double meanings of positive recognition of northern Thai traditions and subordination to the central Thai Buddhist system.

Comparing the state sponsored rituals with the early natural conservation rituals by NGOs or environmental monks, the rituals have differences at three points. Firstly,

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[30] During the period that Khruba Siwichai was alive, there were several millennial movements including the uprising of Man and Lek in northeastern Thailand in 1901-1902 (Keyes 1977; Swearer 1999), and the meritorious monks' revolt of Nong Mak Keaw Village in the northeast in 1924 (Chatthip 1984).

[31] Khruba Siwichai's separatist trend can be seen in the activities of his disciples, even though Siwichai found a compromise with central Buddhism. In 1935, several disciples of Siwichai had openly split from the national *sangha* system and declared Siwichai as a leader (Cohen 2001:230). In addition, Khruba Khao Pi (1889-1977), a disciple of Siwichai, continued a separatist movement against standardised central Thai Buddhism of northern Thai Buddhism (Cohen 2001:230232). He was disrobed by the official central Buddhism three times. He continues to teach northern Thai Buddhism wearing a white robe among Northern Thai and upland people, especially Karen people.

the district chief took over a religious source that was once used for the legitimacy of NGOs and environmental monks. In the former nature conservation rituals, monks, NGOs and villagers directly accessed Buddhism as an authority to criticise state policy. In the latter state-led rituals, the district officer justifies their activities by being the agent connecting the religious authority of Buddhism.

Secondly, the main purpose of the state-led ritual was to impress on people their legitimacy to govern the forest through demonstrating direct connection between the state, symbols of Buddhism, and the king. The district officers utilise tree planting to prove good environmental governance and encourage unity with nationalism and loyalty to the king. 'Do good deeds for the king' on the birthday of the king becomes the incentive for voluntary involvement in natural conservation by local villagers. At the same time, it helps the district officers enforce the mobilisation of local villagers in collective environmental conservation activities. Villagers were compulsorily involved in the activities because it shows their loyalty to the state and to the king.

Thirdly, the state agencies moderated their control of local villagers by using the local symbols of Lan Na traditional Buddhism. The district officer mixed local religious symbols, Khruba Siwichai and localism together to fit with the local interests and gain legitimacy for its people in Saeng Thong. By recalling aspects of past historical events particularly in the public activities of Siwichai, the district office attempted to integrate honourable pious Lan Na traditions into the state forest policy.

In sum, the tools of local NGOs and environmental monks have been gradually integrated into the state forest governing system. At first, the nature conservation rituals that environmental monks and NGOs had invented for environmental education using religious methods have nowadays been transformed into a tool to demonstrate the effort of the whole district, by the state agencies. Through the state natural conservation ceremony, the district office mobilised people and installed a new sacred forest for

promoting nature conservation. Local communities also started to accept tree ordinations to demonstrate their environmental activities and to improve their relationship with powerful authorities (Tannenbaum 2000; Darlington 2007). Isager and Ivarsson (2002:116) also documented minority people's use of tree ordination to claim their community forest surrounding their villages and pointed out that 'the tree ordination allied the villagers with the king and the national government as well as local and international nongovernmental organisations interested in environmental protection'. These new rituals were organised to be as large as possible and to dramatically demonstrate the connection with legitimated sources of religion, the state and the king. The rituals form a ceremony in which pictures are taken, food is distributed, message boards or banners are posted, and publications advertising forest conservation are distributed to the public. The state agencies support the nature conservation rituals as a handy method to encourage local villagers to take on the state conservation policy and villagers gradually lose their local voice on natural conservation in the rituals.

Transformation from Spirit Forest to Community Forest

The state agencies' increasing reputation and villagers' accumulating experience about the nature conservation rituals, have led local village leaders to utilise their local rituals as a tool to express their voices and draw the attention of the Thai public and state agencies. In this balance of the relationship among the stakeholders involved in the forest, local village leaders seek their unique symbol of local environmentalism to emphasise the legitimacy of their forest management. Yos (2008) mentioned that local knowledge is symbolically utilised for negotiation among stakeholders as a cultural resource. The concept of cultural resources emphasises the manipulation of customs and identity as part of 'an invention of tradition' to which Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) have drawn attention. They focused on 'the invention of tradition' in various national ceremonies or costumes. In this process of invention, the flexibility of custom easily

'grafted' new thoughts with old customs to make them more attractive as a good old 'tradition' for a public audience.

Thus in creating a symbol of village local nature conservation, a unique and attractive management full of the essence of localism was chosen by Ban Mae Luang village leaders. This focus on connections between village guardian spirit shrines in the forest and environmental issues is gradually spreading across Northern Thailand. For example, there are another village shrine in the Mae Hia sub-district in Chiang Mai, which is famous for its forest ritual for a couple of village guardian spirits called *pu se* and *ya se*. This spirit forest and its facilities have been well developed as part of a tourist destination for an important festival in Chiang Mai. Mae Hia sub-district also explains the ritual from an environmental aspect. In an article in the *Chiang Mai News* on 26 May 2010, Mae Hia city explained that the ritual has conserved the sacred forest and look after the waters of the Mae Hia River for the livelihoods of downstream villagers for hundreds of years. The article reported that 'the traditional ritual of the spirit forest has created approval for and a need for the protection of the forest in the mind of the local community. It has resulted in the conserving of this forest sustainably and protecting it from encroachment'. Inside and outside the village, the village shrines have started to gain a symbolic position with an environmental connotation among Northern Thai people.

In Ban Mae Luang, the village spirits and the spirit forest have become an ideal symbol of the village's uniqueness, conservation consciousness and eco-friendly lifestyle, and this has helped the village in its efforts to gain management of the forest. At the very least, they have been used as significant evidence to show the public that the villagers are not the main culprits involved in deforestation. However, for politically weak villages and ethnic communities, manipulation of the status of the spirit forest becomes necessary to show a clear connection with the state nature conservation project.

In 2002, Ban Mae Luang village decided to establish an experimental community forest project in their spirit forest following agreement about technological and financial supports between local leaders and local officers in the WMU. In the establishment of this, village leaders used the customs of the spirit forest in their experimental community forest project as a symbol of their communal forestry using local knowledge. However, as seen in the previous section, the customs of the spirit forest were little related to nature conservation in the modern sense. Therefore, they reinterpreted their spirit forest into modern environmentalism mixing local ideas and modern technology to suit both the needs of the state agencies and the villagers. Village leaders positively adapted two strategies to do this: imitation of the stereotype of a community forest and arrangement of villagers' behaviour to suit nature conservation.

At first, village leaders attempted to use the state-led community forest implemented as an experimental government project at another site of the village as a prototype. The state-led community forest project was established as a pilot project by the WMU in 1993. The project was run in cooperation with the neighbouring villages including Ban Mae Luang. The workers were hired by the unit as wage labourers. The site was located in the forest, twenty minutes away from the village by motorcycle. The project site was well set up with scientific facilities for forest management such as experimental forestry plots, a rest house, small ponds, a natural fertiliser fermentation site, and workers' houses. General information and the mission of the community forest were posted on a message board. The map on the board illustrated the systematic forest management by plotting the location of trees. The names of medicinal plants were researched (Figure 6.10). Eighty nine species of medicinal herbs and instructions for use were listed in the booklet which local officers distributed to visitors (Watershed Management Unit 2007b). Everything was in order and tidy similar to other well-organised projects in Thailand.

Figure 6.10 One of the Message Boards in Front of the State-led Community Forest

Village leaders applied this system of state-led community forest to their own spirit forest, and in 2002, the spirit forest in Ban Mae Luang was designated as a village-led experimental community forest project by the WMU.[32] The community forest imitated the appearance of the governmental project with the assistance of the WMU. The spirit forest was reformulated along modern lines. A new wooden gate to the forest was established. On a wall of the rest house, pictures of the national flag, the king and Buddha were posted. In addition, similar facilities to that of the state-led community forest were created inside the spirit forest: the gate, rest house, message boards, a list of herbs and natural fertiliser fermentation sites. At the same time, the WMU and NGOs came to introduce the method of making natural fertiliser and traditional herbal medicines to the village, but these technical transfer programs held little interest for the villagers. The fertiliser and herbal medicines did not fit the villagers' lifestyle. One villager said that 'if we are really sick, we do not use such herbs.

[32] Interview with a member of staff of the WMU on August 18, 2007.

We just go to buy medicine in Chiang Mai or see a doctor'.[33] The utilisation of forest products was also almost negligible. Even though regular seminars run by the sub-district administration on fermented fertiliser, distribution of documents and some facilities there continued, the designation of the community forest did not encourage villagers' utilisation of the spirit forest. In 2007, the rest house started to fall into disrepair and the messages on the message boards faded away.

Figure 6.11 The Rest House in the Village Community Forest

The combination of spirit forest and community forest, however, provided a tool for Ban Mae Luang village leaders to influence local villagers' behaviour in achieving a common consensus on nature conservation. The village leaders just changed the title of the spirit forest to community forest and added scientific and environmental meanings. They succeeded in reorganising the political power structures surrounding the spirit forest to unify the whole village for nature conservation purposes. Conversely, village leaders convinced the villagers to protect the forest for various mixed reasons including

[33] Interview with a villager on March 17, 2007.

local customs with obligations and respect to the spirits and village ancestors. In the interviews with Ban Mae Luang villagers, almost all villagers agreed to support protecting the forest. Reasons for protection of the forest fall into three categories. Firstly, most of the villagers mentioned that those who insulted the spirit forest would receive punishment from village spirits. The forest had already an important religious identity. Secondly, they also emphasised their duty as a community to keep this forest as a significant part of village culture. The importance of the forest as a cultural heritage from their ancestors had its motivation from the point of view of protection. Thirdly, there were also the nature conservation reasons. The villagers were afraid that destruction of the forest would cause water shortages, unstable river waters, and arrest by forest police. All these reasons show that various opinions like local spirit belief, community thinking, and modern forest conservation thoughts have come together in the villagers' view of the forest. Accepting both local spirit beliefs and scientific forest conservation methods enabled the integration of both local villagers who believed in spirit beliefs and ones who did not, in their forest management and this resulted in a more unified village.

The spirit forest is further used to prove the good management of Ban Mae Luang village by its leaders to outside monitors. For example, on 10 February 2008, a village meeting in Ban Mae Luang was held with the officers of the WMU. In the meeting, one of the village watershed conservation committee members reported that the results of mandatory monitoring showed that there were just two cases of logging in the community forest, but both of the cases had already been approved by the village council in advance. Then, the village chief questioned all present asking if they had seen anyone who had cut down trees from the spirit forest. Everyone stated that nobody had seen any other loggers in the forest. Management of the forest by the villagers and a united consensus on natural conservation were proven in front of the officials.

