

THE SOCIAL LIFE OF THE GREEN MONG TEXTILE

Commercialisation and Alternative Discourses of
Value in Thailand

by

Caroline M. Harper

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the Degree of PhD in the Department of Anthropology,
School of Oriental and African Studies, University of
London.

February 1992



ProQuest Number: 10731563

All rights reserved

INFORMATION TO ALL USERS

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.



ProQuest 10731563

Published by ProQuest LLC (2017). Copyright of the Dissertation is held by the Author.

All rights reserved.

This work is protected against unauthorized copying under Title 17, United States Code
Microform Edition © ProQuest LLC.

ProQuest LLC.
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 – 1346

Abstract

This thesis examines how material culture, specifically the Mong textile, is used in society and how an analysis of these uses can inform us of social processes. Discussion takes a contextual approach whereby the object is analysed at different points in its social life, ultimately focusing on alternative discourses of value and the conflict generated between different readings and interpretations. After an introduction to the Mong textile (Chapter One) and the fieldwork community (Chapter Two) the textile is placed in village context. Through a radical analysis of women's position in the village (Chapter Three & Four) and through an examination of the textile in Mong myth and cultural use, the textile is shown to play an important role in legitimising social relations and reproducing social institutions (Chapter Five). Changes in production (Chapter Six) are part of a new commercial trade and in this form the Mong textile provides an income for Mong and specifically for women, who are shown to adopt new patterns of residence and productive relations (Chapter Seven). Varying uses and values of the textile reveal conflict, a result of differences in exposures and knowledge acquired by the Mong. One effect of conflict is fragmentation from within Mong society (Chapter Eight). The social life of the Mong textile outside of the Mong village supports a stereotypic image that is contributing to Mong assimilation in Thailand (Chapter Nine). Although a subordinate group, within Thailand the Mong are not seen to be totally dominated and the Mong textile thus becomes the focus of a battle between the Mong statement and an alternative ideology which attempts to appropriate the symbols of their material culture for a rival interpretation (Chapter Ten). In conclusion it is suggested that we should continue to reassess the place of material culture within anthropological study and learn from the different contexts of production and consumption, and the constantly changing relationship between subject and object.

CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
Abstract.....	2
List of Maps, Figures, Photographs and Appendices.....	4
Acknowledgements.....	5
Preface.....	6
Chapter One Introduction to The Mong and their Textile.....	20
Chapter Two The Fieldwork Community.....	53
Chapter Three Mong Women in Social Context.....	88
Chapter Four Mong Productive Relationships.....	139
Chapter Five Mong Textile Production.....	189
Chapter Six Village Textile Use.....	218
Chapter Seven The Economic Development of the Commercial Textile.....	250
Chapter Eight The Changing Use of the Mong Textile..	308
Chapter Nine Political Contexts: Mong Image in Thailand.....	347
Chapter Ten The Mong Textile and Image.....	390
Conclusion.....	439
Bibliography.....	450
Appendices.....	467

<u>Maps</u>	<u>Page</u>
Map 1: Fieldwork Locations, North Thailand.....	83
Map 2: Doi Pui Village.....	84
Map 3: Pa Glang Location, Nan Province.....	85
Map 4: Pa Glang Settlement.....	86
Map 5: Khaang Hor Village, Pa Glang Settlement.....	87

Figures

Figure 1 :Doi Pui village - Simplified lineages and households of women producers - The Yaaaj Clan.....	186
Figure 2 :Doi Pui village - Simplified lineages and households of women producers - The Lis Clan.....	187
Figure 3 :Doi Pui village - Simplified lineages and households of women producers - The Vaaaj and Thauj Clans.....	188
Figure 4: Textile producers.....	305
Figure 5: Peddlers.....	306
Figure 6: Retailing Households.....	307

Photographs

Photograph 1 Mong New Year dress.....	23
Photograph 2 Setting up a loom.....	179
Photograph 3 Preparing hemp thread.....	197
Photograph 4 Rolling hemp thread.....	200
Photograph 5 Batik tools.....	208
Photograph 6 Batik on hemp cloth.....	210
Photograph 7 Refugee women making textiles.....	277
Photograph 8 Doi Pui street peddler.....	287
Photograph 9 Parochial Mong girl from Laos.....	337
Photograph 10 Urban Hmong girl from Chiang Mai.....	339
Photograph 11 Extravaganant Mong dress.....	343
Photograph 12 Commercialised Mong fashion.....	399
Photograph 13 Doi Pui Stall.....	413

Appendices

	<u>Page</u>
1. Retailer's Finances.....	467
2. Measurements.....	468
3. Cumulative <i>Chao Khao</i> departures to countries of resettlement.....	468
4. <i>Chao Khao</i> refugees in UNHCR camps in Thailand.....	468
5. Funding committed to opium crop replacement schemes.....	469
6. Third world craft trading organisations.....	469
7. History of the refugee camps.....	470
8. Agencies involved in skills training in the refugee camps.....	471
9. The Sources of Hemp and Marijuana.....	472
10. The myth of the origin of batik.....	472
11. Captions to all photographs.....	475

Acknowledgements

Fieldwork was conducted from June 1986 to May 1988 with assistance from the Central Research Fund of London University and the research fund of the School of Oriental and African Studies, for which I am grateful. I would like to express particular thanks to Dr Andrew Turton, my supervisor, for his guidance throughout and to Dr Brian Moeran whose comments at the very beginning and very end of this study have been most helpful. In the field I am grateful for the encouragement and advice of Dr John Mckinnon of Wellington University whose period of work at the Tribal Research Institute coincided with my fieldwork. I also owe thanks to John Connel, whose help and insights after many years of working among the *Chao Khao* were informative and generously given. I ^{would} like to thank ^{would like to} ~~already mentioned~~ my research assistant, Seewiga ^{thank my} Janatsengpet, whose interest and assistance was invaluable. Of course I owe a great debt to the villagers of Pa Glang and Doi Pui and the many Mong women who took the time to teach me their skills and talk to me of their lives. Thanks must also go to the Thai authorities who allowed me to work with the Mong in Thailand. Finally I wish to thank my family and husband, whose generous help and encouragement enabled me to undertake and complete this work.

Preface

"Even the best ethnographic texts - serious, true fictions - are systems, or economies, of truth. Power and history work through them in ways their authors cannot fully control..... Ethnographic truths are thus inherently partial - committed and incomplete" (Clifford and Marcus, 1984).

Without being destructively self conscious about the "truth" of fieldwork observations any thesis is today incomplete without such debate. Clearly situations I decide to illustrate, events which I remembered, texts I read, are all selected and of necessity exclude other information and therefore influence the argument and evidence of this thesis. These accounts of fieldwork experience are increasingly common and have a place in the reflexive analysis of anthropologists even though in the crafting of such books the authors can never reveal all of what they know.

How I decided upon my area of research among Mong minorities in North Thailand, how I selected my study site and how I carried out fieldwork from June 1986 to April 1988 are, however, of importance in understanding the whole context of my research.

The idea for research evolved from several different directions. In 1984 I found myself assisting Dr McCleod at the Museum of Mankind, dipping into a range of exhibition oriented subjects and rummaging through the extensive collections in the museum's cellars. At the same time I was involved in making and marketing my own batik, the processes and creation of which fascinated me, though the profits were minimal. During that year I attended a lecture on African textiles and the lecturer produced for effect some "modern" works, essentially tourist art and of designs I would never consider buying myself but which clearly had a market somewhere.

Being involved with my own marketing I was, naturally, interested in why certain designs and colours sold well, whilst others did not. I found myself in the large London emporium of Libertys watching American tourists scoop up handfuls of "Liberty print" scarves, whilst my own, individual designer-made textiles remained unsold in the basement. Later I was to see the same scooping process of selection in the night market in Chiang Mai (Thailand's second largest city in the North of the country), for many of the same reasons. Meanwhile, around the corner from Libertys, auctioneers of exotic arts and textiles were selling products from around the world at prices which enabled them to net large profits. Clearly I was now entering the world of taste, trade, designer labels, status, image and imagination.

In 1981, after finishing my BA degree, I had taken a primarily tourist trip in South East Asia, encountering en route, as do most tourists, several of the minorities of Thailand. I recalled, in particular, their striking clothes and began considering why people dress in this way, whether what appeared to be uniform dress in fact had more variety than was obvious to me and how these people managed to sustain their material culture when surrounded by a fast changing society. Many other questions also arose from textile techniques to political status and I was particularly intrigued with the batik of the Mong, labelled in all the tourist literature as the only mainland South East Asian minority to make batik, a craft which they brought with them from China.

By the end of 1985 I had formulated an idea for research and written my research proposal. This centred on the study of the commercialised Mong textile and the processes of change from home use to commercial sale. This seemed to be occurring alongside changes in the political status of the minority population in the nation state of Thailand and, I suggested, could be part of the process of minority assimilation. I was also interested in development strategies, which included textile production and which enabled resettlement of villages from the highlands into the lowlands. The repercussions of the changes in Mong internal textile use were also of interest such as the changing context of textile production and Mong social relations of production and I wished to investigate the

aesthetic judgements and values of a textile by different observers. I was therefore concerned not just with the textile product and its physical manufacture but with the entire social process that surrounded its production and the many factors involved in its evaluation.

My analysis was to be concerned with more than comment on the formal and aesthetic qualities of the object or on its production or symbolic content. I wanted to view it within a variety of contexts; with the awareness that although made by an individual it is actually constructed by a community and that although it may be made with one person in mind it actually has many audiences. It may be used at one time in one way but can serve many functions and have several roles. It may mean tradition to one person but change to another and influences of a political or economic nature may affect its production and be reflected in the product. The intention of my research was, therefore, to examine the material culture of the Mong, specifically their dress, within its social context; asking why and how the textiles change, and in the process of change how material culture can inform us of the lives of its producers. Material culture was to provide a medium through which I could look at change and commercialisation of the Mong culture in Thailand.

When I arrived in the field I set about searching for a fieldwork location. One of the main questions asked of me at this time was "where was my village" and I wanted to

locate a village where production of traditional and commercial textiles could be found. I visited numerous places but found that production in most villages was limited. Although my major interest was with the Mong I also looked at other minority groups including the Lisu and stayed for a while in a Thai village which made commercialised goods in connection with a development project. Although I was very interested in this village, I found the links with the development group too close to enable the study I had intended.

The situation in minority villages was complicated by the lack of cultivatable land meaning hemp production was declining with most villagers buying ready made cotton from markets. Traditional home clothes were still made and still widely worn, but in smaller amounts. Both men and women often wear T-shirts and trousers or *phasins* (wrap-around Thai skirts). My choice seemed to be between a remote village where traditional textiles were made and worn but, due to a declining economy, in smaller amounts or a more accessible village where traditional clothes were worn less often but commercialised textiles were made for tourists. Neither of these options seemed to provide what I was looking for and I realised that I was attempting to make a model to study.

After a few weeks I visited the village of Doi Pui on the outskirts of Chiang Mai and much frequented by tourists. Suddenly I found myself surrounded by women, men and

children in traditional clothes, by stalls full of commercialised textiles and by a hive of trading activity. Sitting in front of every stall were a woman or two sewing, seemingly covering the entire range of Mong textiles from traditional skirts to embroidered shoulder bags. I was however reluctant to choose this place as "my village" of study. First of all it was large, there were many Thai and Chinese in the village, there were clearly many drug addicts and trading of opium appeared an almost open activity. The issues here from tourism to drug abuse could fill many a thesis. However for the first time I felt excited by what I had seen. I stayed in the village for a few days at the house of one of the Mong shop owners and then left to follow up another location.

The second location was Khaang Hor village, far away from any tourist trail close to the border with Laos and within the Pa Glang resettlement area. Due to its proximity to refugee camps the villagers had been trading in textiles produced in the camp and had been making their own, some with the help of the Ockenden development group (a refugee NGO) and others on their own initiative. This village was also larger than I had wanted and full of complications related to its resettlement. By this time, however, I had realised that I should not be looking for one village. What I wished to study was part of a process and had implications which crossed village boundaries. It was also part of what was happening to all minority villages in Thailand.

In my first few weeks in Thailand I had been meeting as many people as I could, Mong and Thai, to try and identify research locations. I had also begun working in Chiang Mai visiting the night bazaar and shops trading in textiles. I soon began to realise that faces from many of the places I had visited were showing up in other locations and gradually a network of people became clear to me, a network which has become the focus for my study. The network consists of villagers from Doi Pui, from Pa Glang and Mong living in Chiang Mai. There are families with relatives in all three locations, all involved in trade. There are families from all three locations who trade in the Chiang Mai market. The same families also all travel to a refugee settlement near Pa Glang and to Ban Vinai, a large refugee camp on the border with Laos, where they buy goods. The families also trade with each other, ordering goods from villagers and selling goods to shop owners. The connections between these locations are not just coincidence. They are related to the fact that both villages are undergoing rapid processes of change and have taken to trading to provide a living. The villagers from Pa Glang have been quite mobile since resettlement on poor land and some have come to Chiang Mai, Doi Pui and the night bazaar to become involved in trading full time. The existence of this network of people naturally became clear over time and I began work in Doi Pui village using links between Doi Pui and Pa Glang to later work in Khaang Hor village, part of the Pa Glang resettlement. During

all this time I also travelled the network myself, between the night bazaar and other villages, handicraft production shops, cultural centres and the refugee camps.