Village leaders have a practical approach to the management of the experimental community forest as shown by the overlapping of their management efforts with the worship activities of the spirit forest. On 22 March 2008, the village chief used a loud speaker to gather people in the sacred forest. It was the third day of the renovation of village shrines in the spirit forest. About fifty villagers came to the spirit forest from *muat* 5 and 6. All the nine *muat* participated in the four days: the first day for *muat* 1 and 2, the second day for *muat* 3, and 4, the third day for *muat* 5 and 6, and the fourth day for *muat* 7, 8 and 9. The WMU also allowed villagers to cut timbers for shrine renovation from their tree plantations in keeping with the local culture to conserve the forest. Old villagers dug the soil and levelled the ground by using a hoe. Young men climbed on poles and assembled the timber using hammers. The whole village was organised by village leaders to join together in renovating the village guardian shrines. The renovation of the village shrines was explained as a project for strengthening the community by village leaders, but it also had a notion of forest conservation. Some of the materials like the timbers were donated to the village by the WMU. The unit encourages community activities for nature conservation in the forest because they can then benefit from reporting their special collaboration with the local community to promote nature conservation[34]. Under the guise of environmental conservation, the rituals in the spirit forest are also supported by the local powerholder, the WMU.

In conclusion, village leaders succeeded in arranging the needs of all villagers and outside agencies by syncretising nature conservation with their faith. The spirit forest became an ideal symbol for village leaders to use to fit in with the modern environmentalism pushed by the state agencies. Even though customary rituals, annual gatherings and the tree cutting taboo based on spirit beliefs were gradually disappearing

[34] A report on the spirit rituals was used in a proposal for a community forest plan in Ban Mae Luang village. The author took some photos of some of the pages of this report at a village chief's house in preliminary research in 2006. But the report was lost after a flood in the village at the end of the same year.

from the village in recent years, village leaders revived the old beliefs by associating them with modern environmentalism. Local leaders reinterpreted the meanings of the sacred forest to fit with forest conservation policies without any conflict. On the other hand, the village leaders also succeeded in establishing an alliance with state agencies by providing successful cases of participatory forest management using local cooperation and knowledge.

Conclusion

Nature conservation rituals became a negotiation tool to demonstrate the performer's responsibility and ability towards nature conservation and to seek participants' agreement on the legitimacy of the performers' consciousness on nature conservation. Through the rituals, the state agencies, local village leaders, NGOs and local villagers socially negotiate their position in forest management.

The symbolism of the nature conservation rituals also played a flexible role in the social negotiations depending on the social situations and the performers. At first, the nature conservation NGOs used the ritual as a symbol of resistance against commercial crop cultivation and state forest policy. The ritual became the method used by critics against the dominating trend of development. Then, the meaning was transformed through its adaptation by state agencies, who started to involve the ritual in their policies. Furthermore, responding to the increasing reputation and acceptance of nature conservation rituals by the state and the public, Ban Mae Luang village leaders nowadays have reorganised their local religious rituals in the spirit forest as symbols for the demonstration of the villagers' efforts and local villagers' behaviour towards nature conservation. Through the ritual, they have sought legitimacy for managing the forest and thus avoiding the bad labelling of deforestation. The recognition of their natural conservation ritual by the WMU office has strengthened the relationship between the state agencies and villagers, and because of the confirmation of the local knowledge as

being eco-friendly, the state agencies can delegate the forest management to the village leaders.

The village leaders' arrangement integrated the needs of the villagers and outside agencies by skillful manipulation of the meanings of the sacred forest. The sacred forest became a showcase symbolising a well-protected conservation forest by syncretising both local religious beliefs and modern environmentalism. Hayashi (2003) described a tale of a village spirit told to an old villager almost fifty years ago in Northeast Thailand. The old villagers told him that the village spirits were negotiators among villagers, outsiders and forest spirits. The story was about the first settlement of his village:

> The first settlers inevitably encountered spirits [...]. The settlers had to obtain permission from these [forest] spirits to clear the land and needed the assistance of a spirit to communicate with the forest's inhabitants. This intermediary was the guardian spirit (*phi puta*) who provided divine protection to the world of men and governed the world of the forest and its inhabitants. (Hayashi 2003:112).

In the past, a village guardian spirit became a negotiator with outsiders such as forest spirits or other ethnic groups to protect the peaceful life in the village. In the present, village leaders utilise the village spirits as a symbolical negotiator among various stakeholders by bridging different technical terms, ideas, images and interests in the social negotiation of natural conservation. In this alliance of the state and village leaders, village spirits' miraculous power is not a fantasy any more. Offenders to their forest will actually be punished by the WMU or forest police following official laws. Using belief in village spirits has actually confirmed the alliance with the state agencies through this hybrid religion of local knowledge and modern environmentalism. The village spirits in Ban Mae Luang have been revived as a symbol of village unity and

natural conservation by regaining energy from modern environmentalism.

Chapter 7 Water Dispute with an Upstream Hmong Village

Previous chapters have discussed the negotiations between state agencies and Ban Mae Luang villagers on forest conservation. On the one hand, state agencies are attempting to territorialise the forest, and influence the villagers' behaviours and their consciousness towards state forest policy. On the other hand, village leaders are struggling to secure their livelihood by reorganising their livelihoods or belief systems in a moderate alliance with state agencies. Chapter 6 illustrated that the public image of an 'appropriate community' for nature conservation is important for village leaders to get legitimacy to secure their rights for forest management. Village leaders reorganise their local beliefs and rituals to fit modern environmentalism.

This chapter focuses on another aspect of the strategic behaviour of the village leaders—manipulating environmental images in a water dispute with a Hmong village, a neighbouring upland community, to secure their legitimacy to manage the forest. This is a story of a small water dispute that occurred between Ban Mae Luang lowland Thai village and Ban Doi Yai Hmong village in the headwater forest which Ban Mae Luang village was managing with the WMU. On the 23 and 24 March in 2008, Ban Mae Luang village leaders went to see Ban Doi Yai Hmong villagers who lived upstream of the Mae Luang River and accused them of stealing and polluting water. The dispute between the two villages had not been settled at the time of writing. This chapter will analyse this dispute as another example in understanding local Thai leaders' strategies in achieving legitimacy for their forest management. In this dispute, village leaders connected the water issues with forest management issues or negative dominant discourses of Hmong causing forest deterioration through their illegal logging or encroachment due to past local history. Thus, Ban Mae Luang village can demonstrate

their ability to protect natural resources in the forest from Hmong villagers' exploitation. The water dispute itself functions as another tool to justify Ban Mae Luang's control over natural resources in the forest.

The first section examines the reasons for the dispute from the point of view of Thai lowlander's claims. It shows the suspicion and negative feelings towards the Hmong in the background to the disputes. Lowland Thai villagers tend to inflame the water disputes with the upstream Hmong by using the dominant environmental discourse without scientific evidence about the actual damage to their lowland agriculture. The second section examines the relationship between the two villages which has led to the negative environmental images and discourse about the Hmong as 'forest destroyers' (Tapp 1986:7; Tomforde 2006:80; Forsyth and Walker 2008). Thai village leaders justify their image of community to protect natural resources by utilising the Hmong as scapegoats. The third section focuses on the different views between Ban Mae Luang and Ban Doi Yai by comparing the reports written by some researchers on the Ban Doi Yai side and my observation of the investigation of the Ban Mae Luang team. Through the investigations, the Ban Mae Luang leaders looked for evidence proving illegality to justify their village's headwater forest management, while Ban Doi Yai had a different view on the water dispute. Finally, the last section discusses the flexible alliance among Ban Mae Luang village and the state agency against the Hmong village. Ban Mae Luang leaders are aware of the political tensions between the Hmong village and the state agencies. Thus village leaders drew the best compromised benefit from the dispute in their managed watershed by utilising the discourse or images in a local eco-political context.

The Reasons for the Water Dispute

In the dry season of 2008, Ban Mae Luang village faced a water conflict with Ban Doi Yai village. Ban Doi Yai is a Hmong village with 400 members, which is located close

to the intersection of three different catchments including the upstream of the Mae Luang River (Neef, Bollen et al. 2004:2). The conflict had started in the middle of the rainy-season of the previous year. On 16 August 2007, some villagers in Ban Mae Luang reported to the village chief that water with a bad smell like water buffalo's dung had flowed down from upstream. Responding to the report of the water pollution, the village council thought that it may have been caused by water buffalos and cattle which Ban Mae Luang herders pastured in the forest. The council asked several cattle herders to take their water buffalos and cattle in the upstream of the river back to the village.[1] When they came back to the village from upstream, contrary to expectation, the cattle herders reported that they could not find any water buffalos or cattle grazing in the upstream but there was a small cement irrigation dam and long plastic pipelines diverting the water to the Hmong village. They suspected that Hmong villagers stole and polluted the water at the upstream of the river.[2]

The gossip that '*maeo* (Hmong) were stealing and polluting water with dung in our forest watershed' circulated angrily among Ban Mae Luang villagers through chatting at village shops and informal gatherings after dinner in the village. For Ban Mae Luang villagers, the water shortage was one of several serious topics in that season because one of their large irrigation dams had collapsed as a result of unusual rainfall the preceding year. On March 23 in 2008 the village chief finally gathered members of the village watershed management committee and they decided to investigate Ban Doi Yai, the upstream Hmong village, located in another catchment area of Mae Sompoi catchment and suspected of the stealing of water and water pollution (Figure 7.1). The Ban Mae Luang village chief took on the investigation of Ban Doi Yai village.

[1] On the mountain, water buffalos and cattle usually are rested at swamps in the forest. They sometimes cause trouble for the villagers by making the water muddy, damaging ricefields and dropping leeches or dung in the river.

[2] Cattle herders could not find the source of the smell. The connection between water stealing and polluted water was unknown at the beginning of the dispute.

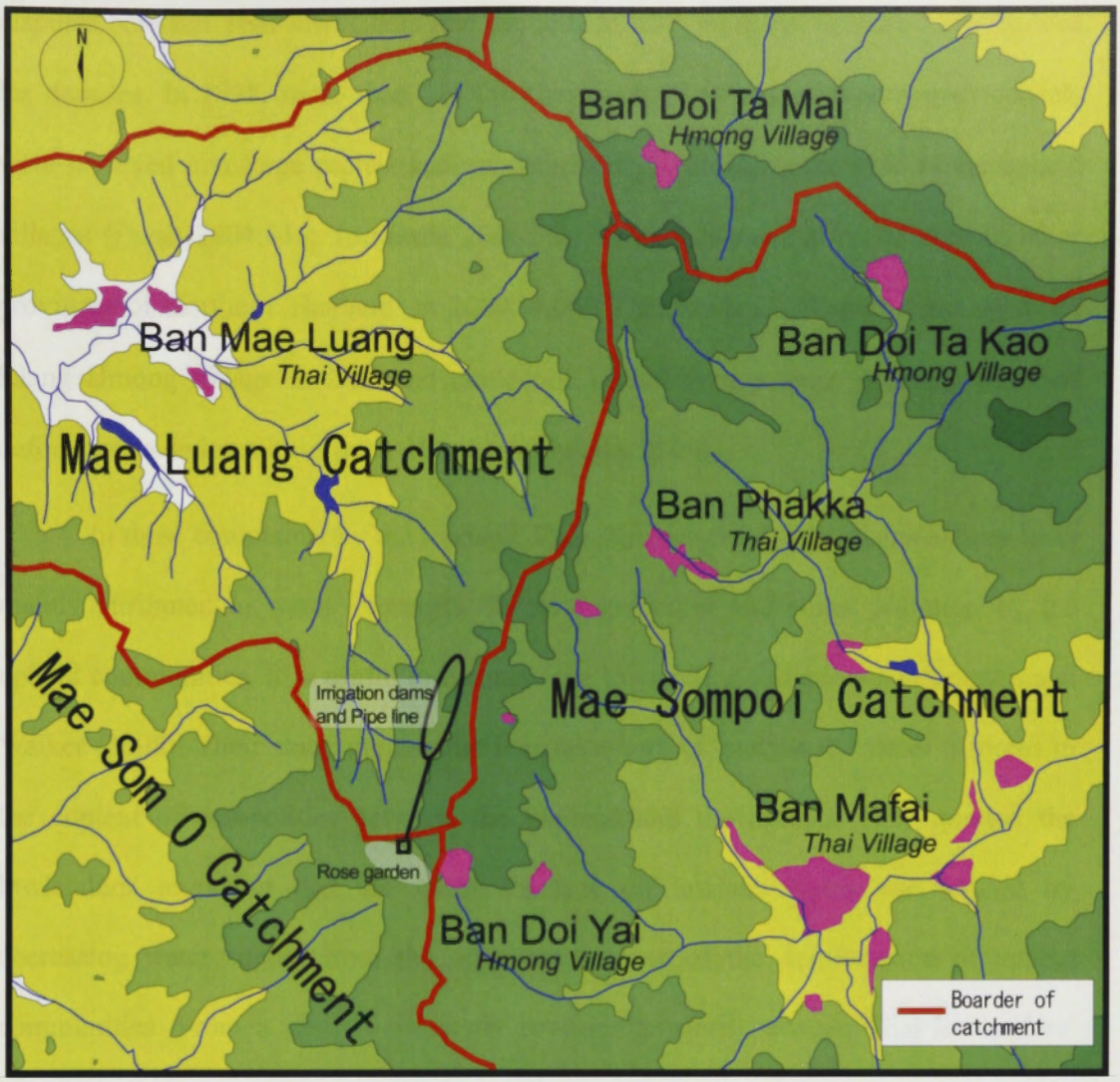

Figure 7.1 Map of the Water Catchment Areas and Villages

In northern Thailand, a lot of natural resource disputes between the Thai lowlanders and upland communities have been reported since the 1970s (Tapp 1986:30). In these disputes, the Thai lowlanders have accused the upland people of causing shortages of agricultural water downstream because they thought that the upland communities' deforestation and upland agriculture had decreased the water supply from the headwaters. Water conflicts in Chom Thong, Chiang Mai Province have been well known in Northern Thailand since the mid-1980s. Lowland famers accused the upland communities including those of the Hmong and Karen in Mae Soi and Mae Tia catchment in Chom Thong of water shortages and pollution (Ratner 2000:6). The

disputes between Thai lowlanders and the upland hill communities were left unsolved for decades. In 1998, more than 10,000 Thai lowlanders and environmental activists were involved in a large protest against deforestation, blocking the road to the upland villages (Prasit 2004:336; Tomforde 2006:76). Similar disputes also occurred in other provinces of Northern Thailand. In 2000, 4,000 Thai lowland villagers went up to Pa Klang Hmong village in Nan and cut down 30,000 lychee trees, accusing them of deforestation and resulting water shortages (Suradej 2000).

In these complaints by the lowland Thais, the reasons for the disputes have been mainly attributed to water shortages, forest degradation and water pollution by the upland communities. It is useful to examine the lowlanders' complaints in Forsyth and Walker (2008). Their study argues that it is necessary to analyse the water disputes in the context of eco-politics between the lowland and the upland. They queried the lowlanders' argument that the water shortage on lowland farms was caused by decreasing water supply from the upstream because of the deforestation of upland communities. From a case of the water resource tensions between Thai lowlanders' villages and the upstream Karen villages in the Mae Uam catchment of Mae Chaem District in 1998, they argued that the water shortage in the downstream was mainly caused by increasing water demand from lowlanders following development of dry-season cultivation in the lowland. Dry-season crops, mainly soy beans were introduced into the downstream Thai villages in 1984 by the Mae Chaem Watershed Development Project, which was funded by the United states Agency for International Development (USAID) and implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture (Forsyth and Walker 2008:123) According to the data on river water flow and its yearly fluctuation, they found that the growing demand for dry-season cultivation in the lowland villages exceeded the water supply of the downstream in a year with lower rainfall.

If so, where did the connection between the upland agriculture and the water

shortage come from? Forsyth and Walker (2008:134) emphasise the social and political aspects of an 'environmental narrative' which provides a simplified cause and effect relationship of water shortage and deforestation by upland communities. Various environmental discourses in literature, public education, popular discussions on TV programs, speeches, NGO publications and governmental notices politically or socially selected this stereotypical cause and effect explanation on the issue. In the complex eco-politics between Thai lowlanders and upland communities, some specific and environmental narratives about water shortages and upland communities dominate the Thai public's mindsets effectively and illegitimatise the life of upland communities in the forest (Forsyth and Walker 2008:134). They argue that even if they do not have assured scientific evidence, the environmental narrative is created based on 'the shared beliefs in environmental crisis'.

In the case of the dispute between Ban Mae Luang and Ban Doi Yai, three points of similarity with Mae Uam's case can be seen in the villagers' complaints. First, upland communities are accused of reducing water supply for dry-season agriculture or causing water pollution. The Thai lowlanders emphasise damage to their agricultural production and health risks but have little scientific evidence for this. Secondly, the disputes were influenced by negative prejudice about upland communities' forest degradation. Thai lowland villagers pay more attention to the dominant environmental discourse on upland communities rather than scientific causality on how upland agriculture of upland communities has affected the lowland agriculture of Thai villages. Thirdly, Thai lowlanders think they have the legitimacy to control forest resources due to their ability to manage the forest. Lowland villagers claim exclusive control over the watershed forest from Hmong on the base that Thai lowlanders manage the forest through planting or fire fighting in their participatory forest management.

In sum, water disputes with upland communities easily occurred due to the

dominant discourse based on the unreliable causal relationship between the water shortage of Thai lowlander areas and the agriculture of upland communities. Furthermore, the negative ethnic image of upland communities contributes to more violent disputes. Finally, it was claimed that upland communities should give up natural resources and move out from the forest managed by the lowlanders. Considering these characteristics of the complaints of the lowland Thai village, Thai lowlanders utilise the dispute itself to contribute to justify the good forest management of Thai lowlanders. They can use Hmong villagers as a scapegoat to show their loyalty to modern environmentalism. Protesting against the Hmong who have the image of 'forest destroyer' becomes a clear message to demonstrate their reliable ability in managing the forest, to the state and public. Water disputes in the forest need to be examined from an eco-political aspect as one of the strategies of Thai lowland leaders to secure control of the forest watershed.

Hmong as Forest Destroyers

The Hmong, a group of upland communities who moved into Thailand's highland from Southern China around the end of the nineteenth century, have an image as a 'forest destroyer' persisting in the relationship between Ban Mae Luang village, governmental officials and Thai society. This image has clearly been a great disadvantage to the Hmong in gaining legitimacy for their use of natural resources in the forest (Tapp 1986:7; Tomforde 2006:80; Forsyth and Walker 2008:134). Furthermore, Thai lowlanders sometimes use the Hmong's negative images on forest conservation as a scapegoat to demonstrate their ability in forest management in the disputes.

Discrete ethnic images of Thai lowlanders and Hmong are obvious in village life. Strong feelings regarding Hmong as 'other' can be found in Thai lowlanders' speech. Although the Hmong village is located close to Ban Mae Luang and the Hmong's upland fields on the top of the mountain can easily be seen by Ban Mae Luang villagers,

communication between the two villages is rare in normal situations. Ban Mae Luang villagers usually seem to overlook that Hmong people use the natural resources as long as they do not damage their livelihood. Both villages overlap livelihood areas in the forest through cattle or water buffalo pasturing, hunting, or herb gathering. In the forest watershed, a network of mountain passes are used for transportation by both Thai and Hmong villagers. Hmong villagers sometimes ride on a motorbike and go down to irrigation dams in Ban Mae Luang for fishing without conflict. A few sociable young men from Ban Mae Luang village go to see friends in the Hmong village. Moi (31), a young leader born in Ban Mae Luang, said that he used to go to see a Hmong girlfriend before his marriage with a seven-year younger Thai girlfriend in the main hamlet of Ban Mae Luang village. He said that his girlfriend in the Hmong village had good education and could speak Thai, the Hmong language and English. Probably, this case is not typical of Ban Mae Luang and Hmong villagers. According to the Ban Mae Luang village chief, Ban Mae Luang has only one case of inter-ethnic marriage with a Hmong village. Thai lowlanders have little objection against intermarriage with Hmong, but the Hmong village seems to have some objections against intermarriage with other ethnic groups. The social distance between the downstream Thai village and upland Hmong village in cultural appearance, history, and residential location is quite large.

When the dispute occurred, the ethnic images of the Hmong were negatively amplified by the public environmental discourse on upland communities. One of the main reasons why there are negative public images of the upland communities among The Thai public can be attributed to the political history of Thai border issues in the process of state formation. Pinkaew (2002:46) refers to the Thai state political-geographic view on upland communities as 'the politicisation of space'. She explained that the border and elevation are reorganised as symbolically significant markers in creating the commonality of the state. Also, the cultural dissimilarity of the upland

communities in the marginal areas was also utilised as politically and culturally significant symbols for Thai lowlanders in separating the upland communities, 'them' from the Thai people, 'us', living in the lowlands (Pinkaew 2002:43-44). The state has politically controlled and blocked upland communities on the geographical periphery into politically inferior positions within the state through its state policy and its public negative images of upland communities' problems such as insurgency, opium and forest degradation (Pinkaew 2002:47). This created public suspicion of the Hmong and unequal political power in Thai society. Upland communities are still being discriminated against by Thai lowlanders, and have unequal access to public services (Tomforde 2006:63) and natural resources (Li 1996; Vandergeest 2003).

Thai lowlanders, a majority group in Thai society, have a dominant power to create this image of 'forest destroyers'. One day I went to see a Buddhist relic, a footprint of Buddha on a stone at Wat Pa Daeng Temple in Saeng Thong District and I met two young monks on pilgrimage around northern Thailand. At a temple on the top of a small hill, one of the monks explained to me the differences in the attitudes to the forest between Thai and upland communities.

> Thai people have spirit beliefs as well as Buddhism. For example, as one of their beliefs, Thais believe that *thewada* (celestial spirits) reside in trees. The spirit is called *rukkha thewada*. Thais worship trees to thank *rukkha thewada* for his blessing. The tree is very important for Thais. If there were no forest, the water of the river would dry up. However, hill tribes cut the trees of the forest. In Thailand, there are a lot of hill tribes like Hmong, Karen, and Lisu. They cut trees in the mountain to practise slash and burning cultivation. By contrast, Thais cultivate ricefields and upland fields

by worshiping trees.[3]

His view clearly shows the contrasting environmental images of Thai lowlanders and upland communities: the eco-friendly image of Thai lowlanders compared to a destructive image of upland communities. These images are a common view among Saeng Thong district officers as seen in the textbook published by the district office of educational programs for all village chiefs in the district. Saeng Thong district says there are considerable numbers of ethnic communities located in the upland forest cutting trees for selling, encroaching or setting fire for cultivation, which are the main causes of forest degradation. The forest decreased by 2.3 per cent of the total forest area from 2004 to 2005 in Saeng Thong District (Saeng Thong District 2008).