My entry into this network was greatly enabled by a friend who also later became my research assistant, and since I left Thailand has enrolled herself on an MA course at Chiang Mai University. Our work generated an interest for her in Mien textiles, now the subject of her own dissertation. Clearly her presence and help influenced my own collection and analysis of data and a description of her background is important. She is a trader in minority textiles, is of Thai ethnicity but being married to a Mong for many years she speaks the language well. She speaks Thai as her native language and English as her third language learnt in childhood from an English relative. I met her through a mutual friend and began to help her and her husband in their search for financial support for a hostel they run for minority children. After several months of contact I asked Seewiga to help me in my work as a translator and friend. She agreed, but refused direct payment regarding it as a learning process for herself and so I paid her wages to her hostel to support children.

Since I had abandoned the idea of a single fieldwork location I had also come to realise my exposure to the Mong language was not going to be enough to enable fieldwork without an interpreter. I had studied Thai intensively before I went to Thailand, had lessons from

the time I arrived in the field and had spent some time in a Thai village looking at its production of commercial textiles and was thus able to converse reasonably in Thai. However I now found myself working in Mong villages where men conversed easily in Thai, where some young Mong people couldn't speak Mong at all (and consequently old people couldn't speak to their grandchildren) but where women largely conversed in Mong using their Thai only in sales talk. Many people preferred to use Thai with me rather than ^a attempt to understand my fledgling Mong. I thus decided the use of an interpreter was essential if I was to complete fieldwork within the time allowed by my financial resources and I have not regretted that decision despite the complexity of issues it raises.

In early ethnographies the role of the interpreter or research assistant was never mentioned. Many anthropologists seemed to appear in the field, find their village and settle down to "learning the language" which they appeared to have accomplished within a few months, after which they unlocked the secrets of the society in front of them. This has now been revealed as the myth it clearly is but for some time I agonised about the effect of my assistant on my own perceptions. This effect cannot be classified into clearly negative and positive influences since they seem to be interwoven. Because she did not belong to a specific village I was able to meet many people without undue bias, though of course her own relationships with villagers had their own complications.

My interpreter was, at the same time, translator, friend and informant. She generally worked only as an interpreter and although I would have appreciated more help in data collection my financial resources did not allow for this expense. She also figures in my research herself, along with other traders, and I hope without undue bias. Being an outsider to Mong society herself she faced many of the problems I was encountering. With her help I was able to reach aspects of women's lives that are very personal and potentially difficult to discuss. This was especially the case as far as women's emotional life was concerned, much of which related to the physical and spiritual insecurity of women who were not married, were between marriages or were never intending to marry again and through which I have interpreted aspects of women's social standing in Mong society.

We spent a large amount of our time with women who were alternately gossiping, laughing and often crying. It was more emotionally exhausting than I expected and I wasn't able to share many of their common experiences, my height and blond hair were the least of the cultural, emotional and physical differences that kept us separate. As has been frequently noted the power relations between ethnographer and informant are not necessarily erased by commonalities of sex. In addition although women share experiences we do so in very different contexts and although there are, arguably, similarities in experience the idea of the universal experience of women has been

shown to be erroneous and has inhibited the development of gender studies (Moore, 1988). However, the women did talk, I believe, honestly, about their lives and how they saw their world and in my interpretation I have acknowledged the ethnocentric problems inherent in such analysis. My assistant was guide to me when I accompanied her as her assistant on her trading missions to the refugee camps. In villages she identified people's relationships as she saw them (of course not without bias), and confided all the unsaid gossip whilst I guided her in the sort of information I needed to make up into a whole the scattered pieces of the picture. We discussed endlessly the merits of different textiles, the prices, the tastes of consumers, the problems of making, of buying, the dangers of trading and the life of a Mong, especially Mong women, life which I watched, which she had known as a foreigner and which neither of us could ever totally experience. Several people from my fieldwork locations became key informants, but I wish to change the names of them all. Some for political reasons but most because they confided personal accounts to me which are primarily their own affair and should remain so. No doubt a well informed Mong could identify them from their histories and I shall have to trust their integrity.

Summary of Chapters and Themes

My approach as I describe in Chapter One is to follow the social life of the Mong textile through the different contexts of its production and use. The textile is thus analysed in a variety of contexts from the village to the market and in a variety of uses from ritual to ideological. My argument is that material culture is used within a society to legitimate and reproduce social relations. However, the changing circumstances of Mong social relations are creating marginal discourses within the broader confines of minority experience. Thus the values ascribed to textiles are changing in accordance with the social relations they legitimate. Rather than describing social relationships in relation to rules I intend to create a picture of something which is lived. Whilst existing resources provide valuable material on Mong social relationships they fail to describe Mong women's relationships as lived experience and it is Mong women's *experience* of their society as they related it to me which I hope to convey. Thus in Chapters Three and Four these aspects of Mong life are portrayed. It is evident that Mong women at different times in their social lives encounter very different relationships and experience them in sometimes contradictory ways. They can be seen to act (at different times) as both insiders and outsiders in relation to their lineages. Thus it is the *difference* in experience and understanding which here informs us of social processes. In Chapter Five I return

to the role of material culture in legitimising and reproducing social relationships and the Mong textile is shown to act as a social support mechanism validating the social relationships identified in the earlier chapters.

The second part of this thesis introduces change as it is being experienced in Mong life and cultural production. The theme of women, and particularly the marginalised woman, continues as we begin to see how Mong life is being subjected to a wide range of new influences. The textile takes center stage at this point and its production for commercial sale is examined in detail. What emerges are the new productive relationships and the new opportunities upon which marginalised women are attempting to capitalise. These significant changes in social relations of production are compounded by conflict which is a result of different understandings of textile use and is exhibited along two main axes, between the old and the young and between women and men.

An important theme in relation to the commercialisation of the textile is the power of the consumer as an ideological force. It is the argument of this thesis that the commercialisation of the Mong textile forms part of the process of the assimilation of the Mong in Thailand. Whilst integration and full assimilation would suggest the disappearance of the Mong as an ethnic group, partial assimilation and incorporation involves the maintenance of

ethnic identity but the partial appropriation and emptying of Mong value systems. This process of assimilation can be seen operating both within Mong society, where conflict in textile use reflects fragmentation in Mong social order, and outside of Mong society in relation to the Thai state. It is in this latter context, the Thai arena, that we see the Mong textile reproduced in supporting a political discourse beyond the control of the Mong who produced it. Thus the Mong textile becomes a battleground between the Mong saying who they are in the face of a dominant ideology appropriating the symbols of their material culture for a rival interpretation. The textile thus becomes a focus between rival discourses, and the maintenance of these discourses reveals the political content of material culture. This thesis thus intends to demonstrate the social life of the Mong textile in different ideological settings. Finally it is important to add that this thesis does not claim to be the authoritative^{at} view of Mong culture from any one dominant theoretical stance, it is rather just one viewpoint which, along with many other views, may contribute to our understanding of the Mong and the way we use material culture.

CHAPTER ONEINTRODUCTION TO THE MONG AND THEIR TEXTILE

This thesis is concerned with the material culture of the Mong, specifically their textiles. My intention is to place the textile in contemporary production context to examine how material culture is used in a society and why and how it changes. From this perspective questions will be raised which concern the way we use material culture within a society to legitimate social relations and reproduce social institutions and what happens to the product and the people in the context of change. The thesis is therefore also about culture change, how change takes place, what motivates change and what happens to the actors and the product during the process of change. The product is seen to have a social life of its own removing the limitations of one context of analysis. This social life will introduce the reader to alternative discourses of value both within Mong society and outside in the wider arena of the Thai context. In this broader perspective, but within the context of cultural legitimation, it is about the condition of the Mong in Thailand as a cultural group, the manipulation and control of their image and the process of cultural fragmentation, incorporation and assimilation. It is also intended to illustrate a

cultural product in social, political and economic context as a living part of a society, responding and adapting to change.

The Textile

The Mong textile as dress

The subject of my study in its narrowest form is the Mong dress. In Thailand there are two main dress forms: one of the Green Mong (*Moob Ntsuab*¹) and one of the White Hmong (*Hmoob Dlawb*).² The Green Mong women in Thailand wear a black long sleeved jacket with embroidered cuffs and front edges and a collar embroidered on the reverse side. They wear a pleated three panelled skirt, plain at the top, batiked in the centre and cross stitched at the bottom. Round their waists long strips of cloth are wound attached

¹In general, within the text, I use the Mong script in the case of proper names. Green Mong do not aspirate the word Mong (*Moob*) hence the spelling differs from the White Hmong (*Hmoob*) where the word is aspirated. There are several Mong scripts developed by missionaries and the Chinese in China which use romanised and Chinese alphabets. There are also scripts developed by Mong leaders (Tapp 1989, Lemoine 1972). The script in common use is that of the Barney-Smalley system developed by Bertrais (1964) and Heimbach (1979) for the White Hmong dialect and adapted for use with the Green Mong (Xiong, Xiong and Xiong 1983). In pronouncing Mong words it should be noted that there are no final consonants and those shown indicate one of the eight tones. When two vowels are placed together they are pronounced as an 'ng' sound.

²Other dress variations exist with Flowery and Striped Mong who are to be found in small numbers in Thailand and generally intermarry with the Green and White Mong. In clothing, these differences are exhibited in patternings on skirts and stripes on shirt sleeves.

to which are tassels or embroidered tails hanging at the back and an apron, either black or decorated with embroidery and applique, at the front. They wear leggings, usually plain though today these are rarer and flip-flops or plimsolls replace bare feet. They pile their hair up in a large bun angled towards the front of their head and decorated from time to time with silver pins and chains. Round their necks they frequently wear silver rings, important items worn from birth which serve to tell the spirits that this person is part of the human not the spirit world and also, when worn in rings of five, indicate the wealth of the family.

Men wear short waisted jackets also embroidered on the cuffs and front edges. The characteristic low crutched trousers are made from one unseamed piece of cloth and are held up with a belt which hangs to the front with embroidered ends and usually covers up a bare midriff. Plain black jackets are also worn. Men also wear a neck ring and in festivals wear a black skull cap with a bright red pom pom on top. Like women at festivals they are decked with silver in the form of coins and triangle pieces hanging from belts and purses and sewn onto their clothes. The traditional textile products are, therefore, skirts, jackets, trousers, belts, aprons, leggings, head scarfs for women, hats for men, wrappings for babies, baby



Photograph 1: Green Mong (Moob Ntsuab) woman from Pa Glang settlement in full dress at Mong New Year Celebrations.

carriers, bags and shoes (of hemp fibre), Other textile products include plain rolls of hemp for ceremonial use and squares of cloth used as gifts.

The dress of the White Hmong differs considerably with women and men wearing blue wide legged trousers. Hmong women wear embroidered box hats and white hemp skirts on special occasions. This classic dress style is not uniform and the villagers in the two locations in which I worked wore the dress to different degrees for different reasons. Whilst some people could be called "traditionalists" in their cultural attitudes and lifestyle others look to Thailand to inform them of a new way to live and new codes of conduct. Many fall in between employing aspects of both worlds.

History of the Mong textile

The history of the Mong textile is difficult to trace. A few accounts of Mong dress are to be found in materials written about Chinese Mong, or Miao as they are known in China, by missionaries and historians. Other accounts about the textiles of southern minorities and Mong are found in Chinese records.

The use of hemp as an important cloth among southern minorities is mentioned in a variety of texts documenting Mong in China. Ruyi Yih-Fu (1960) describes its production among the Magpie Miao (who call themselves the

Hmong Ntsu) of southern Sichuan. They also indigo dye, batik and trade in hemp as cloth and handicraft. Lin Yueh-wha (1944) describes the Miao of Yunnan who spin and weave hemp cloth and also embroider elaborate and delicate patterns. Samuel R Clarke (1911) working in Guizhou describes a variety of cloth among different groups of Miao. He identifies cotton, calico, silk and a coarse cloth which is possibly hemp. Of interest is the death song he recounts to "show the way" to the deceased. It describes a meeting in the next world with a person finely dressed and a person dressed in coarse cloth; it is the latter who is the ancestor of the Miao. This association of the Mong with coarse and less fine cloth and the Chinese with all things fine is part of the Mong perception of their history also related by Mong in Thailand.

Margaret Mickey (1947) describes the Cowrie Shell Miao of Guizhou "who made hemp cloth only for special uses of their own and straw sandals only for their own use". It is possible the straw sandals³ were unwoven hemp, ^{Hemp fibre} ~~which~~ may also have been the nature of straw belts and overblouses which she noted. De Beauclair (1960) working in China in 1947, notes that "from the most ancient times" the "barbarians" of NW Hunan produced a special cloth as tribute known as *tsung pu* (the name of the cloth). In the

³In Thailand the Mong use hemp sandals^a specifically for dressing the dead at funerals.

Ch'ing dynasty the *Hung Chou* Miao are noted as being skilled in spinning, weaving and producing a special grass cloth. David C. Graham (1954) notes from his stay in Guizhou in the late 1930's that the *Ch'uan* Miao of Guizhou weave on home made wooden looms. He says "formally most of their clothing was made of hemp cloth, which was undyed and therefore white, woven on their looms by the women today much of their clothing is made of blue cotton cloth bought from the Chinese" (1954:3). However he does note that the best skirts of the women are "Pleated and dyed in a manner resembling somewhat the batiks of Java" (1954:3). Mention of the Miao costume is found in books from the Han, Tang (617-907 AD) and Ming (1368-1644 AD) dynasties (Rossi 1988). The textile clearly has a long history and its production in China continues today. In my own work with the Miao in Hunan, Guizhou and Yunnan I have seen them working in hemp, flax and cotton and use indigo, natural and chemical dyes in their textiles. Their costume is widely promoted by the Chinese authorities in a number of colourful texts as evidence of a rich and flourishing culture⁴.