The negative environmental discourse on Hmong people is created by 'synergies' between the dominant narrative of the state forest policy and the ambition of Thai lowland villagers to create a scapegoat to prove their ability in forest conservation (Forsyth and Walker 2008:233). The state policy creates several negative dominant narratives about Hmong and forest conservation, and circulates them through publications or speech. The discourse is further spread by the Thai public. Local Thai lowlanders reinterpreted their communal memories or the relationship with Hmong in village local history to create simplified narratives reflecting the dominant environmental discourse in the context of local eco-politics. In Ban Mae Luang village, for instance, the memories of illegal logging or encroaching on the Hmong are strongly attached to the issue of water shortage. The Ban Mae Luang village chief and the WMU officers remembered that several disputes about illegal logging and encroachment occurred in village history.[4] Many other villagers also remember Hmong illegal logging and regard it as a main cause of water shortage in the village in the past and present. Gon (52), one of the farmers' leaders born in Ban Mae Luang, argues that the upland

[3] Interview at Wat Pa Daeng Temple in Mueang Saeng Thong on May 1, 2007.
[4] Interview at the WMU on April 23, 2007.

Hmong are a main cause of water shortage in Ban Mae Luang village:

> When I was a child, the forest was dense and dark. Since Hmong came to destroy the forest, the forest had not been so dense and dark anymore. Hmong made upland fields in the forest. We started to suffer from lack of water. However, we succeeded in chasing Hmong away from the headwater forest a decade ago and recovered the forest. Since then, water has never dried up. [5]

He believes that forest degradation by upland Hmong has caused periodical shortages of river water in the village. His speech is consistent with the state agencies' statement and the Thai public's concerns about the relationship between water and forest degradation. According to a WMU officer, there were several Hmong satellite villages in the territory of Ban Mae Luang headwater forest in the old days.[6] He said that Hmong people committed illegal logging in the 1970s to earn money for the war in Vietnam and Laos.[7] Around 1978–9, the WMU started to convert Hmong land to a tree planting area. During this period, Hmong villagers gradually retreated from the headwater forest surrounding Ban Mae Luang village to Ban Doi Ta or Ban Doi Yai, but they still kept some upland fields in Ban Mae Luang's watershed, commuting everyday via the mountain pass. The WMU and surrounding Thai lowlander villages including Ban Mae Luang continued to talk with the Hmong about ceasing agriculture in the watershed area. Finally, they totally gave up their upland fields in the watershed of Ban

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[5] Interview on February 17, 2008.

[6] Interview on April 24, 2007.

[7] From the 1960s–1980s, Hmong were involved in conflicts between communism and anti-communism forces. The mountain area of Northern Thailand was recognised as a politically insecure 'pink zone' where the Thai government suspected communist activities as being active (Forsyth and walker 2008:47). A considerable number of Hmong people were suspected of being involved in the Thai Communist Party and were killed by the army. It eventually led to a large armed clash with the Thai army in Nan Province in 1967. On the other hand, young Hmong were recruited to the anti-communist army of Hmong leaders in Laos to fight against Vietnam and the Pathet Lao, communist states, with the Royal Lao Kingdom, following Hmong militia like General Vang Pao and supported by the CIA in the 1960s-1970s. After the defeat by communist parties in Vietnam and Laos in 1975, more than 40,000 Hmong in Laos fled to Thailand. Tapp (1989) had interviews with the Hmong people in Thailand and concluded that most of the Hmong probably joined in these conflicts not because of ideological struggles but because of economic conflict between the Thai state and the Hmong (Tapp 1989:77).

Mae Luang around 2000.[8]

Gon's statement regarding the Hmong as a main cause of the deforestation and water shortage was probably selected from the aspect of the local eco-politics in the village. These ideas are supported by village leaders and young politically active villagers like village council members, election committee members, and active female leaders of the mother's group. Because these people have relatively closer connections with village politics than other villagers, it is supposed that the statement on the water issue is affected by the official consensus of the village council. By contrast, Bai (30) born as one of daughters of a landowner in Ban Mae Luang has a different idea of the Hmong. She has a university education and runs a condominium in Chiang Mai. Since she usually lives in Chiang Mai, she enjoys relative independence from village politics, but is financially and politically one of the best supporters of the village festivals. When she was a child, her daily duty was going to the forest to collect firewood for cooking twice a day. She reaffirmed that the dense and dark forests where she had used to gather firewood have disappeared. However, she commented on the relationship between Hmong and forest degradation in different ways from Gon.

> Hmong cut trees in our headwater forest in the old days, but now villagers cut trees more than Hmong. In these decades, the edge of the forest is set back to the mountain. Comparing to when I was a child, the forest has shrank. But the main reason should be attributed to our villagers.[9]

Although Bai did not deny the connection between Hmong and illegal logging, she commented that the main reason for forest degradation is not the Hmong. In other interviews with other villagers, villagers who are little related to village politics like

[8] The village chief in Ban Doi Ta Mai also supported the story of the retreat from Ban Mae Luang's headwater forest in an interview on August 25, 2007.
[9] Interview on April 11, 2007.

older generations tend to support her view. They admitted that forest degradation is caused by villagers' cutting trees for building houses, selling for cash income to support families, or clearing for upland fields. Furthermore, they did not make the connection between periodical water shortage and Hmong deforestation. They just remembered that one spring in the mountain—a medicinal spring (*nam bo ya*)—had saved villagers during the drought of the Mae Luang River in the dry season.[10] Nonetheless, the story of Hmong forest degradation and water shortage can be reorganised politically depending on the narratives from the village committee and the WMU and the Thai public.

The politically stigmatised image of deforestation by the Hmong in the Thai public mind seems to be very hard to change. The Hmong have also made an effort to secure their own space in the competition arena for natural resources both at the local level and the public/policy level. They attempted to reorganise their ethnic identities by initiating sustainable development or establishing NGO networking such as the Hmong Environmental Network (HEN) or the Intermountain Peoples Education and Culture in Thailand (IMPECT) (Paiboon 2003:1). Some Hmong villages have taken a strategy to participate in the same state forest conservation policy as that of the lowland Thai villagers. For example, they took on community-based forest management by participating in tree planting, building firebreaks or deciding village rules and regulations for forest conservation at their village meetings (Prasit 2004:344). In addition, they also attempted to adapt 'Thai-ness' in their community to counter the Hmong's bad reputation in the state. In 2001, when the Hmong communities set up a negotiating meeting with the Chiang Mai Provincial Office on citizenship issues, they had to address Hmong's bad reputation for insurgencies to the state, disloyalty to the king, being non-Buddhist, opium growers, tax avoiders, forest destroyers in the meeting. To resist the Hmong negative images, Hmong communities and NGOs submitted a

[10] The Medicinal spring (*nam bo ya*) also has seasonal worship days by the villagers. Some villagers believed that it also has magical powers for calling rain.

letter to the provincial office to swear an oath that they will be loyal to the nation, the religion and the king following the 1997 constitution and they would severely sanction those who betray these three pillars of 'Thai-ness' (Paiboon 2003). Through the demonstration of the oath, they attempted to transform the Thai public views of their inferior ethnic identity and assimilate themselves into 'Thai-ness' to access an equal political position.

Hmong villagers are also struggling to transform their religious rites as counter-discourse tools against negative environmental discourse. They similarly demonstrate their local knowledge for nature conservation as seen in Ban Mae Luang village in chapter six. The people in Ban Mae Sa Mai, Mae Rim district, Chiang Mai have reorganised their customary worship of the sacred tree (*ntoo xeeb*) as a symbolic ritual by the eco-friendly life of the Hmong (Prasit 2004; Tomforde 2006).[11] The sacred tree worship of Hmong is originally held among community members on the fifth day of the Hmong New Year.[12] Every year, they sacrifice a pig or chickens for an individual tree located on the top of the hill in order to seek protection, longevity and prosperity for the village (Nusit 1976). The sacred tree is a large hardwood tree in which the Hmong shaman invited all the owner spirits or *thwv tim* or *xeeb teb xeeb chaws* of the terrain's river, mountains, caves and fields to settle (Prasit 2004:340; Tomforde 2006:337).[13] This tree is important in the establishment and prosperity of the village. Nusit (1976) also noted that the Hmong shaman carry out rituals to persuade the head spirit of the mountain to protect the village, at a shrine which was built when they established the village (Nusit 1976:21). The death of the tree is a bad omen for the village or villagers. Therefore, the tree is fenced in and the area surrounding the tree is prohibited from

[11] Ntoo xeeb ritual is also called *tier tee tier seng* ritual (Nusit 1976:21, 135) or *tong seng* (Prasit 2004).

[12] Hmong's New Year had followed the lunar calendar, but they changed to the Gregorian calendar in Mae Sa village, Chiang Mai Province. It falls during December 26 to January 1 (Huang and Sumrongthong 2004:33).

[13] According to Huang and Sumrongthong (2004) 's study in the same village as Tomforde (2006), the spirits in *ntoo xeeb* rituals are composed of four great spirits: 1) *ntoo xeeb*- guardian of animals and human beings; 2) *sab seej*- guardian of the ground, 3) *tis tswv*- guardian of the forest; 4) *looj meg*- dragon spirit, guardian of the other world (Huang and Sumrongthong 2004:37).

being logged or hunting to take place near it. If the sacred tree is insulted in some way, the person or village doing so may suffer misfortune, drought or illness (Prasit 2004:343; Tomforde 2006:340).

In 1998 Ban Mae Sa villagers transformed this sacred tree rite from an intra-communal rite at the Hmong New Year to an inter-communal rite for forest conservation by inviting 300 members including local leaders, journalists, the officers of the Royal Project, the RFD officers, district officers and the National Park officers (Prasit 2004; Tomforde 2006:342). This ritual was well organised by Hmong NGOs and local village leaders as a tool to demonstrate Hmong's consciousness of nature conservation. A seminar on the decentralisation of natural resource management was also held to discuss the community-based management issue (Prasit 2004). News about this ritual and the discussion was distributed to the public in booklets published by the NGOs and was broadcasted on television or in the newspapers. In addition, they also gradually enlarged the size of their sacred forest as the Thai lowlanders did for the tree ordination ritual. In 1985, village leaders enlarged the sacred forest from 15 *rai* to 100 *rai*.[14] In 1990, villagers designated 2,500 *rai* as sacred forest for watershed forest conservation and started tree plantations with Thai government officials (Prasit 2004:344; Tomforde 2006:343). These attempts transformed their images to being eco-friendly and having Thai-ness and created a counter-discourse against their negative environmental reputation.