⁴This ideological manipulation of the Mong image is to be found in China as well as Thailand as will be discussed in later chapters.

Literature on the Mong

I have not attempted here a detailed ethnography of the Mong. This has partially been documented in many texts (Bernatzik 1970, Binney 1971, Lemoine 1972, Dessaint 1975, Geddes 1976, Mottin 1980). In addition the relationship of the Mong with the Chinese and the enduring effect of their history which informs many aspects of their present lives has been the subject of two major works on the Mong (Radley 1986, Tapp 1989). There are also many texts on the Mong in China, written mainly by missionaries and others working in China before the 1949 revolution (Clarke 1911, Graham 1926, 1954, Lin Yueh-Hwa 1944, De Beauclair 1956, 1960, Ruey Yih Fu 1960, Lebar, Hickey and Musgrove 1964, Lindy Li Mark 1967) or commenting on that period (Deal 1971) but there are now appearing more recent works by scholars allowed into China during the 1980's (Rossi 1988, Tapp 1990). There are also works by Chinese scholars, many of which attempt to define ethnic categories (Fei Hsiao Tung 1981). There are many texts on Mong in other parts of Asia. The distribution of the Mong extends throughout S.E. Asia from North Vietnam, Laos, Northern Burma and through to Tibet (Lemoine 1972) and their southward migrations is described by Savina (1930). In Laos the Mong in relation to opium have been studied in Westermeyer's "Poppies, Pipes and People" (1982) and there has been interest in their relationship with the State,

Mong traditions and characteristics and the basic economy (Barney 1961, Yang Dao 1975, Vang Tou Fou 1979, Gunn 1983).

Studies of the Mong economy in Thailand have received considerable attention although the earlier works lack detailed baseline data which would have been of comparative value. Many are based on the situation in the 50's and 60's detailing swidden practices (Kuhn 1956, Geddes 1976, Walker 1981). Van Roy's (1971) study tried to create a highland model of a "hilltribe" economy, a model which was disputed by Cooper (1984) questioning the uniformity of economies between ethnic groups. The multifarious and rather confused economy of today is given attention in Cooper's "Resource scarcity and the Hmong response" (1984) which provides a more contemporary examination of the political economy of the Mong within the constrained environment in which they must operate. This consideration of the Mong within the Thai state is also considered by Walker (1979) who identifies the three themes of borderland security, opium eradication and watershed protection as being goals which serve the needs of the government and country at large rather than the needs of the Mong themselves.

A consideration of the Mong as highlanders in a broad developmental context has been the subject of McKinnon and Vienne "Hill Tribes Today" (1989). The volume of collected papers attempt a broad perspective of the status

of highlanders presenting the government's position (Bhruksasri) and the more radical challenge to the government programme (McKinnon, Kesmanee, Eudley). A study devoted specifically to the Mong and development projects is the thesis by Gar Yia Lee (himself a Hmong) "Effect of development measures on the socio-economy of the White Hmong" (1981, unpublished). In his thesis he illustrates the poor success of the opium eradication programme and details many aspects of the White Hmong economy questioning whether it can adapt to change. Many of the above works also include descriptions of Mong traditional practices, in part to relate tradition to concepts of ethnicity and aspects of change. Writing specifically on traditional practices Lemoine has produced several volumes documenting traditions of the Mong in Laos, Thailand (1972) and as refugees (1983). Bertrais' study of marriage (1978) and Chindarsi's volume on religion (1976) provide useful detail of Mong practices if not much analysis. Demographic and population studies of the Mong have also been forthcoming. Many population issues are covered within broader texts (Cooper 1984) related to pressure on land and economic issues. Other works look specifically at the Mong population in relation to health and family planning (Kundstadter, Kesmanee and Pothiart, 1987).

A whole new category of work on the Mong has been emerging from the United States in the 1980's as refugees become the focus of interest. A newsletter (Southeast Asian

Refugees) is regularly produced with details of Mong related publications, many of which refer to the social and cultural conditions of the Mong in America and the problems of their lives such as sudden death syndrome (where refugees died suddenly with no physical symptoms), Mong writing systems, illiteracy and integration.

The material culture of the Mong and other highlanders receives sketchy attention with the exception of a few studies. Work on the Yao by Lemoine (~~Yao Ceremonial Paintings~~ 1982) provides a detailed history and religious explanation of their fast disappearing paintings. Several books attempt to place the Mong and other minority textiles in a social context. Cambell's "From the Hands of the Hills" (1978) covers the technical production of the textiles of several minority groups but fails to set that production in any context, romanticising through pictures and poetry the life of minority women. Paul and Elaine Lewis's popular book "Peoples of the Golden Triangle" (1984), draws heavily on material culture for illustration. It can be praised for bringing to a wide audience the Considerable variety in the cultural contexts of the minorities, variety which is subsumed in common representation (in Thailand) under the single category of "Hill Tribes". The Lewises also raise some of the problems experienced by minorities and describe some of the social, political and cultural contexts. However, in their allocation of themes to different groups they wrongly attribute characteristics (desire for harmony

(Karen) independence (Hmong) and propriety (Mien)) which cannot be supported from empirical evidence. The book briefly refers to change in the last two pages but does not focus on this, generally describing in a relatively brief text traditional contexts of living.

The catalogue of an exhibition of mainly White Hmong textiles produced by the John Michael Kohler Arts Center (1985) tackles tradition and change. In fairly limited space separate papers describe Hmong resettlement in the USA, Hmong music and Hmong traditional and commercial textiles. The interpretation of textiles relies heavily on verbal interviews with refugees and being unable to explore contexts in detail provides a fairly brief description of meaning and usage. The account although brief is, nevertheless, useful and corresponds to much of my own data. However, it fails to take account of some important gender differences⁵ and cultural associations. Concentrating, as it does, mostly on the experience of the refugees from Laos and commercial production in the USA it clearly cannot focus on village change. Some authors try to deduce meaning from material culture, including Cohen (1986 unpublished) in relation to the white Hmong cross motif and Hinton (1974) with the Karen, but the results are not convincing because the product is artificially isolated from its context of production and use. There

⁵For example the text fails to distinguish between the different burial places for male and female placentas.

are a few other sources on *Pa Ndaou*, the needlework of the White Hmong stimulated by an American exhibition of needle^ework (White 1982). Detailed description of the art of batik is recorded by Wolf (1974), and Buhler (1974). Three papers from America on textiles in social context indicate new work on this area may be forthcoming. (Conquergood 1986, Donnelly 1986, Mallinson 1984).

Mong women

The above review details the best known of the considerable texts on the Mong and highlanders in Thailand. Within these texts there is one very noticeable gap and that is the subject of gender. Mong women as major producers of the Mong textile feature promin^eantly in this account. Women, of course, have always been present in ethnographic accounts but the main problem has been one of representation. Increasingly gender studies are recognised to reveal a whole new perspective on societies which have already been well documented. Although they often cannot be separated from a large range of other issues, those of gender and the perceptions of women cannot be ignored in attempting to understand other societies. In all the above texts references to women and to their perspective of their societies are very limited. Cooper's "Sexual Inequality among the Mong" (in McKinnon 1983) fails to illustrate the complexity of Mong women's lives. Other references to women within texts are often brief and badly informed, in part due to male author bias.

Within this thesis I intend to illustrate the various roles of material culture within a society. In its contexts of production and consumption material culture becomes a medium through which social and political changes can be viewed. A second theme will be the position of women, who as producers of textiles have been at the forefront of change. The consideration of gender in the anthropological study has gained needed attention over the past twenty years. As has been correctly identified studying women within anthropology is not just a matter of "add women and stir" (Boxer 1982:258). Their roles cut across every sector of life and cannot be boxed into separate women entitled sections. Recognition of the neglect of women's perspective in the ethnographer's account brought about a new anthropology of women in the early 1970's whose primary aim was to remove the male bias in the analysis of women's roles. However, this approach was soon recognised as deriving from an ethnocentric perspective on power relations which failed to recognise difference in relationships in other ways. The privileged position of the woman^a ethnographer which was held to be a key factor in exploring women's anthropology was dismissed as it became clear that women in communication with women do not necessarily hold privileged positions and that the categories of woman and man cannot be assumed and are culturally constructed (MacKormack and Strathern 1980). Thus women are not considered innately more able to study women not least because as Shapiro informs us: "if it

really took one to know one, the entire field of anthropology would be an aberration" (1981:124-5). The inevitability of a privileged power position in relation to the position of the ethnographer has been correctly identified as biasing the approach which argued for the universal women's experience. Central to a new analysis is gender studies as opposed to the study of women and the analysis of women from a feminist perspective. This it is argued should account for the difference in women's experience and move away from the universal woman (Moore 1988).

The concerns voiced by anthropologists involved in ~~fem~~inist anthropology have been summarised by Moore (1988) as comprising three main areas: firstly the isolation of womens studies from the whole discipline and its subsequent marginalisation; secondly the growth of disciplinary bias towards women studying women, when in fact the notion of the universal woman is clearly false; and thirdly the domination of western discourse which leads to ethnocentrism within a ~~fem~~inist anthropology. My discussion of the Mong woman as producer illustrates that, as with any other apparent sub-division within the discipline (such as economic or political, historical or symbolic anthropology) it cannot be separated from a more complex whole. Although, through necessity, a focus has to be made, gender issues are fundamental to the most basic issues of cross cultural investigation. On the issue of the universal woman I believe the gender of the

anthropologist cannot be ignored. Access to different parts of a society can be inhibited or advantaged by ones sex. However, the problem arises more at the level of interpretation and it is here that basic assumptions can be challenged. As this thesis will illustrate, the male bias in existing studies on the Mong (which have focused on the strength of the patrilineal lineage) have prejudiced alternative views of women's social relationships. This thesis, therefore, attempts to represent difference in women's understanding of their own society, ^{and} ~~Not~~ just the difference between women and men ← incomplete sentence but the difference between women and women. Finally the issue of ethnocentrism is one that must be recognised by any anthropologist, female or male. The power relations between the ethnographer and the women or community of study cannot be ignored. If the concept of the universal woman is ^{ve} ~~dis~~garded ^{ve} ~~than~~ the realities of difference in experience are ^r ~~b~~rought into sharper focus. Within this account power relations between Mong women and men and between Mong and those who interpret the Mong are central themes. However, rather than illustrating dominance, this thesis intends to demonstrate different reactions to dominant ideologies. In the following chapters, therefore, women play a key role as producers and traders of textiles and their position is explored within social contexts to illustrate their power relations, how they find value in Mong textiles and the way textiles give value to their social relations.

Approaches to textile analysis

~~The textile is used as an interpretive tool in a wide variety of contexts and~~ Material culture is found to have different uses according to the interests of the producers and consumers. For example political statements can be made: the Mong, as will be shown, use their material culture to legitimate social and political relations. Within the nation states of Thailand and China the continuity and history of the Mong textile can be interpreted as evidence which supports government statements, for example, in China that the Miao are flourishing under the Han Chinese authority. Similarly in Thailand it can be used to deny that Mong culture is disappearing. The continuity and history of the textile is also needed in relation to issues of authenticity: materials sought by collectors must, according to their criteria, have a history to be authentic. Certainly the history is relevant in some interpretations of the evolution of style and it is used to prove theories of ethnic identity and evolution of ethnic groups. The details of the Mong textile are used not just to define ethnic groups but links between ethnic groups. For example Schuster (1937) compares patterns of aboriginal textile designs from South West China with peasant design from Eastern Europe suggesting a relationship between the traditions of groups. But this is based on purely visual analysis.

Associations between textile patterns and perceived cultural traits are also drawn but are often speculative. For example Hinton (1974) in an article entitled "The Dress of the Pwo Karen of North Thailand", retreats into a detailed description of designs which are then suggested to represent certain characteristics of the people who make them. Skaw Karen dress is said to be drab whereas Pwo Karen is bright despite the fact that the Pwo are said to hold a pessimistic outlook on life. Meanings of patterns and textiles are given and denied but with no explanation of how cultural trait associations are derived. According to Hinton the patterns of the Karen are given names but are said to hold no "intrinsic meaning", although this may well be because Hinton could not (understandably) elucidate meaning "Their names are merely descriptive of their forms ... and their function is purely decorative" (Hinton 1974:34).

Cohen (1987) also examines design in detail intending to reveal the meaning of Mong patterns. He examines the presence of the Mong cross in textile products and its evolution in commercial items and argues that the traditional cross becomes barely recognisable but is still present in commercial products. The patterns are taken as proof that Mong textile traditions are enduring and the cross is said to hold "deep structural cultural meaning" because of its predominance in Mong ritual and on the costume. This meaning however, according to Cohen "is one of which the members of the culture are probably

completely unaware" (1987:3). He also adds that a western consumer public are "unaware of and probably uninterested in Hmong culture [to them] the Hmong designs could hardly harbour even a hidden message, but are of purely decorative interest" (1987:3). Cohen thus becomes the only person who actually sees "meaning" in Hmong designs which is clearly erroneous and reminds us of Levi-Strauss' warning that:"All Anthropologists are free but everywhere men are in Chains". The danger of all this analysis, focused as it is on a relatively limited context, is a tendency to isolate it from the social production. Cohen admits his analysis is based on conjectures but, with very little examination of social production he claims "No connection whatsoever could be established between the Mong cross and Mong social organisation" (1987:27). This leads him to suggest the design is of exogenous origin taken from the Chinese. This immediately raises the question of authenticity in any design idea but also illustrates the limits of deducing meaning from design particularly when the evolution of design is so obscured by time.