However, the Hmong's negative environmental discourses and images still strongly persist in eco-political concerns amongst Thai lowlanders. These suspicions about the Hmong are still connected with their history, politics and external politics in Thailand. Because of Hmong political weakness in Thai society, the Hmong's attempts to change their image have little impact on Thai lowlanders so far. The Hmong are seen

[14] At the beginning, the reason for the expansion was religious. Because one village man fell ill frequently, village leaders concluded that it had been caused by disturbance of *ntoo xeeb* (Tomforde 2006:342).

as culprits for deforestation or water shortages by both the lowlanders and the Thai public, and used as a scapegoat by Thai lowlanders to protect themselves from gaining a negative reputation.

Upstream View and Downstream View

The comparison between the views of the upstream Hmong and the downstream Thai lowlander village show the different approaches to the same dispute. The lowland villagers in the investigation selectively chose the problems which supported the negative image of the Hmong's illegality. By contrast, the upstream Hmong village looks at the dispute from the point of view of the structural disadvantage of their social and political stance in Thai society.

Figure 7.2 Investigation by the Ban Mae Luang Watershed Committee of the Hmong Village

Now we go back to the scene of the Ban Mae Luang's investigation of Ban Doi Yai Hmong village (Figure 7.2). The main purpose of the Ban Mae Luang investigation was to look for evidence of water stealing and pollution. The investigation also had another purpose and that was to prove either consciously or unconsciously that the

people of the Hmong village were 'forest destroyers'. The investigation selectively focused on some facts and ignored other facts. At the first meeting with the Hmong village, the Ban Mae Luang village chief explained the reasons why they had come to the village. He said that some Ban Mae Luang villagers had complained that there were some suspicions about water stealing and water pollution by the Hmong village in the headwater forest which Ban Mae Luang managed. He asked the Hmong village chief to provide information on this and for permission to investigate the village. The Hmong village chief, in Thai language explained how they were suffering from a lack of water for agriculture. However, this did not draw any mercy from the Ban Mae Luang villagers. Then the Hmong vice chief started to moderate the meeting. Some young members from Ban Mae Luang questioned the Hmong village about the water pollution issue in a very tense manner, but the vice chief smoothed their complaints by using frequent Thai language and the knowledge of water issues in the meeting. Finally, the Hmong village chief gave permission for the investigation.

The investigation concentrated on finding evidence of illegal activities not only concerning water issues but also deforestation in the Hmong village. The investigation proceeded to look at four areas: 1) encroachment for agriculture in the forest of Ban Mae Luang's watershed, 2) water intake from three streams in the headwater forest, 3) pollutants of the river water, and 4) other illegal activities. At first, the investigation team started to look for encroachment into the forest of Ban Mae Luang's watershed. They went to the upland fields on the western side of the Hmong village. The Hmong's irrigated cash crop agriculture came under scrutiny by the Ban Mae Luang investigation team. This was different to Ban Mae Luang agriculture which was concerned mainly with cultivating rice, peanuts and maize in the basin. According to the data of the University of Hohenheim and Kasetsart University in 2008, Hmong villagers in Ban Doi Yai introduced cash crops and fruits like lychees and rose and maize growing on

their upland fields (Figure 7.3) (Schreinemachers, Praneetvatakul et al. 2008).

	Total Agricultural Land (ha)	Five main crops (%)					Others (%)
		crop 1	crop 2	crop 3	crop 4	crop 5	
Ban Doi Yai /Pang Lung		lychee	rose	sweet maize	feed maize	banana	
	116	23.7	21.4	14.5	7.7	5.7	27.0

Source: University of Hohenheim and Kasetsart University 2008 (Schreinemachers, Praneetvatakul et al. 2008)
Note: This data is based on a survey from November 2005 to October 2006. This data looks at Ban Doi Yai and Pang Lung, a neighbouring hamlet, together.

Figure 7.3 The Five Main Crops Produced in Ban Doi Yai/Pang Lung as a Percentage of the Arable Land

Flower cultivation was especially well developed. Their rose gardens were well set up and used irrigation. A plastic hose was connected to a blue plastic water pipe with a metal tap and water was drawn through this water pipe from a water reservoir. All the buds of the roses in the garden were covered with white foam polystyrene protectors. Next to the rose garden was a small warehouse where packing was carried out for market. Inside this building, there were a women and a child working to pack the flowers in paperboard boxes (Figure 7.4).

The Ban Mae Luang investigation team went down to the border between Ban Mae Luang and Ban Doi Yai and carefully checked encroachment in the forest in Ban Mae Luang's watershed area and asked when the land was cleared as official investigators of the state agencies did. Ban Mae Luang members questioned a Hmong villager who was watering the rose garden. The Hmong villager, almost forty years old, said that this garden was established more than twenty years ago. Since the declaration of the forest as a conservation forest, encroachment can be illegal, so the oldness of the land clearing is important to secure the use rights. The investigation team also took pictures of the upland field on the mountains' ridge. According to one member of the investigation team, the forest areas which Ban Mae Luang village manages is the same

as area of the watershed catchment of the Mae Luang River, so the boundary of the Ban Mae Luang village forest lay on the ridge of the mountains. From the point where the slope goes down to Ban Mae Luang village's side, this area becomes the headwater forest of Ban Mae Luang. The investigation team concluded that some parts of the upland fields came down into the Ban Mae Luang side (Figure 7.5).

Figure 7.4 Roses Produced in the Hmong Village

Figure 7.5 Hmong Rose Field on the Southern Boundary of Ban Mae Luang Village

The investigation team then investigated water intake on Ban Mae Luang's side. In the rose gardens of the Hmong village, the investigation team found two large reservoirs (almost 10x4x2 metres) and another under construction. The Ban Mae Luang village chief sent a small team composed of young members and a soldier to trace the pipeline. The team found one small intake dam and pipeline networks in the forest of Ban Mae Luang. They measured the approximate size of the dam and took pictures. They also searched other dams by following pipelines but finally they could not find the other dam, but the water pipe headed towards two other streams. They concluded that Hmong villagers must be taking water from three streams in Ban Mae Luang's forest.

The team looked for evidence of water pollution. The Ban Mae Luang villagers could not actually find pollutants in the river. The Ban Mae Luang chief finally grabbed soil in their rose garden and examined it. He concluded that the smell in the water probably came from the fertiliser for growing roses because Hmong farmers actually scattered a lot of fertiliser when growing the roses and this then flowed into the river with rain.

Other illegal activities were also investigated during the investigation. The soldier confiscated several old style rifles which were not formally registered, from the Hmong villagers.

In the investigation of the Hmong village, The Ban Mae Luang team critically found evidence of Hmong violation of state forest policy as officers of the land agency usually did for Ban Mae Luang village.[15] The illegal activities of the Hmong were clear. After the investigation, the Ban Mae Luang village chief met with the vice chief of the Hmong village in the field again. He complained about the water stealing and the agricultural expansion of the upland fields: 'Do you intend to build a new town

[15] During the period of June and July 2007, officers of the land agency came to the village to measure agricultural land and households in the village. Some villagers were temporarily hired to assist them. The land officers also checked encroachment on the forest. According to the villagers, if they found a villager who had encroached on the forest, they ordered the villager to go back to their original area and fined them.

(*mueang*)?' while pointing out Hmong's rose garden, which was a clear contrast to the green forestland on the opposite side of Ban Mae Luang's watershed. Also he demanded that they consider this issue in their village meeting and that they attend the village chief meetings of the WMU. Through the investigation, they used legal knowledge about natural conservation and land rights to attack the Hmong village. These weapons of the state were used by Thai lowland villagers to attack the Hmong. Ban Mae Luang villagers were less interested in how much it affected downstream agriculture or asking why Hmong villagers went to search for a new water source near Ban Mae Luang village.

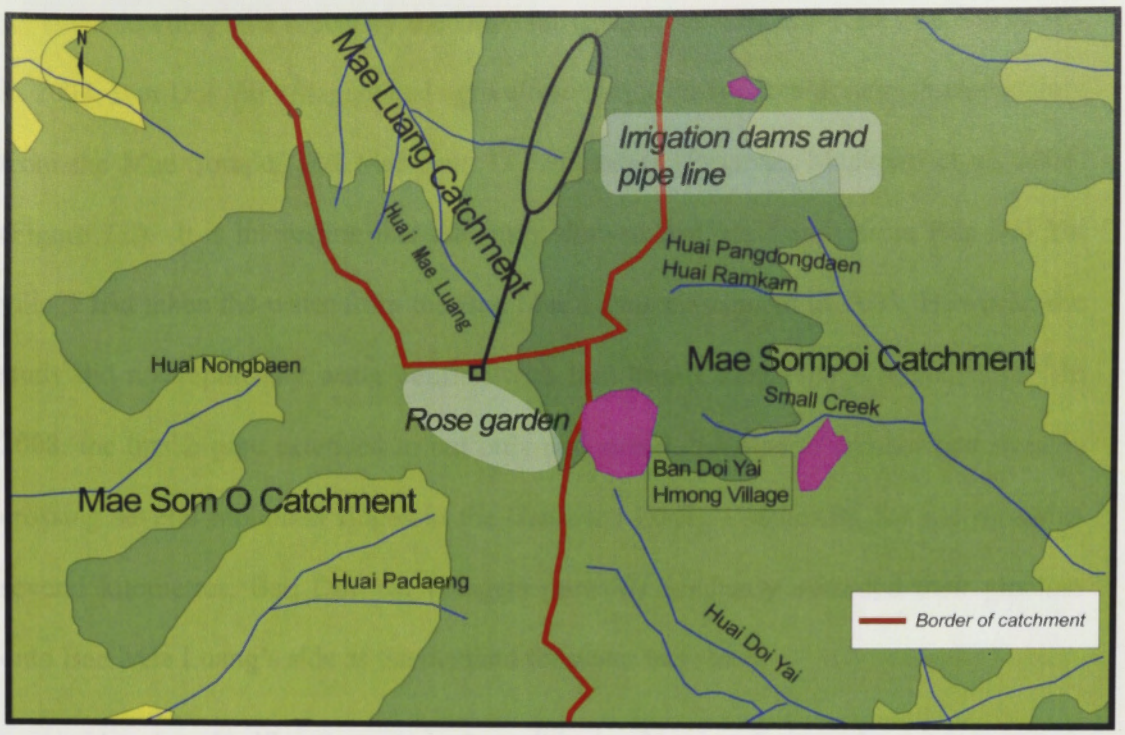
Switching now to the upland Hmong's view, the Hmong village chief expressed sorrow at the meeting that water shortage drove villagers to find new water resources in Ban Mae Luang's watershed. What caused this water shortage in Ban Doi Yai? Ban Doi Yai Hmong village had two political problems leading to the water shortage in the village: agricultural innovation and water source enclosure which the lowland Thai investors caused.