Thus the critical factor in any analysis of change in patterns is not how patterns change but the conditions which are necessary to enable them to do so. The meanings of shapes and designs will almost always elude us because we were not there at the beginning. As Spooner writes: "We have been quick to see symbolic values, but we have seen them in the motifs and designs rather than in the

production and functions. It is difficult enough to find or gather information about the symbolic dimension of their use since there are barely any historical records and the social context has changed. It is almost impossible to study the symbolism of their design either historically or ethnographically because the tradition was fully formed when it came into historical view"

(1988:210). Similarly the historical information on Mong costume, although of interest in establishing the age and considerable history of the Mong (which in itself establishes a continuity of tradition), tells us little about their textile, beyond its physical construction. Looking to limited historical records for such information is generally inadequate since textiles are produced within specific social relations of production and socio-political contexts, the total reconstruction of which is impossible.

ls
115
An analysis of group identity based on similarities or differences in material culture, or an analysis of evolution of design, to indicate migratory habits and historical traditions makes ^{is} good use of available historical evidence, but ~~are~~ ^{is} still unsatisfactory in explaining a product. The historical information and references to the Mong and their cloth must thus be seen as valuable in that they place the Mong in a historical tradition which will influence Mong perceptions and indicate some direction and depth to their culture. However the limitations of these references restrict

further extrapolation. There are therefore limits to the messages which can be drawn from material culture, particularly if the culture is viewed in isolation from its context of production. However the textile can provide considerable information if viewed within a production context. The object should not be viewed as static but constantly changing and subject to many interpretations, all of which provide alternative realities to any society.

The textile as interpretive tool

The Mong costume can be worn with startling effect and it does not go unnoticed by Mong, Thai and other, foreign, observers. The vivid orange and red cross stitch along the hem of the Mong skirt contrasts with the dark central panel of indigo dyed batik especially if it is further decorated with applique and silver pieces. When the women adorn their hair with decorative hairpins and wear heavy silver necklaces and the men their low crutched Mong trousers they attract considerable attention. In the streets of lowland Thai cities this presentation may be interpreted as display or performance by some observers. The more elaborate New Year clothes, decked with silver, also draw attention from other Mong and form part of a courting ceremony. This same basic dress, without the silver purses and coins, is worn daily as women work in the fields and the home. The heavy skirts and the hemp cloth from which they are made also comprise part of marriage payments from the bride's family. Elaborate wedding clothes used to be stored until death and were then used to dress the deceased, although this is now rarely practised. More commonly Mong dress the deceased in several layers of hemp and silk clothes, and the body lies, before burial, inside the house in an open coffin along with scores of presentation hemp squares, given by children and grandchildren, and under swathes of undyed hemp cloth suspended from walls and ceilings, along which the soul travels to the "next world". The processed hemp thread and

the finished, undyed cloth is used on numerous ceremonial occasions by shamans and household heads. In an undyed form the cloth is used to communicate with spirits and the souls of the deceased. In ceremonies it will be used to call back the wandering souls of an ill person or to summon the spirit of a child into the womb of a woman who cannot conceive. Mong cloth is thus intended to dress the body and also to serve ceremonial, metaphoric, emblematic and symbolic functions. Carrying many values it is used by different members of society, in different ways, at different stages in their lives.

Emblematic use

The emblematic functions of the Mong textile are clearly seen when it is dyed, decorated and made into clothing. In this form it can be used to denote differences according to origins, age, wealth, marital status and sex. On specific occasions the dress can be used to identify marital status. For example, at New Year festivities an unmarried woman and man will wear highly decorated cloth in contrast to married women and men who wear quieter and less elaborate dress. Cloth usage identifies wealth and associated status. A funeral of a rich man, in terms of both material wealth and kinship relations, will include scores of hemp gift cloths and sumptuous clothing. The funeral of a poor man may be carried out years after his death, when miniature "spirit clothes" made of hemp cloth are used to call back his soul and conduct the ceremony that could not previously be afforded.

The detail of different designs can be read to indicate regional origins, although this is not a rigid identifying criterion. The jackets of both men and women are divided by the Mong of Pa Glang and Doi Pui into three variations: Pa Glang Mong (used to define Mong from the area of Nan and the border regions), Chiang Mai Mong (used to define Mong from the north central area of Thailand - often families resident in Thailand for over 100 years) and Lao Mong (Mong from Laos). The varying features of the jackets are based on how they fasten and on the embroidery. Thus the Pa Glang design includes a zigzag crossover front (as in Photograph 1). The Chiang Mai design has straight front panels (as in Photograph 3). The Lao design includes embroidery not only on cuff edges and the front borders but also on the main body of the jacket (as in Photograph 9). These differences in design do not rigidly define origins according to clan or specific geographical regions. However, they are used broadly to determine where women come from and their geographical knowledge and experience. Since clans can in some cases be determined by geographical location, the likelihood rather than the specifics of clan affiliation can also be judged. This lack of specific ownership of pattern or style is in contrast to other societies where specialised designs are linked to the property of families or individual weavers. For example in parts of Indonesia, to wear someone else's design is to be classified as a thief (Gittinger 1991).

At different levels of design and form, dress identifies the individual as belonging to a certain group and in doing so it also excludes others. This function of inclusion and exclusion is a property of the meaning of dress within a group as well as between groups (Barnes and Eicher, 1992). On a daily basis the wearing of the Mong dress identifies the Mong as an ethnic group, an identification which some Mong wish to deny. Men frequently wear shirts and trousers of standard design purchased from local towns and made in Thai factories. The indigo dyed Mong clothes are more commonly worn in more remote areas, varying in quality according to the activities of the day. Women are also increasingly wearing Thai style *phasins* (wrap around skirts) and shirts. These factory made garments for women and men are relatively recent additions to Mong costume. Their usage can be compared to Gittinger's observations regarding the wearing of tailored garments instead of local costume in Indonesia: "The dictates of modesty, prestige, vanity and status continue to extend the realm of tailored garments to the extinction of older, often noble forms of dress" (1991:69).

Thus, depending on the context, not wearing Mong dress can also be emblematic as it denotes Mong who wish to be associated with Thais and thereby acquire a different status. This can be seen with cosmopolitan young Mong who at new year will wear Mong dress but with variations to denote their modern attitude, such as the wearing of

trainers and reflective sunglasses. Alternatively the costume itself is parodied, and exaggerated usage denotes the individual as "different" in some way (as in Photograph 11).

Challenges to dress conformity are statements which refer to a changing environment which may be acceptable to some but not to others. The controversial donning of male Jewish attire by Israeli women during synagogue services is shown by Baizerman (1992) to signify their wish for more active participation in ritual. Similarly the challenge posed by the different attire of young Mong signifies their different exposure and cultural needs and their wish for a different lifestyle. However, the importance of dress form as an identity and the significance of not wearing Mong dress cannot be under-estimated. Dressing according to one's culture is related to self-perception, self-identity and self-confidence. The donning of Thai clothes in preference to Mong dress reflects a depletion of Mong power and sense of self. The links between power, identity and dress are strongly illustrated when different societies are thrown together. For example, the excessively formal European dress of colonial officers and their wives, as described by Callaway (1992), not only gave them a sense of who they were but also heightened the symbolism of masculinity, power, position and rank in relation to the perceived lesser power of the natives.

When Mong clothes are not worn the gender differences in Mong dress become particularly apparent. Gender distinctions in dress cut across almost all other attributes of dress identity (Barnes and Eicher, 1992). In the Mong context it is frequently men who are the first to give up Mong style attire, within the context of villages, whilst women continue to wear Mong dress. The gender division of dress is thus reinforced by different issues of power relations. Mong women at different times choose to wear Mong or Thai style dress. In their dress choice they are reacting to authority from their husbands and Mong society on the one hand and to the pressures and authority of Thai society on the other. Dress choice can be a sign of submission to authority and this function of dress has been identified in many contexts. Leslie (1992) describes the significance of dress for Orthodox Hindu women in signifying their submission to the authority of their husbands as their deity. The dress choice of the Mong can also be seen as a response to different sources of authority.

Production values and social relations

In addition to its emblematic use the Mong cloth is used as a standard of value. On marriage the Mong woman takes with her a dowry of skirts and hemp cloth roughly estimated by the Mong to be of the same monetary value as the silver bars which are paid in bridewealth. A Mong woman should also take to her new home rolls of plain hemp and animals, usually a cow and a pig. On her death an equivalent cow and a pig can be slaughtered for her funeral rites and hemp

cloth hung from the walls. Women whose relatives fail to provide them with these items, for whatever reasons, comment on their poor fortunes and refer to their marriages in terms of buying and selling their bodies for silver wealth. The exchange of this cloth thus also serves to consolidate social relations and leads to kinship and other obligations. The calculative dimensions of cloth gifts, whether they come as dowry or presentation funeral cloths, are argued to be one factor which is common to all forms of exchange from gifting on the one hand to barter on the other. This broader perception of objects expands our understanding of commodities from a "certain kind of thing" to "things in a certain situation" (Appadurai 1988:13).

Mong hemp cloth with its wide variety of usage and readings is primarily made by women. However, men are involved in the making of looms and tools. Hemp cloth is woven on backstrap looms by women working within the confines of their household. Whilst weaving can be isolated, batiking can involve groups of women sitting together to chat and exchange news and ideas. An examination of the relations of production illustrates Mong social relations which differ according to gender, age, marital status and kinship relations. These social relations of production serve to reinforce and reflect social norms. They are also linked to the perception of women acting, at different times in their lives, as both insiders and outsiders in relation to the Mong patriline.

During productive processes the cloth can be seen to function as a medium of aesthetic experience and competition. Women compare the weave, batik designs and processing techniques and commend those who are skilled. Men also recognise an aesthetic code, like women, preferring closely drawn batik interspaced by clear white lines, although there is room for new ideas. Designs and techniques exchanged with Mong from Laos are reproduced in Thailand stimulating comment and criticism. Likewise commercial designs, arouse different reactions, commonly prompting criticism for shoddy work. This criticism often centres around the commonly used batik pattern called *nkeeg faa* which translates as "lazy women" design.

The values of the cloth are, therefore, many. They include the labour power of the woman, since the making of the cloth takes considerable time and involves prized skills and diligence. In addition the cloth acts as a repository for ideologies connected to the Mong spiritual value system. In acting as a channel of communication between this world and the next, the cloth plays a role in reinforcing ideological values centred around the power of the ancestors and the reproduction of the patriline. Metaphorical associations, which will be described in later chapters, between cloth, the spirits, tigers and women, serve to reinforce the above mentioned perceptions of women as insiders and outsiders in relation to the patriline. The ritual, symbolic and ceremonial uses of the cloth serve to

legitimise and reproduce Mong social relations.

Ancestral power, kinship and the social order

The analysis of cloth within the social, ritual and political domains of different societies has revealed common themes. Dominant and recurring arguments include the importance of cloth in affirming ancestral power and authority, an affirmation often mediated by women who produce the cloth. Many of these debates are relevant in considering the Mong textile. The significance of relationships between women and cloth is a major theme of this thesis and is one which has been explored in many recent writings on cloth production and use. In these the analysis of textiles identifies important links between women, their households and society, and the reproduction of power. These links are often represented symbolically through the use of cloth. Symbols, for example, which represent ancestors and fertility can be applied to cloth as described by Barnes (1989) in relation to Indonesian textiles. Symbolic association between the continuity of thread and the continuity of kinship is another widespread usage. This can be represented in the use of circular cloth, as among the Batak of Indonesia, which in birth rites represents continuity between mother and child (Gittinger 1991), or in the enclosure of ritual areas with textiles as found in Java and Sumatra to protect the dead (Gittinger 1991), or, as with the Mong, the hanging of cloth to guide the spirit of the deceased to join the ancestors in the next world. The continuity of descent is also represented by



proscriptions on cutting the warp threads of certain textiles exchanged on marriage as described among the Lamaholot of Indonesia (Barnes 1989). The Mong also compare kinship and the continuity of warp threads; for example tangled threads on a loom are taken to represent strains in kinship relations.

The theme of authority as derived from ancestral power being reinforced through the use of cloth is developed by Feeley-Harnik (1991) in relation to Malagasy cloth. Like many authors in this field she identifies cloth as "part of the product of women's work and arguably a form of women's wealth" (1991:102) and in this identification she emphasises the role of women in the maintenance and indeed the creation of ancestral power. Among the Sakalava people the dead return as spirits and reveal their identity by demanding cloth from their relatives. Thus disguised, the clothed medium also takes advantage of the opportunity to make comments on the politics of the living. The use of cloth as a medium for spirits and souls to inhabit is an important aspect of Mong cloth usage both in curing ceremonies and at funerals when the spirit of the deceased is "shown the way" to the next world. The clothing of spirits so that they might speak thus also comprises part of Mong ceremonial activity.