Agricultural innovation in substituting crops for opium created a demand for water in the upstream Hmong village. Until a few decades ago, the Hmong village economy was based on non-irrigated opium cultivation. The opium grew well in the cooler climate and poor soils of northern Thailand without irrigation and advanced technology. In addition, it also had good characteristics as a market good with a high and constant market price, preservation and durability (Tapp 1986:21; Renard 2001:3). The opium growing adapted well in Hmong's cash crop agriculture on upland fields. According to Geddes's studies in Meto, Chiang Mai Province, Hmong villagers used 1,310 *rai* of their upland fields for poppy while they used only 276 *rai* for rice in the 1950-60s (Geddes 1976:131). Hmong villages around Ban Mae Luang also cultivated opium. The Ban Mae Luang village chief and his wife remember seeing the beautiful

poppy fields of the upland Hmong villages when they went hiking in mountains when they were a newly married couple.[16] However, around the end of the 1950s, the Thai government gradually accelerated the control and sale and production of opium by prohibiting opium production (Geddes 1976:209; Renard 2001:4).[17] Many international agencies, the state agencies and the royal family provided funds to introduce alternative crops to replace opium in highland development projects (Tapp 1986:32). The Hmong themselves also were keen to seek substitute crops instead of opium. The uplands in Ban Doi Yai were then transformed from rotational cultivation and opium growing to the permanent cash crop cultivation of fruit, flowers or vegetables using irrigation and fertilisers.

[16] Interview on August 9, 2007.

[17] Opium cultivation was legal under the control of the Royal Opium Monopoly, a state agency, from 1855 to 1956. During this period, the Thai government heavily relied on the revenue earned from the sale of opium (Renard 2001:12). The upland communities were excluded from the state's legal opium cultivation, but were committed to illegal cultivation and smuggling around the northern region. Illegalisation of opium cultivation occurred in the late 1950s. The state issued the 37th Proclamation of the Revolutionary Party in 1956, which illegalised sale and smoking of opium in the whole of Thailand, then the Harmful Habit- Forming Drug Acts to prohibit opium production in 1959 (Geddes 1976:209).



Name of catchment	No of users	Cultivated crops
Mae Luang Catchment		
Huai Mae Luang (A upstream of the Mae Luang river)	1	Roses, lychee
Mae Sompoi Catchment		
Huai Doi Yai	4	Roses, lychee
Huai Ramkam	5	Roses
Huai Pandongdaen (the lower part of Huai Ramkam)	2	Roses, lychee, wheat, oranges, cabbage
Small creek (no name)	11	Roses, lychee, wheat, chayote, leek, carrots, beans, salad
Mae Som O Catchment		
Huai Padaeng	18	Roses, lychee, carrot, choyoto, leek, highland rice, ginger, mango, orange
Huai Nongbaen	4	Roses, lychee, leek

Source: University of Hohenheim and Kasetsart University 2004 (Pasupae, Mapkpun et al. 2004)
Note: This data is based on a survey undertaken in 2003.

Figure 7.6 Map and List of the Streams in Agricultural Areas in Ban Doi Yai

According to a report by the University of Hohenheim and Kasetsart University in 2004, Ban Doi Yai villagers had agriculture irrigation systems drawing water mainly from the Mae Sompoi and Mae Som O catchments (Pasupae, Mapkpun et al. 2004) (Figure 7.6). It is interesting that the study showed that one family from Ban Doi Yai village had taken the water from the Ban Mae Luang Catchment in 2003. However, the study did not report any water conflict with Ban Mae Luang village at that time.[18] In 2008, the intake pipe extended to not only one stream but also to another two streams crossing several mountain ridges in the Ban Mae Luang Catchment, for a distance of several kilometres. Ban Doi Yai villagers probably gradually extended their pipeline onto Ban Mae Luang's side as the demand for water increased.

Another significant aspect is the political influence of external private investors in the Thai lowlands. Ban Doi Yai village developed irrigated flower cultivation with Thai private investors (Neef, Bollen et al. 2004:203; Pasupae, Mapkpun et al. 2004). However, in exchange for development of their village by these private investors, they had to accept a politically weak position and conflicts with outside villagers on water resources. In Ban Doi Yai, most of the land is owned by a number of outside investors including a chief of a sub-district, investors from Bangkok and private companies. There are no Hmong villagers who officially have a secure land title (Schreinemachers, Praneetvatakul et al. 2008).[19] 83 per cent of villagers have other insecure titles or no titles. 17 per cent of them rent the land from landowners. The Thai lowland investors because of their education and their legal position have easier access to secure land titles.

Because of this weakness in legal land rights, private investors increased the demand for water and occupied some water resources by getting a land title on the river

[18] The evidence about Hmong villagers' water intake in 2003 makes me doubt the statement of Ban Mae Luang villagers' accidental findings of Hmong water stealing. Ban Mae Luang villagers go to the forest very often for hunting, gathering herbs or logging. It is natural to think that some villagers had already known about the stealing but they had just waited for a good opportunity to blame Hmong villagers for it. If we accept this speculation, the Ban Mae Luang villagers' investigation was planned very well.

[19] NS. 4, NS. 3, and NS.3G is the high ranked land title in Thailand. The holders of these land titles can officially sell, transfer or mortgage the land for loans with little restriction.

area to build plantations or resorts (Neef, Bollen et al. 2004:203). The Huai Ramkam and Pangdongdaen, two of the main streams in the Mae Sompoi catchment are nowadays regarded as 'investors' streams' by the villagers because most of the land along the streams are owned by one investor. Other investors also installed a lot of wells, pumps or private water reservoirs along the rivers (Pasupae, Mapkpun et al. 2004). Increasing enclosure of the open-access water resources has resulted in Ban Doi Yai villagers' struggling to seek a secure water supply for village use. As a help, they have started to use a communal pumping system from downstream which was installed by the district office (Elestner, Bollen et al. 2006:9). It was planned that each household was to pay a water fee of five baht per unit for maintenance of the pumping and distribution system to the households (Elestner, Bollen et al. 2006:9). But the fee collection could not be implemented properly because of a lack of the distribution rule and the existence of other open-access water resources (Pasupae, Mapkpun et al. 2004).

The low political power of the Hmong villagers regarding water resources results in water conflicts with private investors and outside villages. Before the conflict with Ban Mae Luang village, Ban Doi Yai villagers had been involved in several other water conflicts. One of them was with one of the investors who occupied a stream in the village territory with a land title allowing cash crop agriculture. After a water shortage in 2005, Ban Doi Yai villagers asked the investor to allow them to use water from the stream (Elestner, Bollen et al. 2006:12). Unfortunately, scientific research showed that the water source was not located at a high enough altitude to enable the use of a gravity irrigation system (Elestner, Bollen et al. 2006:12). The villagers therefore had to give up this idea because they could not afford the cost of pumping the water. Another conflict happened with a downstream Thai village, Ban Mafai village, in the same Mae Sompoi watershed. Ban Doi Yai regularly had conflicts regarding the Hong Yen River. Ban Mafai villagers complained that Ban Doi Yai blocked the water supply to the

downstream. At that time, Ban Doi Yai finally agreed to give up using the water from the stream (Pasupae, Mapkpun et al. 2004). Thus, Ban Doi Yai villagers faced the need to develop new open-access water sources in the Ban Mae Luang's watershed to respond to water shortage caused by the cash crop agricultures of the investors and pressures from conflicts.

In summary, the Ban Mae Luang village emphasised the illegality of the intake of water resources in the forest and forest encroachment as proof of the forest destroyer image of the Hmong. Ban Doi Yai Hmong village, on the other hand, faced the two structural problems of agricultural innovation and water source enclosure by lowland Thai investors, which contributed to the shortage of the water in highlands. Which aspect of the problems becomes the issue in the eye of the public depends on the political power of the two villages.

A Flexible Alliance against the Upstream Village

Ban Mae Luang village leaders continue to keep their alliance with government agencies so that they have the initiative in negotiations to secure legitimacy in managing the watershed. Ban Mae Luang leaders' strong attitude toward the Hmong's encroachment and water usage in the headwater forest of the Mae Luang River, is based on their alliance with the WMU. As seen above, both the Ban Mae Luang Thai villagers and the WMU officers view the Hmong as 'other' or 'forest destroyer'. While Thai lowlanders portray their livelihoods as eco-friendly emphasising their participation in the state forest management, the Hmong livelihood is portrayed as a 'forest destroyer'.

Ban Mae Luang received some supports from the WMU in taking the initiative in the dispute. The WMU provided financial aid, military support and support for the legitimacy of Ban Mae Luang's investigation. At first, the WMU provided financial support for the investigation team as an honorarium (150 baht per person) and lunch.

The amount of the honorarium is almost the same amount as an average labouring wage in the village. However, the village chief thinks that the honorarium does not fully cover all the expenses for the dangerous jobs in the forest and for necessities like gasoline or car hire. They recognise that mutual cooperation by the village and the WMU is necessary for participatory forest management. In addition, the WMU office provided food to the investigation team. Ater the investigation, a son of the village chief, who worked in the WMU as one of local staff came to the outside of Ban Doi Yai bringing lunch boxes and several bottles of local white liquor, in a car with the emblem of the WMU.

Secondly, the WMU sent a late middle-aged soldier armed with a HK33EA automatic rifle as a body guard for the investigation team after the villagers' report to the unit about the investigation. In the villages of northern Thailand, villagers have considerable numbers of rifles or guns without permits, so negotiation of the dispute has the potential risk of resulting in armed conflict. The official attendance of military solders with automatic rifles actually stopped the Ban Mae Luang investigation team from being involved in gun-fights with Hmong villagers who have old style hunting rifles. Furthermore, the attendance of the soldier also symbolically showed the investigation had official authority and received the support of the state.

Thirdly, the WMU provided legitimacy for Ban Mae Luang's investigation. Although the unit did not attend the investigation, Ban Mae Luang villagers hinted that they had the support of the state agency to Hmong villagers during the investigation. In the meeting with the Hmong village chief, the Ban Mae Luang village chief reported on how the meeting was going to officers in the WMU several times using his mobile phone. In addition, they also used regional or national authoritative laws or regulations about forest management like land titles encroachment, deforestation, or water pollution, in their investigation and meetings. By using these terms of the state, they demonstrated

that they belonged to the state's side.

These alliances between Thai lowlanders and the state against upland communities have been commonly seen in other disputes in northern Thailand. For example in Nan Province and Chom Thong in Chiang Mai Province, Hmong people were blamed for deforestation and attacked in a racist way by alliances between Thai lowlanders and local state authorities. In the Nan case, Suradej Yangsaeng, a Hmong village leader, argued that Thai lowland people conspired with the state agencies, resulting in lowlanders and the Royal Forest Department (RFD) cutting 30,000 lychee trees in 10.76 *rai* of Hmong village because they blamed them without evidence for water shortages, forest encroachment, and water pollution (Suradej 2000:45-46). He also suspected participation of the district chief and other state agencies of vandalism (Suradej 2000:46-47). In the other case in Chom Thong, Hmong leaders argued that the RFD supported the Thai lowlanders' NGOs, the Dharmmanaat Foundation and the Chong Thong Watershed and Conservation Club, to force Hmong villagers to relocate from uplands to the lowland alternate site (Forum on Conflict or Resolution? People and Forests in Northern Thailand 1998:10-28). Thai lowlanders, RFD staff, national park officers and local government officers joined in the demonstrations to request the removal of upland communities because they were causing deforestation in upland areas.

To maintain this alliance in forest management, local village chiefs have made an effort to keep a good relationship with local public officers. They reinforce this in the context of village life or through religious sympathies. Ban Mae Luang village leaders often invite police, military and governmental officials to village Buddhist festivals or events, especially nighttime drinking parties in the village.[20] The relationship has taken a long time and has become a political culture in the village. The village donation list in Ban Mae Luang temple lists the government agencies or individual officials invited to

[20] I saw that several villagers invited soldiers and policemen in Saeng Thong district to the night parties for the *Pha Pa* festival and *Song Nam* Buddhist festivals in April and May.

the temple who have donated money or construction materials for the renovation of village temples and for the festivals. In addition, the alliance is also based on an everyday connection with the state agencies. The WMU office regularly employs local office staff from educated young villagers who are mainly the sons or daughters of village leaders, and wage labourers from Thai lowland villages as forest managers, bushfire monitors or tree seedling growers. As a result, local authorities have been incorporated in the alliance.

However, in the eco-politics surrounding Ban Mae Luang, lowland Thai villagers' advantage over Hmong villagers illustrates a subtle power balance among stakeholders like the WMU, Thai investors and the Hmong village. The balance between alliance and antagonism flexibly shifts depending on the situation being faced. Considering the state's attempts to control the forest in the previous chapters, the alliance with the WMU must be flexible depending on the benefits and strategic aims of the villagers. They can not always accept the state's control and authority without any consideration of its effects on them. Too much reliance on the state may mean that the village community will lose autonomy in using natural resources. Therefore, they try to negotiate with the Hmong villages in the balance of powers.

As a result of this dispute between Ban Mae Luang and Ban Doi Yai, Ban Mae Luang village leaders sought a compromise reflecting the politics in the forest. At the beginning of the village committee meeting on 24 March 2008, the Ban Mae Luang village chief started the meeting with the following words: 'we have to think about "*phi nong*" (brothers and sisters) on the top of the mountain'. The village chief called the Hmong '*phi nong*', (brothers and sisters), in front of committee members who gathered in the lecture hall of the Ban Mae Luang temple before they started to discuss how they should respond to the Hmong village. The term '*phi nong*' is usually used at a village meeting to urge people to join collective actions like festival preparations or communal

meetings. It surprised me that he used this word for Hmong people because it was the first time that a relationship was shown with the upstream Hmong. Usually, Ban Mae Luang villagers called Hmong '*maeo*' which has a negative connotation. The village chief was choosing a word emphasising the Hmong's wider identity as members of the Thai nation. It was very important for this meeting because the main purpose of the meeting was not to accuse Hmong village of stealing water, but to discuss how to negotiate with the Hmong in local politics. The Ban Mae Luang village chief, leaders and the chief monk had prepared a negotiation plan by investigating the Hmong village before the meeting.

There are probably two reasons why Ban Mae Luang village council sought a compromise with the Hmong village: the possibility of economic benefit and political problems among regional stakeholders. At first, Ban Mae Luang village leaders thought it might provide the chance to get another source of income by compromising with Ban Doi Yai. So far, Ban Mae Luang's participation in watershed forest management did not provide much income for the villagers. The villagers were sometimes disappointed that the state agencies use them for forest management for a little amount of money or no payment. However, if they could succeed in charging for the water that Hmong villagers used for flower cultivation, it would increase their benefit from the forest because the upstream Hmong had well developed flower cultivation agriculture. The Ban Mae Luang investigation team estimated that the benefit from the compromise would be high. At the village meeting, one point on the agenda was, in fact, to decide what amount of charge there should be the intake of water from the three streams. One of the members reported the market price of flowers in Chiang Mai and estimated their benefit from flower cultivation. Some of the committee members were excited by the surprisingly high benefit. Thus, the meeting found it would be more beneficial to allow the Hmong to use the water. As a result, Ban Mae Luang villager council agreed on a

negotiation plan to allow the Hmong to use the water from three streams at a rate of 50,000 baht per year under one condition: water intake in the dry-season was prohibited because it would damage dry-season cultivation in Ban Mae Luang.[21] On 4 April 2008, the village chief officially announced the negotiation plan to all villagers in the village meeting.

However it was impossible for the Hmong farmers to accept this proposal. The charge of 50,000 baht per year was too expensive for the Hmong flower farmers. Because their investors probably get most of the benefit from the flower cultivation and they had entered Ban Mae Luang's catchment to find free water sources to avoid paying water fees in the village, they did not feel like paying the charge. It was also difficult for the Hmong village to stop the water intake in the dry season. As Ban Doi Yai Hmong village chief mentioned, they also faced a lack of water during this period.

Secondly, there was also a political reason why the WMU and investors proposed a compromise with the Hmong village. For the Ban Mae Luang village leaders, too much reliance on the water management unit could undermine their autonomy in the use of the forest. In fact, their investigation is given legitimacy due to the WMU. As the Ban Mae Luang village leaders had already demonstrated their ability to manage the forest well enough and show the illegality of the Hmong village activities though the investigation, it was not necessary for them to continue the conflict. Even if this compromise was not accepted by the Hmong village, the Thai lowland village still achieved the reputation of being able to defend their water resources and also to demonstrate their fairness in negotiating with the Hmong in democratic talks. They offered the Hmong an extravagant condition and asked them whether they wanted to choose this or to move away from 'our' forest. Furthermore, they also wanted to avoid risking that the conflict could become large enough to draw intervention from external

[21] Village meeting on April 4, 2008.

agencies because there are powerful Thai lowlander investors involved in the flower cultivation of Ban Doi Yai village, too. If they intervened in the dispute, the dispute could turn much worse for Ban Mae Luang villager leaders because Ban Mae Luang village leaders also do not have any official rights over land and natural resources in the forest. Therefore Ban Mae Luang leaders set a manageable range in the arena of the negotiation where their negotiation tools like the demonstration of environmental images or alliance with the state agencies could function effectively.

Conclusion

Through a discussion of the inter-village water conflict between Ban Mae Luang and Ban Doi Yai, this chapter has illustrated how Thai lowlanders secure their legitimacy in managing natural resources in the headwater forest of the Mae Luang River. Thai lowlanders reorganised their local history and used the negative image of the Hmong to reinforce their alliance with the WMU. Furthermore, they demonstrated their good images as a proper community in managing the forest by using the Hmong as scapegoats as 'forest destroyers'.

The chapter also reviewed the difference in views between the downstream Thai lowlanders and the upstream Hmong in a water dispute. For Ban Mae Luang, a downstream Thai village, the dispute was a chance to demonstrate their ability to secure forest use rights by accusing the Hmong of illegal forest use. The question as to how much the Hmong affected lowland agriculture was not so relevant in the dispute. However, for Ban Doi Yai, an upstream Hmong village, the dispute was due to an inconsistency in the forest conservation policy of headwater forest and the development of substitution cash crop agriculture. The forest conservation policy reaffirmed the Thai lowlanders excluding the Hmong from the forest and water resources in the watershed by showing Thai lowlander's participation in forest conservation activities like patrolling the forest or fire fighting while portraying the Hmong as being more forest

destructive. Furthermore, the Thai lowlander's investment and promotion for substitution crops in the Hmong village caused the water shortages and led the Hmong villagers to seek water in the watershed of Ban Mae Luang.

The analysis of the dispute shows that the images of ethnicity connected with political power intensified the water conflict between lowlanders and upland communities in the eco-politics of northern Thailand. In this conflict, not only the competition for natural resources, but also another competitive arena of images between the Thai lowlander village and the Hmong village emerged. It was necessary to reorganise their lifestyles, identities and images to fit the images favoured by the powerful state forest policy. Those who have succeeded in transforming into an 'appropriate community' in terms of the state policy can gain legitimacy to manage the forest. Thai lowlanders are using stereotypical public images of the Hmong and the alliance with the state agencies to gain advantages in their negotiations. The Hmong were also trying to generate counter images against their negative image. However, being thought of as being more a part of Thai culture and their participation in forest management contributed to creating a more ecological friendly image of the Thai lowlanders rather than the Hmong among the Thai public. This also helped in forming an alliance between the Thai lowlanders and the state. The Thai lowland villagers clearly attempted to position themselves on the opposite side of the negative environmental images of the Hmong. In the balance of powers, Ban Mae Luang village leaders strategically utilised the environmental images of ethnicities, the alliance with the state, and the conflict itself to secure their access to forest resources and to further their alliance with the power of the state agency.

Chapter 8 Conclusion

This thesis started with an interest in the adaptation of participatory forest management in a village in Northern Thailand. The main question was to explore how a village community negotiates both within the village and with powerful external agencies in adapting forestry management in order to secure its livelihoods and political position. Reflecting an increasing concern about the need for local participation in recent Thai forest policy, the focus of forest management in northern Thailand has shifted from one of confrontation to one of political and social negotiation among multiple actors such as ordinary villagers, village leaders, local staff and senior officers of the WMU, mass media, NGOs, the Thai public and various companies. This shift opened a new paradigm of studies that focus on alliance and compromise among multiple stakeholders, in contrast to previous studies on bilateral confrontation between the state agencies and the village community. The alliances and compromises are sets of strategic arrangements of various expectations and interests from multiple actors on forest conservation through official and unofficial negotiation processes. Balancing powers in local politics through close connections such as friendships with government officers, kinship relationships or customary patron-client relationships, a community carefully attempts to gain the best compromise to achieve economic and political benefits from participatory forest conservation activities. Their continuous struggles to negotiate with powerful stakeholders in everyday life result in assuring their rights to manage the natural resources and strengthen the legitimacy of their livelihood in the uplands.

To arrange these interests, Ban Mae Luang village leaders with knowledge about both of the systems of the local community and the nation, take significant mediating roles. On the one hand, they represent their village community and, on the other hand, they become an agent of the external state agencies in village forest management as shown in Chapter Two. The village leaders utilise knowledge on both state forest

management policy and village customs. Within the village community of Ban Mae Luang, village leaders persuade the villagers to join in collective activities for forest conservation using quasi-family rhetoric, local customs, kinship relationships or festivals. For external agencies and the state officials, they become agents to promote their projects in exchange for benefits from the cooperation and send their children to be local officers in the state agencies. Standing between two institutions, the village leaders attempt to control the forest resources and people through their village council and customary institutions suppressing opposition among village members.

The village leaders' role on forest conservation in Ban Mae Luang is important in the implementation phase of state forest policy to mobilise villagers in collective activities. Through the village leaders, the WMU succeeded in mobilising villagers for forest conservation activities and to educate the villagers about environmental conservation following the central state's orders. However, this village leaders' mobilisation is different from guiding the villagers' will toward the unitary and static tendency of environmental conservation which Agrawal (2005b) proposed as 'environmentality'. The Ban Mae Luang's participatory forest management does not always peacefully guide the villagers towards environmental conservation: it still results in various tensions among the villagers and village leaders and state agencies. Using political negotiation or local customs in the local community is necessary to keep stabilising the villagers' resistance towards the conservation policy.