Feeley-Harnik argues that whilst clothing enables communication it can also serve as concealment. She

observes that "Clothing and speaking together play a central role in the contradictory processes of substantiating identity and concealing falsity" (1991:86). This aspect of cloth use both to identify and to conceal is to be found in the many uses to which Mong cloth is put. When the dead are dressed a top layer of hemp cloth conceals a lower layer of silk cloth. The hemp cloth will identify the deceased as Mong; the lower silk cloth would mislead observers into thinking the wearer was Chinese and the silk will eventually be stolen by the Chinese in the next world. This antagonism between Mong and the Chinese is also strongly reflected in Mong myth (Tapp 1989) with the Chinese regarded as the 'elder brother,' in other words the more powerful group. Cloth can serve opposing purposes, thus whilst the dead in Malagasy are reclothed and revived, reclothing is also part of their re-burial. Like Mong textiles, the cloths of Malagasy are also markers of social status, media of exchange, and a common form of dress. These processes of cloth usage are seen by Feeley-Harnik to be part of the complexity of human relations which require indirect and direct forms of expression.

Clothing the dead as an expression of the wealth and prestige of both ancestors and descendants is an important aspect of funeral rites to be found among many peoples. For the Mong it is a significant indicator of wealth, a wealth which reaffirms the power of descendants. Darish (1991) notes this among the Kuba of Zaire whose careful funeral

arrangements are intended to please the malevolent spirits of the deceased but also serve to illustrate the deceased's rank.

The creation and maintenance of ancestral power is, among the Mong, strongly related to control over reproductive power. The Mong restrict circulation of the funeral cloth to those who have guaranteed, through their own children, a continuation of the ancestral line. Their own spiritual wellbeing will be maintained by the attention paid by their descendants to the spirits of the ancestors. The relationship between women's reproductive power and cloth production is a central aspect of cloth production among the Kodi of Indonesia. Links between indigo dying and reproductive processes are described by Hoskins (1991) who also identifies a conceptual separation between the two forms of creative production with the processes of indigo dying posing a life threat to pregnant women. This, she argues, is because men see indigo dying as an independent female creation outside of their control and thus conceptual separation is necessary to limit women's potential power. The association of textiles, with women, fertility and women's creativity is also reported to be common to many areas of Indonesia (Gittinger 1991). Hoskins relates the role of cloth in marking different life stages to a common feeling of loss. She describes the articulation of feelings of loss, displacement and separation (of children to adulthood, of women into a new lineage of marriage) through

the medium of cloth and indigo dying. She also identifies a negative association between women's creation of children and of cloth, and loss of the same as the child grows to adulthood and the cloth is traded by men. The symbolic association continues through a lifetime with lifecycle transitions linked to textile production and the qualities of gender and age compared to the ephemeral qualities of textiles. The secret world of indigo dying and the world of women are seen to be intriguing to men but not threatening to the social order.

The ephemeral qualities of textiles and their usage in marking life stages, ultimately decomposing on death, are commonly described in accounts of textile usage and are also features of Mong textile use. Marking a life stage, proficiency in textile production is often a pre-requisite to marriage as, for example, among the Iban of Borneo (Gittinger 1991). The fragility of cloth is often seen to add to its value and the requirement for cloth to show transient qualities is exhibited in the treatment of the Mong funeral gift cloth. Those pieces of cloth made of synthetic fibres are commonly sorted and discarded prior to a funeral since they are regarded as being unable to travel with the deceased into the next world.

The theme of social order and the role of cloth in relation to the social order, including the reproduction or maintenance of social order is also taken up by

Weiner (1991). Weiner's analysis of "cloth and women's production" in the Trobriands identifies the relationship between what she terms "cloth" and the regeneration of power. The "cloth" she refers to comprises banana leaf skirts. Whilst the skirts cannot be defined as cloth, as women's costume production they can be considered within the literature on clothing. By looking specifically at women's wealth, but within political and economic contexts, Weiner's contributions include feminist analysis (1982), exchange (1985) and the cultural construction of religious and political hierarchies (1986, 1991). Weiner argues that cloth wealth plays a central role in the evolution of political hierarchy and that it is the qualities of cloth itself, ultimately decomposing but with a semblance of immortality in that it can outlast generations, which symbolises the abilities to transcend time, loss and death. Weiner links levels of female power with the extent of cloth value and cloth longevity. She argues that throughout Polynesia "cloth wealth provided the economic and cosmological foundation for rank and hierarchy" (1991:63), with women's connections to cloth enabling them to enter the political domain.

Mong women's role in cloth production reflects a similar process. Production of cloth by women involves the construction of power and rank, reinforces the centrality of the patriline (since it is only within the patriline that cloth wealth can be acquired) and thereby supports and

reproduces Mong social order. The social and spiritual wellbeing of Mong society can be seen to be mediated through women although there is a constant tension as a result of the status of women, as both insiders and outsiders, in relation to the patriline. The function of Mong cloth in reproducing and maintaining social order carries some ambiguous implications. The production and use of cloth within the context of Mong social and political relations re-inforces the position of women within the existing social order. For women in marginal positions (including those in polygynous relationships or those existing poorly on the margins of society) this presents a dilemma. The marginalised woman is, along with all Mong women, involved in the reproduction of her status after death and re-birth in the "next world". These implications of cloth use are related to aspects of control which lie outside women's domain and are centred in the patriline.

The social life of cloth and commercial production

The mediation of the spiritual wellbeing of a community by women is a theme also developed by ^{Louise A.}~~Alison~~ Coart (1991) in her analysis of archaic Japanese textiles. Her description covers a range of cloth symbolism which includes historical production, its role in legitimation and its use as a link to the roots of the past. This type of analysis follows what Appadurai (1988) terms the "social life of things" and finds value in the context of the trajectories of objects as they move through time. Coart also describes the qualities ascribed to cloth of different texture which is derived from

different types of fibres. Tracing early use of cloth in Japan, Coart describes how silk was commonly a desired luxury cloth whilst the grass-bast fibres were relegated to commoners clothing and paper making. However, her work explores the considerable significance of rough cloth, which came to include both tree and grass-bast fibres, in imperial ritual and in daily use, and the more recent special status accorded to rough cloth as a result of Okinawan nationalist sentiment. The different associations and status accorded to different cloth are important aspects of the use of Mong cloth. ^{as well. For example,} Hemp fibre ^{is} ~~being~~ identified as Mong as opposed to silk, which is considered to belong to the domain of the Chinese. This opposition is commonly interpreted by the Mong as the more powerful Chinese controlling fine silk whilst the relatively powerless Mong are allowed "only" hemp. Rough hemp cloth has, however, acquired new values in the commercial context. The associations accorded to rough cloth in Japan and the commercialisation of this cloth are identified by Coart (1991) as related to the Folk Craft movement, the Japanese middle classes and nationalistic sentiment. The textiles, as she describes, have long been commodities for trade in a large-scale class stratified society. Similar associations drawn between Mong "rough cloth" and notions of the traditional are also serving to encourage the production of hemp for commercial consumption.

Commercial production of Mong cloth is an area that has become dominated by the marginalised woman, although the

retailing has attracted a wide range of buyers and suppliers including both women and men. Whilst a large amount of commercial production takes place in Mong refugee camps, significant quantities, especially of commercial batik, are produced in villages and bought and sold by Mong women, many of whom live in urban centres. The commercial Mong cloth includes bedspreads, cushion covers, wall hangings, aprons, baby carriers and rolls of batik and hemp cloth. Old materials can also be transformed into commercial items and, for example, are sewn onto T-shirts, bags or made into cloth shoes. Change is not confined to textiles consigned to the market but is also occurring in the use of textiles within the autonomy of Mong political and social life. These changed understandings emphasise the fact that changes in textiles and Mong social relationships are inextricably linked.

Commercial production involves changes along several lines. As has been noted elsewhere (Pancake 1992), commercial production can blur gender divisions in production. Whilst Mong men generally do not produce textiles they are involved in commercial production in the context of the refugee camps. In Guatemala, Pancake (1992) has identified the blurring of gender roles in the production of an export trade. However, whilst broad gender divisions in production can be drawn, Pancake argues that every community exhibits exceptions to the rule. This is certainly the case with Mong textile production where some men, outside the

commercial context, produce textiles for home use. They are, however, considered by other Mong to be unusual.

Involving many changes in production and use the commercial producer is often seen to lose control of the product as it is increasingly designed to meet the needs of the consumer (Graburn 1976). As has happened with Mong cloth, the changed designation can also cause a deliberate separation, both conceptually and in physical form, between cloth designated for the market and cloth designated for home use. Eventually commercial products can become acceptable and integrated into the culture which produced them. However, whilst many argue that this process of commercialisation increasingly alienates the producer from the product, it is not always the case. Sciama (1992) in her study of lacemaking in Venetian culture illustrates how, in recent years a commercial lace (which evolved from religious usage to dress usage for the dominant classes) has partly changed from "stuff to sell" to "stuff to keep" (1992: 140) with the makers themselves, many for the first time, now retaining and framing lace as a sign of their skill and prosperity. Whilst this occurrence is a result of a combination of complex economic and social changes, the change in designation and its retention by the makers has brought producer and product together and occurred along with changed connotations in relation to lace and lace products.

Common to the growth of commercial cloth manufacture in many parts of the world is the decline in the capacity of cloth to function as an arena for ancestral and political symbolism. Indeed, in contradiction to the regenerative and socially binding powers of cloth described earlier, commercial cloth, as described for example by Schneider (1991) in early modern Europe, is seen to have destructive capacities. Interpreted as part of an attempt to sabotage those who benefited from commercial linen production, the links between fertility and cloth production are shown to be contradictory rather than supportive. Some aspects of Mong commercial cloth offer similarly striking contradictions. When the cloth is diverted from its customary path, conflict is engendered between the proponents of change and the upholders of the old order. This is one of the contexts in which the Mong cloth serves as part of a process involving the assimilation and incorporation of the Mong into the Thai state.

The diversion of objects from their customary paths is a process described by Appadurai (1988) in relation to many commodities. He argues that part of the challenge in examining commodity flows is to define customary paths so that their diversion from those paths can be understood. This is because the item is only valuable in relation to the path from which it strays. The Mong commercial cloth has become part of a political exploitation which uses the textile to reinforce stereotypic images and contribute to

the assimilation of the Mong in Thailand. As others have noted there is considerable "political power to be gained through the possession of cloth that symbolises a sacred past" (Weiner and Schneider, 1991:26) and the control of cloth and its associations are part of the political wealth of many societies. This political wealth and the symbolic and economic roles of cloth are argued by Weiner and Schneider to reflect "more than the labour invested in its production; the connections of its threads and weaving patterns with ancestral or mythical knowledge ultimately make it a political vehicle for transmitting legitimacy, authority and obligation" (1991:26). It is the appropriation and control of this legitimacy which is especially significant in the commercialisation of Mong textiles.

Thus whilst commercialisation is linked to economic gains it also involves a loss, especially to women. Their contribution to the indigenous social and political systems through cloth production and the power they thereby acquire can no longer be sustained. This loss is recorded especially in smaller scale societies in connection with capitalism and commercial production (Schneider 1991, Waterbury 1991). In the interaction of different societies the coercive usage and appropriation of cultural products by the most powerful group is commonly noted (Schneider 1991; Waterbury 1991; Cohn 1991; Bean 1991) and is also an important aspect of Mong commercial cloth. Appadurai (1988)

argues that it is this overlapping of different systems of commodity flow which is central to the creation of commodity values, with levels of knowledge or ignorance about the commodity serving to facilitate or hinder the flow and change the perceived value. An examination of the processes involved in the use and changing use of objects necessitates an analysis of the social life of the object as it moves through time (Appadurai 1988). This focus on cultural redefinition and change as the object passes through various life stages is argued by Kopytoff (1988) to give value to the object as a culturally constructed entity.

Conclusion

The interpretation of textiles as cultural products and their value as interpretive tools has revealed common tendencies. These include the implications, especially for women, of the social and political significance of producing textiles and, to varying extent, directing their usage. The range of ceremonial, symbolic and emblematic functions of cloth comprise part of this significance in all societies. The coercive use of cloth products, particularly when cultures interact, is also common to many societies, although the processes and effects may differ. The examination of cloth products as objects with their own social lives and with identities and values constructed and changed over time, provides an analytical framework for the study of the Mong textile in Thailand.

CHAPTER TWO

THE FIELDWORK COMMUNITY

The history and regional dispersal of the Mong in China, S.E.Asia and latterly in the USA and other countries of refuge is knowledge known well to the fieldwork communities of Pa Glang and Doi Pui. With their history based in China and their relatives living in America, Laos and refugee camps, their social knowledge encompasses many contexts. These contexts I shall now describe.

The Mong in regional context

To describe the Mong as an ethnic group requires examination of the history of China from where they began migrations to Thailand just 150 years ago, probably initiated after uprisings against the Han Chinese in the 18th and 19th centuries. Mong are known to the Chinese as Miao and mention is given to a Miao people in the Chinese classics of the Emperor Shun (2255-2206 BC)¹, although whether the same Miao as known today is debatable. It is possible that early use of the term Miao means peoples of non Chinese descent (Radley 1986). It is held that the Miao lived in the lower reaches of the Yangtze river over two thousand years ago and in the five streams district (Western Hunan and Eastern Guizhou during the Qin-Han

¹As noted by Radley 1986:13.

period (220 BC to 220 AD)). The westward movement continued and from the Ming dynasty (1368-1644) the Miao are mentioned in several Chinese texts and during this time moved throughout the southern provinces. The Miao have been a recognisable group in China for several hundred years and it is clear that the Miao have been a group in conflict with the Chinese through every dynasty to the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949 and since. The Miao in China today number 7.4 million (1990 population census). They are to be found scattered through the southern provinces of Hunan, Hubei, Guizhou, Yunnan, Guangxi, Sichuan and Guangdong.