The cooperation of the village community on forest conservation does not mean complete local villagers' subordination to the state agencies and modern environmentalism but there is practical and ideological negotiation among the stakeholders. The central government's requirement for participatory forestry also helps the local office to promote political alliances with local leaders and to support local communities participating in participatory forestry. As participatory forestry definitely

needs the cooperation of Ban Mae Luang village leaders, it gives them unofficial powers in their positive alliances with the local office in the WMU. Through participation in forest conservation, both local officers and Ban Mae Luang village leaders find mutual benefits in representing the community as an eco-friendly village following the images of the state's environmentalism. They arrange for villagers to participate in forest conservation events and use the state's words to support forest conservation, and create clear signals to demonstrate the village's common will to support the state forest policy. This also benefits the local state officers because results are reported to the central government or the public as an example of successful efforts of collaboration between the local state agencies and the village. For village leaders, good management of nature conservation and its positive public reputation become a political resource to aid in their promotion to a higher political position such as a sub-district authority organisation representative. This is because their success is evaluated by their ability to meet the state's expectation on nature conservation and it also makes it easier for them to access support from powerful politicians and the state agencies.

In exchange for supporting the state agencies, the whole village benefits, even though the merit distribution varies according to their socio-political situation. At the least, the village's control over natural resources in the watershed area and its political position are enforced through the image created of it as an ecologically friendly village. Therefore, Chapter Six showed the village leaders' utilisation of religious rituals as a tool to showcase the eco-friendly village culture. Through demonstrating ecological religious rituals for forest conservation, mixing modern education and local knowledge, village leaders justify local control of the forest and secure political advantage, job opportunities in forest management, and financial support from the state agencies. This good reputation for the village is necessary for the village leaders to establish good alliances with the Watershed Management officers and the Thai public. The situation

that forest conservation strengthened the political advantage of a village towards other villages in utilising natural resources was discussed in Chapter Seven. The alliance between Ban Mae Luang village and the WMU actually functioned to secure Ban Mae Luang's utilisation of the watershed forest from other ethnic groups' use. When the upland Hmong villagers attempted to seek water sources in the watershed forest, Ban Mae Luang village leaders utilised their legitimacy as a proper community in appreciating nature conservation to gain support from the WMU and the public. Furthermore, they used negative images to disempower Hmong people in the dispute. Their legitimacy and the alliance with the WMU created by participatory management provided actual power to justify control of their watershed forest area.

Through all the chapters, this thesis attempted to illustrate a new phase of Northern Thai environmental politics transforming from that of conflict to that of compromise through participatory forestry. Local politics in the everyday life of the village become one of the keys to manage participatory forestry. In this change, Ban Mae Luang leaders coordinate different interests among the villagers, sometimes to suppress disagreement, and sometimes to promote alliances with external agencies.They make efforts to use both modern environmentalism and the local customs of forest conservation in local eco-politics. Through manipulation and negotiation to gain a reputation as an 'appropriate community' following the state forest policy, Ban Mae Luang village leaders can broaden their chances of getting various financial and political supports from external agencies. For village leaders, participatory forestry has provided a good chance for them to access power from the state or external agencies. This naturally results in the politicising of participatory forestry in local politics. If we reconsider the system of forest management, it is clear that the management system is highly dependent on local politics. In this system, an egalitarian approach would probably cause the malfunctions in the participatory management. The customary

system and the asymmetric power relationship and micro eco-politics of the local community function to maintain the balance in this forest management.

Social Negotiation in Participatory Forestry

This thesis set up three secondary questions in the introduction chapter, so these questions should be answered one by one. The first question is 'what kinds of power relationships exist among multiple stakeholders in participatory forest management?' In participatory forest management, asymmetric power relationships develop among various stakeholders surrounding the conservation forest; state agencies, other outside agencies, village leaders, ordinary villagers and upland villagers. The state agencies and other outside agencies officially have political superiority over the villagers in decision-making processes in forest management. For example, the village community has to obey the order of the WMU or the district office in the hierarchical power structure of the state's administration system, for mobilising the volunteer villagers to nature conservation events. In the same way, in implementation process, they also control the villagers using their traditional status and political economic advantage in the village. Scott (1985) illustrated that this dominant power in a small village is formed by 'mystification'; that the subordinating class thinks the domination of local leaders is inevitable according to their local traditions and religious customs in the small village society. Nidhi (2003) also showed that Thai people have a political culture suggesting that 'the ways of life, ways of thinking, and values of the society come to accept that legitimate powers must be related together in a certain way' as an unwritten 'cultural constitution'. Even though the political culture may change when the society alters, the dominant political power structure continues to function in village life.

However, this asymmetric power structure in the village does not always mean one-sided dominant relationships among the stakeholders in participatory forest management. In the power relationships that exist in participatory forest management,

villagers are able to obtain flexibility in the asymmetric power structure by sacrificing some parts of their livelihoods and identities in the village. For example, village leaders demonstrate their sincere efforts in forest conservation with localism by participating in conservation events or religious rituals. This means that they accept the negotiation in fitting their lifestyle to environmental conservation in order to peacefully secure their own control of forest resources, financial support, job opportunities and political advantages in village life.

Ban Mae Luang village leaders by balancing powers such as loyalty to the state, the king, Buddhism, modern environmentalism and local knowledge also strategically arrange the various sources of legitimacy to give them freedom and autonomy in forest management. Personal communications with local officers, Buddhists or the royal family, village customs and underground social alliances are a means by which to negotiate with powerful stakeholders in the official power structure of the village. As shown in this thesis, these strategies sometimes compete with the official structures on a practical level. By utilising these various alternative sources of legitimacy and negotiation, Ban Mae Luang villagers can enjoy some autonomy under the asymmetric power structure.

Community Representation

The second question is 'how is the decision-making process structured in the village community and who represents the community?' The village leaders become the key in arranging the collective activities of the community and producing their image representing the community for their eco-political use. Community representation in participatory forest management is a result of mixing political compromise by the village members and the projection of village leaders towards behaviour in favour of the state forest policy.

The leadership by the village leaders is influenced by the customary authority of the local community and by their connection with external powerful agencies. Moerman (1969) focused on the role of the village chief in mediating between the village and the external agencies as the village representative, but found that village leaders had negative views on the position and that duties were unwillingly accepted. However, with increasing decentralisation and opportunities for local election, the village leaders found a financial and political interest in positions like those of local government representatives. This thesis showed that in Ban Mae Luang village, a leadership position connecting internal and external powers helps the village leaders to gain respect from ordinary villagers in the decision-making process. Village leaders carefully managed their political advantage among villagers as religious leaders and proper customary leaders. On the other hand, village leaders also attempted to have connections with external politicians or governmental officers to get financial aid or better job opportunities. Leadership in the village started to connect more positively with external politics as Chapter two showed. From these backgrounds, village leaders establish their positions as village representatives and also as agents of the state agencies in forest conservation.

For the village leaders, the variety of ideas on forest conservation among villagers always becomes an obstacle in collective action in the village. In Ban Mae Luang village, some villagers still continue forest burning and illegal logging as a village customary livelihood. In fact, local customs made it difficult for village leaders to force all members to follow forest conservation. Continuous persuasion by village leaders is being practised on villagers to join in forest conservation, to deny these 'traditions' of logging, and to transform their customary livelihoods.

In order to avoid political problems with outside agencies, the village leaders promote the images of Ban Mae Luang as an eco-friendly village formed through a

practical and immediate compromise between the leaders and the villagers. This strategy by village leaders does not need all of the members of the village community to be sincerely following forest conservation policy. The behaviour of villagers is reinterpreted by village leaders for those outside. For example, the village leaders and local officers of the WMU brought a banner that had a message of forest conservation for the villagers; they took a photo with the banner and they wrote reports or publications on collective events on forest conservation. In each event and at village meetings, they told of the importance of environmental conservation to the villagers.

This thesis showed that creating these images of the community is important to create a compromise among the villagers. This arrangement, on the other hand, creates a distortion between the ideal image and the practical reality of the village. The ideal images representing the village have become more important than reality in the recent eco-political forest issues in Southeast Asian countries in which the state and outsiders' interactions through development programs are unavoidable. Yos (2008:58) defined the local villagers' struggles to gain political advantages in a power balance with outsiders by creating eco-friendly self images, as 'struggles over the appropriation of symbols'. However, because the enlarging distortion weakens the credibility of ideal images, village leaders attempted to arbitrate between the two by strengthening their bases as eco-friendly villages. The symbolic struggle and the actual struggle to decide livelihood styles are definitely interrelated with each other. Community representation is influenced by this interaction between self definition and practical livelihoods styles in the decision-making process.

Negotiation by Local Knowledge

The third question was 'how does local knowledge and modern environmentalism function to achieve a compromise between state environmental policy and the villagers' needs in participatory forest management?' Local knowledge is another key topic to be

explored in negotiations on participatory forestry. This study viewed local knowledge as not static but dynamic. It faces endless transformation and interpretation depending on the changing external environment. In a developing system of democracy, decentralisation and multiculturalism in Thailand, local knowledge was being increasingly influenced by political situations surrounding the village forest. The local knowledge became not just that of old techniques or things. Local knowledge was politically mobilised as a 'cultural resource' in forest management to gain a voice to justify villagers' control of natural resources in Thai eco-politics.

Ban Mae Luang village leaders are combining the abundant knowledge in the village with modern environmentalism and reorganising the villagers' 'cultural resources' as a unique community representation on forest resources and a demonstration of their efforts in participatory forestry inside and outside the villages. The village community simplifies the diversity of livelihoods and local beliefs into symbols of local knowledge to represent their wills and demands on participatory forestry in the negotiation stages. For example, as Chapter Six showed some local rituals were interpreted by local leaders into conservation rituals with political messages for outside the village. Local knowledge on forest management was also transformed and interacted with universal environmentalism. The local leaders simplified various meanings of local customs to fit with the latest natural conservation ideas and they also mixed village rituals in natural conservation projects based on modern environmentalism.

In addition, this study also suggested local knowledge does not belong only to the local communities. The state agencies also utilise local knowledge in state forest policy. Local knowledge became a tool to justify the control of forest resources by the state agencies. By utilising local symbols and discourses, the state agencies like the district office and the WMU also attempted to demonstrate the involvement of local

participation and good understanding by villagers to justify the legitimacy of their governance. Local knowledge started to be separated into the state supported local knowledge and unsupported local knowledge. They keep the forest conservation elements of local knowledge or reinterpret local knowledge in the context of forest conservation. The state supported local rituals were encouraged by state funding and political support but put at risk the position of local knowledge as the voice of the local community independent from external powers. Therefore, local communities always explore their stock of local knowledge and utilise the old knowledge in new contexts claiming it as authorised local knowledge from village history.

Through increasing the reputation of local knowledge on forest conservation and committing to state sponsored local knowledge, local knowledge also becomes a political arena where control of the village forest is sought by stakeholders. Local knowledge functions as one of the sources for the villagers to use to gain legitimacy for control of participatory forestry. Also, local knowledge has become a tool used by the external agencies to involve and control village communities under the name of participatory projects respecting local people and customs.

This study of participatory forest management in Ban Mae Luang shows the compromises after holistic negotiations in the village. Even though the village has few conflicts regarding forest conservation, there are actually dynamic currents of local eco-political struggles under the surface of their participation in forest conservation.

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