Identifying nationalities and classifying them into groups has long aroused contentious debate and this is no less the case with the Miao. In China this has long been the task of the nationalities experts but, as with many classificatory systems, no lines between groups can be satisfactorily drawn².

Most attempts to identify groups rely in the first instance on material culture or dialect. However, neither of these appear reliable. In Thailand two main groups

²One system is that by Ruey Yih Fu (1967) who suggests the Mong in China are distributed as follows (Chinese name is followed by indigenous name): Hunan - Red Miao (*Huang; Ko Shong*); Guizhou Guichu district - The Variagated Miao (*Hua; Tong Mu*) and the Blue Miao (*Ch'ing; Tong Mong*); Lungli district - The White Miao (*pai; Hmau Pia*) and the Cowrie Shell (*Hai Pa; Ga Mp'au*); Gueiting District - the Variagated Miao (*Hua; Hmou Pei*); Anshun District - Variagated Miao (*Hua; Hmong Pang*) and Blue Miao (*Ching; Hmong Pua*); Yunnan - The Variagated Miao (*Hua; Hmong Nchao*);

have been identified: the Green Mong (Moob Ntsuab) and the White Hmong (Hmoob Dlawb). The Green Mong are sometimes also referred to as Blue Mong since the Mong language doesn't clearly distinguish between Blue and Green³. A smaller number of Stripy Armband Hmong (Hmoob Quas Npab) can also be found in Thailand. There are also small numbers of other groups and during my field work in Pa Glang village I also met Mong who called themselves Black Mong and told me they could be identified by their black aprons but they nevertheless distinguished themselves from other women with black aprons who were Green Mong⁴. As Tapp found (1990) during research in Sichuan, identifying the same White Hmong with whom he worked in Thailand was a difficult task. He questions the use of dialects to distinguish between groups since the Mong spoken among people calling themselves White resembles that spoken by Green Mong in Thailand. In addition he questions whether the two languages spoken by the Thai Mong should be labelled as distinct dialects since they are so close and mutually intelligible. In a similar vein I question the use of material culture to distinguish between "branches" of the same group. In China there are to be found, among

³It is suggested that the Green Mong in China are also known as *Ch'uan Miao* (Graham 1923, 1926), the *Magpie Miao*, *Yachio*, (Ruey Yih Fu 1960), the *Red Miao*, *Hung*, (Lin Yueh-Hwa 1940), and the *Black Miao* (Lyman 1969). However, distinctions within and between ethnic groups in China are very unclear.

⁴It is suggested that the Green Mong are composed of three separate groups who converged after entering Indochina. Two of these groups, the banded sleeve Mong (*Moob Quas Npaab*) and the striped Mong (*Moob Yaob Tshuab*) were subsumed within the Green Mong (Lyman 1969).

others, red, flowery, green and white. Mong and claims are made that it is the colour and style of clothes which give them their name. In China, Rossi identifies one hundred and thirty distinct clothing styles among the Miao in Guizhou alone, saying that "Identity with dress style is so strong and important that seldom does a Miao from one dress group intermarry with Miao from another dress group" (1988:27). Rossi sees specialised local dress forms developing according to the Miao's migratory history which involved splitting into small groups, integration with other groups and adaptation depending on climatic conditions and neighbouring groups. Although there is no evidence to prove that the evolution of dress forms did not occur in this way her thesis is contradictory. On the one hand the merging and splitting of groups evolved different styles, on the other hand dress styles today are seen as so different as to prevent intermarriage. Such rules concerning social relationships between people assume that the merging and intermarrying between groups is no longer fluid. It also places considerable importance on dress style as a sign of ethnic purity. There is, in fact, little evidence to support this. On the contrary, the relationships and lines between ethnic groups seem to be in continuous flux.

Chinese scholars have similarly classified the Miao into several "models" and "styles" also according to dress and language. In a book on Miao clothing, published in 1985, they say over 100 kinds of clothing are known. The

regional models are reduced to five: the Western Hunan; Eastern Guizhou; Mid/South Guizhou; Sichuan - Guizhou - Yunnan; and the Hainan Island model. Under each model there are twenty styles. Using geographical, historical and cultural knowledge they define their models. Miao exhibiting the costume of one model but living outside the geographical region of that model are nevertheless included in the regional model if it is known they have migrated in the past from that region. For example Miao stated to call themselves the "Horn men" lived in Hunan in the Ming dynasty but migrated to Guizhou. Their costume still looks like the Hunan model so they are classified in this group. Ultimately then the system uses dress style to determine the model. This system raises questions of why some styles change and others do not and how this may or may not be related to migration. My own recent work among Red Miao in Hunan, Flowery Miao in Yunnan and Green Miao in Guangxi⁵ also raises questions related to ethnicity, regional as opposed to ethnic characteristics, the borrowing of culture and cultural homogeneity. Why distinctions in dress and language evolve is part of a wider debate the answers to which are hidden from historical view. How, and if, distinctions in dress and language define an ethnic group is of contemporary

⁵From 1988-1991 I worked on development projects in China including an Oxfam commercial textile project among the Mong and Zhuang peoples of Guangxi. Reports : Evaluation and Analysis of China Projects, Guangxi, Oxfam 1990; Women in Development, Project Formulation, Yunnan, UN JCJP, 1989; Appraisal Mission to Wuling Mountains of Hunan and Hubei, UN WFP, 1989.

importance.

When placing the Mong in Thailand in an ethnic context they should be seen in a broader regional and historical view, as part of a wider culture extending throughout the area of their settlement and migration in China, Laos, Vietnam and Thailand and arguably now as refugees in the USA, France, Canada and several other countries of refuge. Tapp's (1990) enquiries into Mong dialects, for example, suggests that there is a tendency for groups at the perimeter of a language region to retain the most conservative forms of language whilst those at the centre, in the areas of concentration, exhibit great diversity of language and culture. Thus in the Chinese province of Guizhou and its immediate neighbours the variety in Mong cultural traits is large whilst at the edges of movement as in Thailand the culture appears more conservative. Tapp uses the linguistic arguments of Petyt, Bartoli, Sapir and Murdock among others, to support this argument. Lehman, (1970) is quoted as saying "the present region of a language family's greatest genetic diversity is a good clue to its place of origin". Tapp questions whether cultural "distinctions which have corresponded to a particular phase of development of the Hmong in China have in Thailand been retained unaltered, so that they present the appearance of isolated tribes with distinctive dialects." He says "What would have occurred in Thailand then, is a kind of cultural ossification". Although the Mong in Thailand are clearly at the frontier of their

migrations, (the refugees excepted) the extent of their isolation and the possibility of their cultural ossification in relation to the rest of the Miao is a subject of some debate. Indeed the changes the Thai Mong are currently experiencing, changes reflected in their material culture, could be seen as a development of their culture. In many parts of the world the commercialisation of native culture has been held to represent progress whilst also preserving cultural identity (Graburn 1976). In addition the Thai Mong may be isolated from Miao in China but they have considerable contact with the refugee Miao in America whose own culture has seen rapid commercial development.

The Mong in Thailand

The Mong in Thailand number over 82,000⁶ and are scattered through the north and northern central regions of Thailand. They have migrated into Thailand from China through Laos over the past 150 years. The first wave of Mong were thought to arrive between 1840-1870 (Mottin 1980). In the Thai context they are classified as "Hill Tribes" who live in isolated mountainous areas, practising swidden agriculture, growing opium and remaining marginal to the mainstream of Thai society. As I shall detail later, this part of their image which reinforces their isolation, is based on debatable realities. As "Hill

⁶Sept. 1988 population survey, McKinnon and Vienne, 1989.

Tribes" they are classed with several other nationalities, including the Yao (Mien), Lisu, Akha, and Lahu as peoples preferring their cool hill villages to the "stifling heat of the valleys" (Lewis 1984:9) and along with the Karen as the six major non-Thai groups living in the north, all of whom have migrated from China and Burma over the last 150 years. The term "Hill Tribe" has been adopted in many English language texts although the Mong and other minority highlanders cannot be characterised as tribal. They do not have defined territorial areas and are all identified within larger ethno-linguistic cultural groups. In addition over hundreds of years they have interacted with other lowland and highland neighbours. Other terms in usage include *minorities*, which can include groups other than those referred to as "Hill Tribes", such as the southern Thai Muslims, and *highlanders* which increasingly can include Thai peoples who have moved into the hills. I will use the term "Chao Khao" instead of "Hill Tribe". *Chao Khao* is the term in common usage in the Thai language meaning hill or mountain peoples and its usage is known within Thailand to refer to the specific minorities in the north of Thailand. When refer^ring to all Thailand's minorities or to all upland peoples the terms minorities and highlanders will also be used.

The highland agricultural systems are characterised into cyclical and pioneer swiddening. The Mong economy is based on dry rice and maize, poppy cultivation, utilisation of forest products and animal husbandry. Nowadays the

economy is under such pressures that it is unclear exactly how it can be characterised. Resettled Mong turn to wet rice if they can afford the rental of fields or to lowland crops, such as cassava and maize, suitable to the poor land where they are settled. There is increasing specialisation in more modern Mong villages, mostly connected with trade outside the village, but also including specialisation in cash crops (such as lychees and other soft fruits) and involvement in opium crop replacement schemes. Mong still in the hills find diminishing returns from exhausted land but they are unable to move on due to population pressure and restrictions on new swiddening areas. Large areas of denuded and deforested land deny them any forest products. In the worst cases Mong with no other resources are literally reduced to begging (Kesmanee 1987). Indeed the percentage of Mong still practising the type of typical swiddening economy detailed in earlier texts is uncertain. It is clear, however, that the restrictions on movement, the population pressures from growth and migration of landless peasants into the hills, the threat and reality of resettlement and the anti-narcotic policy involving opium eradication have precipitated significant changes in the lives of the Thai Mong. Some of those changes will be documented in this thesis.

Mong internal organisation

The Mong primarily organise themselves on the basis of their cultural groups (such as Green or White) which determine residence; and in regard to their clan which determines much of their social interaction and is represented through exogamous surname and descent groups. The number of clans in Thailand is commonly held to be 12 but as Tapp (1989) has identified there are in fact more than^a this ideal number of 12 which are referred to in ritual discourse. Within clans of the same surname there are differences in cultural and ritual practices and preferences for association and marriage, with a particular preference for cross cousin marriage. Thus, although some White Hmong may live in a Green Mong village the general rule is for separate residence. The groups may also intermarry but this is also fairly rare. Several clans, however, will be resident in the same village location; however, co-operation between clans is difficult, particularly in relation to trading activities. In regard to social activities the clan determines who may marry whom and what the relations with other villages and clans will be. Clans with many members in one village may find themselves in a strong position relative to other families and will often attract people of the same surname to seek residence in the same village. Individuals and families can seek help and support from families of the same clan and thus isolated families, the only ones of their clan in a village, may

find themselves in a relatively poor position. Although of the same surname many members of the same clan are only distantly related and their social obligations are minimal.

The society is patrilineally based with women marrying into the households of their husbands. However, although women change lineage on marriage they still retain their identification with their clan of birth. Polygyny is permitted and is a cause of considerable contention among women even in villages where it is rare. Child betrothals are common but do not necessarily result in marriage and marriage by abduction is traditional, being more controversial among observers of the Mong than among the Mong themselves, although recent interpretation of the practice among the Mong has led to some abuse of the system. The senior male member of a household, which is commonly extended, has considerable power over his family. In a village the senior male member of the clan also has local authority. On marriage sons may stay with their parents for some years before setting up their own residence close to the house of their parents. The youngest son often remains to take care of his parents but this varies according to personal family preferences. Traditional specialists can be men or women and include herbal experts and shamans, however, the village head is almost always a man. As an elected representative he must communicate with the government and is often a member of one of the larger clans in the village. The size of

villages varies from hundreds of households to under ten. Often the latter type of village began as a temporary residence to care for crops but evolved into a permanent residence. New villages are also common in conditions of swidden agriculture with young families seeking new land. The settlement patterns of the Mong have received attention in a variety of texts and will be discussed further in later chapters as will more detailed discussion of social relations.

Fieldwork locations (Map 1) (see end of chapter)

The two villages in which I worked have been subject to pressures which, until a few years ago, could have been considered unique. Doi Pui, subjected to all forms of tourism, entering a commodity economy to supplement changing agricultural activities, divided by growing wealth inequalities and harassed by drug dealers and army opium eradicators) was one of the first villages in Thailand to encounter these radical changes. Today there is barely a Mong village left untouched by at least one if not all of the above influences. Pa Glang, resettled in the 1960's, was one of the very early villages to encounter the difficulties of adapting to violent changes in livelihood and lifestyle. Today the policy of resettlement threatens to remove almost all minorities from the hills of Thailand. The experiences of these two villages are potentially important for all Mong villages in Thailand in that they illustrate the effects of change

in the Thai context in very specific ways. Researchers who have visited these two villages have reported disillusioned peoples (Radley 1986:110), and commented "*fortunately..Doi Pui is a unique and exceptional case...Most Hmong villages remain inaccessible to tourists*" (my italics) (Cooper 1984:121). Whether disillusioned or not, it may soon be the case that many Mong villages in Thailand, faced with fast declining economies, the prospect of increasing impoverishment and forced resettlement by the Thai government, would now consider themselves lucky to develop in the pattern of Doi Pui or Pa Glang.

Doi Pui (Map 2)

The village lies about 40 minutes' drive outside of Chiang Mai on the city's famous hill, Doi Suthep. A wat (Buddhist temple) on the mountain receives hundreds of thousands of visitors annually and is a major pilgrimage site. Further up the hill at Phuping is a royal palace which is visited by the King and Queen of Thailand in the winter months. Seven kilometres beyond and slightly down hill from the palace lies the village of Doi Pui. The site had been occupied for some years by a few Chinese farmers before the Mong moved there in 1954. The original families came from Bang Pha Kha in Amphur Maa Rim, close to Maa Saa Mai village and before that through Burma into Thailand. The whole village moved, allegedly because Chinese resident in the village had attracted trouble from

the police. Afraid of being caught up the Mong left. Ten households of four clans arrived at Doi Pui. One clan subsequently moved on but descendants of the other households are all still there.

Today the village is on the tourist route for visitors to Doi Suthep, the palace and then the "Meo Village". Tourists first visited the village over 20 years ago and early visitors included amateur researchers and local people. Mass tourism to the village began around 1976 and has increased rapidly since then. The tourists are encouraged to visit Doi Pui by hordes of van drivers who run trips up the mountain and by official tour groups. Hundreds of Thais who make the pilgrimage to Doi Suthep include Doi Pui in their day. An average day will see about 200-400 visitors to the village. A festival may see tourists in the thousands. In the low tourist season only 20 - 30 visitors may make the journey. The road to Doi Pui is notorious. With the average traffic of a less exposed hill village it would have excellent access but with the daily use of scores of vans its condition deteriorates. In the dry season great holes are worn into the ground and in the wet season, in quite manageable weather for the average road, it turns into a quagmire of mud in places feet deep, trapping cars and hapless tourists for hours. During these times the Mong, who frequently leave the village to sell products at the night bazaar in Chiang Mai, walk with their sacks of goods 7km to Phuping where the tarmac road begins and late at night

walk back to the village. Several times it has been proposed to build a tarmac road to the village which has been welcomed by the villagers. It has been opposed by the van drivers who want to retain a remote atmosphere to the village to excite the tourists. The journey can indeed be relatively exciting. In addition, with a tarmac road, small hotel vans will be able to make the trip doing the independent vans out of business.

The entrance to Doi Pui itself is for many tourists, expecting a "natural" "Hill Tribe" village, a disappointment. The road is covered in rubbish, and the van comes to a stop in a large square, full of other vans and ringed by shops. The tourist is immediately besieged by women selling trinkets, children asking for "one baht" and addicts holding out their collecting tins. The main street consists of a row of shop fronts, some built onto already existent houses, others filling in the gaps between houses to provide a continuous line of stores. Most shops are Mong, selling textile products from the refugee camps and also those made at home, trinkets, clothes and souvenirs. There are also several Chinese silver shops, Tibetan shops and Thai stalls. There are 81 households, 147 families and 848 people. Other residents in the village include 52 Chinese and 22 Thais. There are some temporary residents including 5 Nepalese who run shops.

Behind the main street the tourist can find a "real" Mong village, albeit unusually wealthy. Not all households partake in the trade and some houses are much poorer than others. In the back paths women sit sewing, weaving, children play, people go to the fields through the forest and Mong life continues almost but not quite undisturbed. Most of the Mong have fields which they farm and at night the village is returned to the Mong. However because the shops are all sealed up for the night the houses from the main street are impenetrable. Before night falls many young go and play ball, football, badminton and Thai kickball on the school playing field. At night a number of televisions, a couple of videos, a gambling ring and one Thai prostitute provide entertainment. Over fifteen households make a nightly trip to the night bazaar in Chiang Mai. Packing up their Doi Pui stalls between 4-5pm they arrive at the bazaar by 6 pm and are selling by 6.30. They pack up again at 10.30 and are home by midnight. The rest of the Mong spend their evening with the family. Those with television attract a sizable number of young relatives and a few get involved in the gambling and video shows. The majority, especially those with shops, cook supper and go to sleep. The first tourists often arrive before 7am.

Clearly Doi Pui is not a typical Mong village. It does however share many of the problems facing all *Chao Khao*. Its members do not have Thai citizenship, they are subject to the same political pressures as other villages and have

been threatened with resettlement; they are criticized and penalized for allegedly destroying the forest, they grow opium and have it slashed, they follow the traditions of their clans, marry their children with those from other villages and attempt to preserve their autonomy.

Furthermore they have experienced tourism as other villages are beginning to experience it. They also contribute in many ways to the stereotyped image of *Chao Khao* in Thailand. The unofficial promotion of opium production in the village is renowned. Tourists can pay to watch Mong addicts smoking opium and then try it themselves; they can see poppies growing in a flower garden and in small plots around the village and, for a price take pictures; they can visit a museum (albeit in a totally derelict condition) where most of the information refers to opium and deforestation; they can stick their heads through cardboard Mong cutouts for a photograph or if they prefer don the real clothes for a fee of 30baht and pretend to be a Mong in a Mong village for a few minutes. The village is also very closely associated with the textile trade. In response to tourists and as a reaction to scarce resources, the villagers began trading over 18 years ago. With the flood of refugees into Thailand in 1975 they began to trade extensively in textiles from the refugee camps. They are also producers of traditional textiles which some other villages because of lack of time, fields, money and material, have stopped making. The poorer villagers travel, selling trinkets at regional fairs all over Thailand and are part of a growing

community of travelling Mong traders.

Pa Glang settlement, Khaang Hor village (Map 3)

The village is part of a resettlement community in Nan province in NE Thailand. It lies 60 kms north of the county town of Nan and about 5km distant from the provincial town of Pua. Nan town is located on the Nan river and has a distinctive character derived in part from the heavy influence of the Thai Leu, a northern Thai group, communities of which live throughout Nan and in the town itself. Nan has very little tourism, though it is something the town is trying to promote, advertising its wats, and the *Chao Khao*, including the Mlabri of whom only 150 survive and who are promoted as "primitive hunter/gatherers", although many of them now survive by working for the Mong as labourers or are supported by missionary groups. Nan has long been aware of the *Chao Khao* presence in the county particularly since border troubles and the war in Vietnam and Laos after which thousands of Mong, Mien and Htin flooded into the province. At this time the refugees were isolated in camps and restricted in movement. The towns of Pua and Nan see frequent visits from Mong and Mien to buy stores and catch buses to other Mong villages. One group of Mien keep a house in Nan which is used as a stopping off point for an extended network of kin. A few Mien and Mong have moved into town taking on Thai lifestyles and jobs. Many children also study in town. However the *Chao khao*

presence is limited, they often wear Thai style clothes and the young speak Thai fluently. The town of Pua, just a few kilometres from the fieldwork location of Khaang Hor village, has more contact with the *Chao Khao* as some visit the town market daily, older children attend school there and others frequently pass through Pua on their way from the border regions to other parts of Thailand. During the refugee crisis the town was swamped with refugees and UN and other refugee personnel. The relationship between the townspeople and the *Chao Khao* goes back many years.

Until 1980 much of Nan province was an inaccessible area. Under the control of a rebel Thai communist party the Mong were caught up in the fighting during the 1960's. Although unwilling participants in a conflict between the CPT (Communist Party of Thailand) and the Thai army they had been forced to seek help from the CPT having been driven from their villages by fighting and encountering hostility and mistrust from the Thai army. Undoubtedly some Mong willingly joined the CPT, but most were not directly involved. In 1967 villagers from the mountains were resettled first in a temporary camp in Pua town and then in Pa Glang just 5 kilometres from Pua. The land had been disused for some years because of its poor quality and five separate villages were located on the site forming one large settlement. The villages include one Blue Mong, one White Mong, two Mien and one Htin. Some of

the communities overlap but most retain a separate physical identity. My main location was the Blue Mong settlement of Khaang Hor.

The road into Pa Glang (Map 4) is wide and dusty and the settlement still retains something of the character of the refugee camp it once was. The houses are divided by long wide streets which dissect the settlement into several squares. The main road, along which seven small stores do business, used to be tree lined) but during the installation of electricity in 1986 the trees were felled. There also used to be a fish pond which has now been filled in,) but the large lake donated by the New Zealand government remains and is used for irrigation of a few fields, a little fishing and a great deal of swimming by the children. The villages are all hot and dusty, although surrounded by empty land much of it is too poor to farm and needs extensive irrigation. Many farmers rent or have bought land several kilometres from the village and spend much of their time in their field huts. Others have recently begun to return to the site of their old village in the mountains and resume farming there. Many residents of Pa Glang pursue occupations other than rice farming. Some have taken to new lowland crops, they grow fruit and cotton and paddy rice. Some have left the villages as teachers and agriculturalists sending money home to support their families; some have taken up crafts, the women making textiles and the men silversmithing. The

villagers have seized upon a number of opportunities, not all successful but better than trying to cultivate a barren land, although many still do just that.

Khaang Hor village (Map 5) has a population of 1,091 with 135 households; an average of eight people per house. The schooling rate is relatively high with over 60% of children going on to secondary school in Pua town. Local officials claim that over 50% of twelve year olds can read and write in Thai. Houses in the village vary enormously, from Mong style huts on the ground made of bamboo or planks to wooden Thai style houses and cement brick houses, on the ground or on concrete stilts. The disparity in wealth is very apparent. While some households live from hand to mouth, wage labouring and barely surviving, other villagers have large houses, have bought trucks and four houses bought televisions as soon as electricity was installed. It is now the ambition of many to build a Thai style house and several families collect logs whenever they can afford to buy one and have it delivered and wrapped in tarpaulin until they have enough to build. This fashion is as much related to the relative coolness of a stilted house as it is to status.

Although most of the villagers are traditionalists, a substantial few have converted to Christianity. From the whole of Pa Glang settlement the church in the settlement claims about 200 members. There is also a wat which claims fewer Mong members but nevertheless has some recruits. It is a very different village from the

traditional site of Mong communities set in the mountains. However many of these villagers remember well the life of the mountains and retain in many ways the customary life of the Mong. I originally selected this village because of its involvement in the commercial textile trade which is one of the most extensive amongst the Mong in Thailand. Pa Glang's evolution as a resettled village is significant in the current atmosphere in Thailand where forced resettlement of the *Chao Khao* into lowland sites is a reality. 1986/7 saw the implementation of this policy and several villages have already been moved. Unfortunately the newly resettled villages might now be considered fortunate to receive anything like the amount of money and attention provided to Pa Glang at its inception. This fact has already been illustrated with the desperate situation of newly resettled villages which will be discussed in later chapters.

Two other locations also feature in this account. One is the Night Bazaar in Chiang Mai. From its beginnings as a number of roadside stalls in the early 1970's the bazaar has evolved into a sophisticated and neon-lit three story market area. In 1990 it was expanded further and the original location, which had up to this time housed the stalls of the *Chao Khao*, was closed. The new market is expensive and many minorities find it difficult to maintain their businesses with such large rents. However, the market accommodates Mong stall holders from villages around Chiang Mai, and some who live in Chiang Mai

itself. Mong street vendors gather around its brightly lit frontage selling trinkets and small textile items. Travelling Mong traders pass through almost every night, many from Pa Glang, selling their collection of old and new materials.

Baan Vinai and Baan Nam Yao

The other locations are the refugee camps of Baan Vinai and Baan Nam Yao (Map 1) from where commercial textiles enter the market in Thailand and are retailed by Mong and Thai who visit the camps, place orders and purchase products for retail. For the refugees textile trading is one of the few sources of a much needed income. In 1987 most Mong were held in the camps of Ban Vinai, Nam Yao and Chiang Kham. Many of the Mong in Thailand have passed through Laos and almost all Mong in Nan Province have relatives in Laos. The more recent Mong settlers in Thailand, the refugees in the camps and those who have lived on the borders between Thailand and Laos, have been caught up in a long running inter-ethnic conflict which formed the basis for a split among the Mong from Laos. This split was compounded by alliances formed with the French, Japanese and Americans during successive wars and rebellions.

The foundations for this conflict began about 100 years ago. The Mong in Laos prior to the French occupation came under Lao rule and were paying taxes to various local

leaders. When Laos became a French protectorate in 1893 the French collected the tax from the Lao leaders who separately imposed an additional tax for themselves. Discontent was partially resolved by the French who tried to ease tension by promoting Mong administrators but, as Lee (1987) identifies, this established a precedent for Mong leaders to deal directly with westerners rather than the Lao authorities and also gave power to some Mong families. The Mong have a history of millennial movements based on the belief in the coming of a mythical king. This belief has sustained uprisings against the Chinese and the Lao (Gunn 1990; Tapp 1989). With double taxation still being imposed and with the belief in a mythical king, the Mong in Laos were involved in an uprising in 1919 which lasted for two years. It was eventually crushed by the French who employed Vietnamese soldiers to quell the uprising. In further efforts to placate the Mong, more were promoted to senior positions and they began using their connections to extend their political power. Rivalry emerged between two main families, the *Lis* and the *Lauj*, who both sought favour with the French. As the second world war began it was the *Lis* family who began to dominate in key French backed positions. With the Japanese occupation the *Lauj* family sought to regain their position. Those who supported the *Lis* family cooperated with and hid French officials. Meanwhile the *Lauj* allies, working within an independence movement, were supported by the Japanese. When the French and their allies re-established power they fought against Lao and

Vietnamese forces. Allies of the *Lauj* family retreated into North Vietnam and made contact with the Vietminh (McCoy, 1972).

Between 1946-1953 Laos negotiated its independence from the French. The government of Laos realised the importance of loyalty from the Mong and gave them key government positions under a constitutional monarchy. Education was made more available to many Mong and some worked in cooperation with the French and Americans, being sent to Thailand for training. Meanwhile the Pathet Lao, encouraged by the success of the Vietminh in Vietnam, were recruiting among upland Mong in Laos and the *Lauj* family allied itself with them.

The struggle to establish a stable government in Laos saw considerable conflict between the right and left wing factions eventually resulting in a split and an attempted coup d'etat in 1960. Among the Mong, resistance to the coup was led by *Vang Pao* who was soon given support by the western allies and then continued his campaign against the communist Pathet Lao. The Americans continued to provide support to *Vang Pao* who led not only Mong, but soldiers of other nationalities. As the war escalated all Mong became involved and had to take sides. When the U.S. withdrew support, and the communists took over in 1975, those Mong who had followed the *Lis* family, the loyalists and *Vang Pao* had to flee. *Vang Pao* ended up in the U.S. whilst thousands of other Mong sought refuge in camps in Thailand

having travelled large distances and evaded the Pathet Lao and Vietnamese troops. The role of *Vang Pao* in the past and future continues to be debated among Mong. Some commentators (McCoy 1972) regard him as the leader of a mercenary army intent on his own private ambitions. Others regard him as a benevolent leader pioneering for the Hmong a new level of political participation (Lee 1987). Most Mong in Thailand who had come from Laos, for a long while invested all their hope in him as a potential leader for all Mong. However some Mong in Pa Glang who had recently come from Laos described to me their now lost hope in him and some now complain that he has deserted his people. *Vang Pao* is still an active "resistance leader" albeit from the U.S. where he continues to try and rally support.

The Mong in the refugee camps are not all loyalists. Many were uprooted peoples whose economies had been destroyed and who did not profess allegiance to any side. Those who could prove they had supported the Americans were given the chance for resettlement in the U.S. However, as the years passed and rumours of the realities of life in America filtered back to the camps (a life which by most accounts was alien and difficult) many Mong decided they did not want to go. Mong have been resettled (with different levels of success) in several host countries apart from the U.S. and including France, Canada,

Argentina and French Guyana.⁷ Many Mong now do not want to go and live in an alien country and culture. Many would like to settle in Thailand or failing this be safely repatriated to Laos, but only if conditions within the country change. As a result many Mong have spent 10 -15 years in the camps and some children have grown to adulthood knowing only the camp life. The Mong have tried to maintain their customary life within the camp, and pass on their knowledge to their children and to those about to be resettled overseas. The camps present a totally different organisational structure as compared to the Mong village. Crowded into dense housing and unable to provide much of their own food, productive relationships are very different from those found in villages. However, the Mong continue to work along known lines in terms of social relations and the resulting structures abide by Mong rules, although adapting when necessary to new conditions. The recent history of the Mong has been one of uprising against an enemy, defeat and retreat or movement into new lands. The Mong in the refugee camps compared their situation to that of their ancestors compelled to flee from the Chinese (Dunnigen 1985). They seek out relatives within the camps, however distant, and try to re-establish social organisation. Their complex history of family feuding and alliances is known to all Mong from Laos. The resistance of the Mong to returning

⁷Host countries include: Argentina, Australia, Belgium, Canada, China, France, French Guyana, Germany, Japan, Switzerland and the U.S.A. Source : UNHCR 1987.

to Laos is based on a long history of factionalism, war and oppression. Rumours often sweep the camps of forced repatriation and the panic that ensues is based on both known experience and rumours of continuing retaliation against those accused of supporting the loyalists.

Behind the various camp gates over 50,000 *Chao Khao* refugees, including Mong, Hmong, Mien and Htin wait for their various emigration and resettlement applications to be processed. Some have been waiting for over 12 years, others have moved from camp to camp as they are classified and reclassified depending on their claimed origin and future choices. The largest camp for minorities is Ban Vinai and this is the major producer of Mong commercialised textiles in Thailand. Life in the camps is a monotony of routine and continuous unemployment. In the small and crowded rows of huts, numerous illegal activities develop including trade in drugs, gambling and extortion. The camp authorities attempt to impose order: they have conducted dawn raids on houses suspected of hiding unregistered refugees, they arrest Thai women posing as refugees who enter the camp to sell children⁸. In 1987 they banned the entry of people to the camp market and began building a new wall around the camp. However, order becomes disorder; instead of returning bought babies to their real parents, some individuals extort money from the

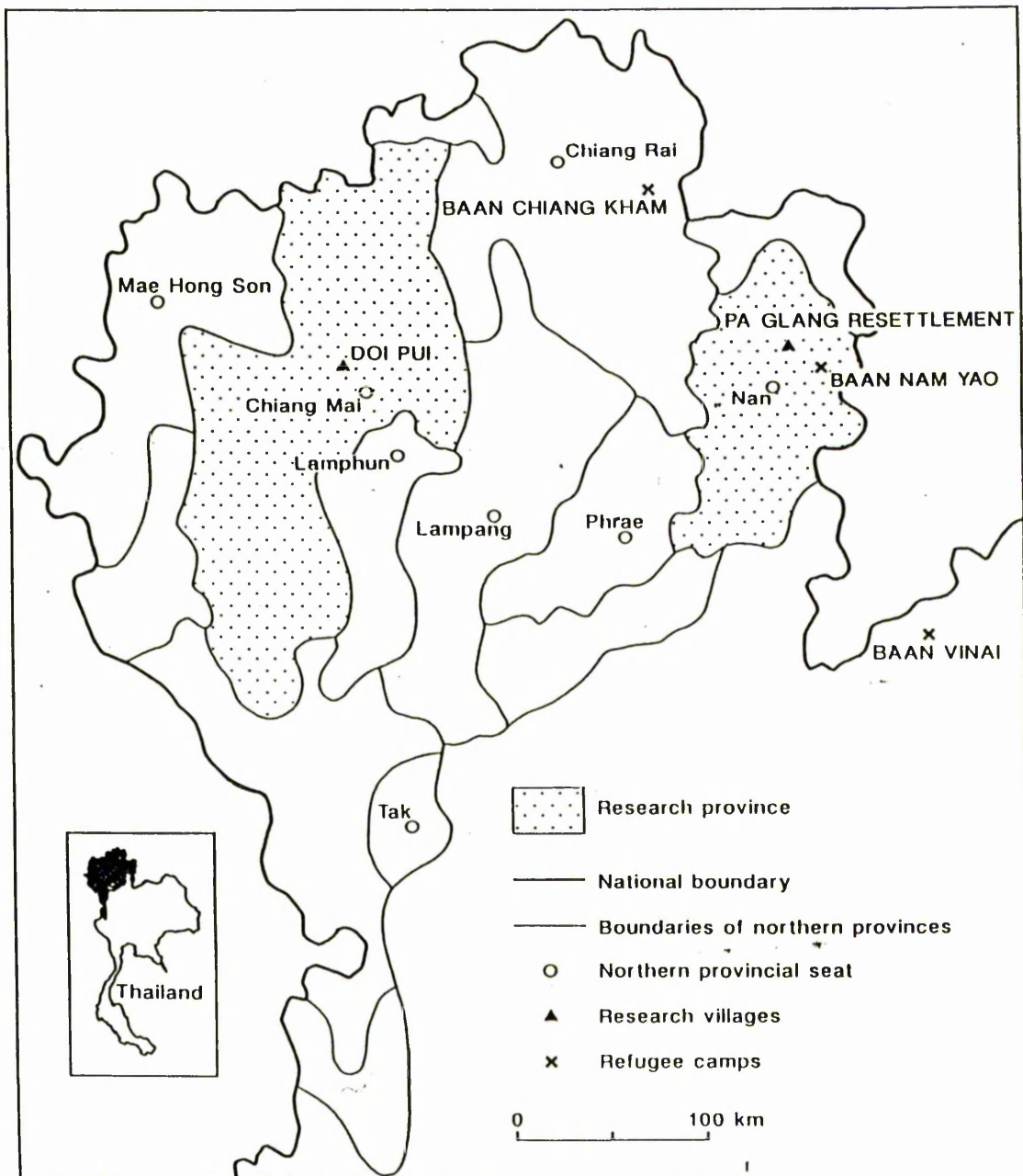
⁸Thai babies are often sold to refugees, particularly Mien women who have low fertility.

adoptive parents; bribes are accepted so that people can temporarily leave the camps and return, for whatever reason, to Laos; the camp post office takes its cut at a rate of 3% of the goods' value, or the cost of the telephone call; rations supplied by the UN become tradeable goods. None of this is unusual for refugee camps but it is in this atmosphere of uncertainty and corruption that women are encouraged to produce textiles. This trade is not exempt from problems of its own and the market reacts to conditions in the camp. After one particularly tough raid on unregistered refugees in the camp, a feeling of helplessness swept over the women who began selling their traditional clothes on the premise that they might be the next to be sent back to Laos and money, not costume, was of more use. The effect of these rumours amongst people who have been isolated in a camp for years can be devastating. But the effects are not confined to the camps, because prices defined here determine prices elsewhere in Thailand and overseas.

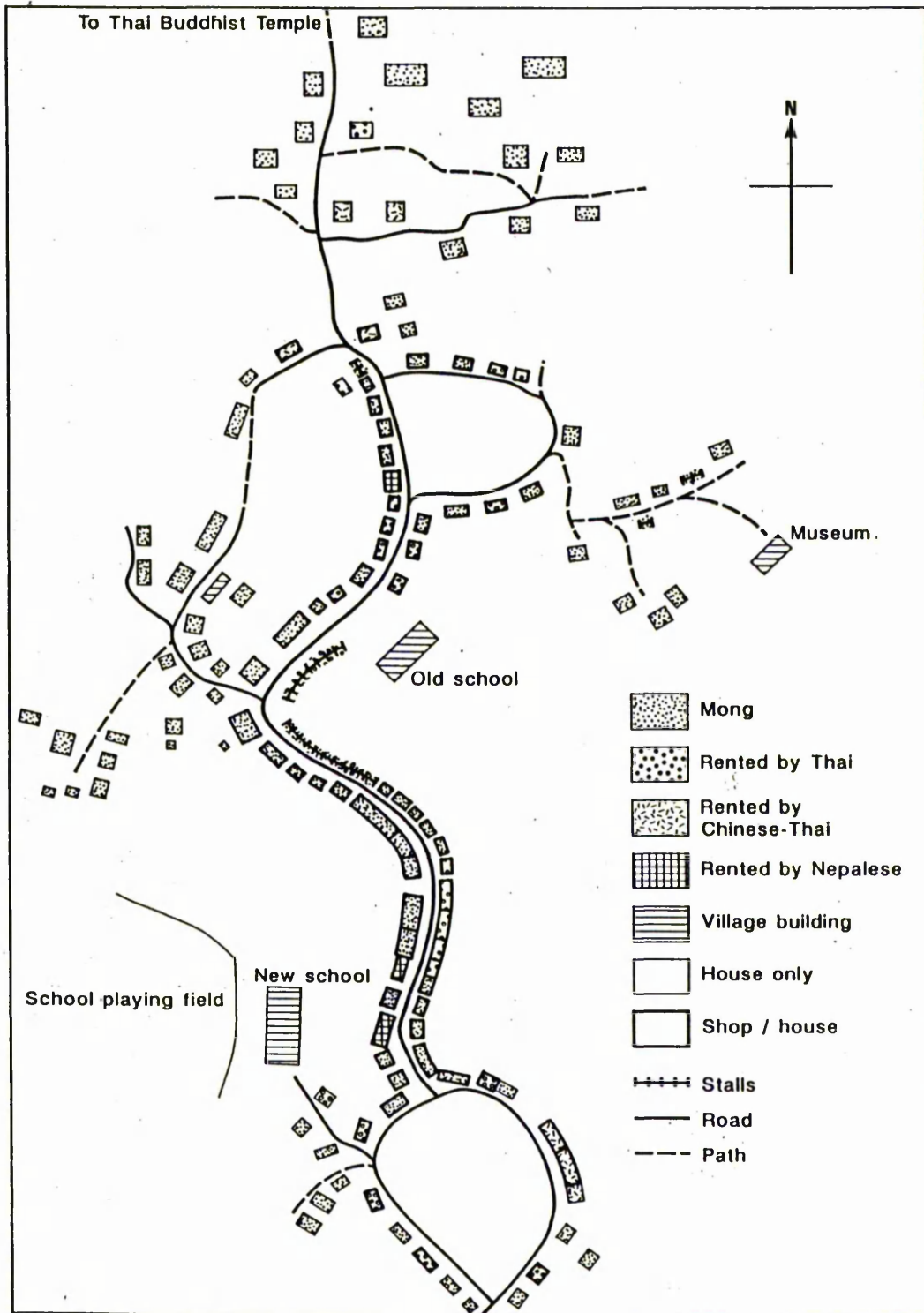
The camps are run by UNHCR and several voluntary organisations contribute assistance programs. In Ban Vinai over 14 NGOs work within the camp on maintenance, literacy, health, training, rehabilitation and income generation projects. However, although the UN provides basic needs, survival in the camps is fraught with difficulties. Many Mong attempt to supplement their poor lifestyle by earning money and the main (legal) income is from textile production. The influence of the camps on

textile production is very significant. Most of the large textile products which are retailed from Doi Pui and Chiang Mai originate in the camps. Many other items are bought semi-finished with the final processes done in Pa Glang or other villages. Many of the new textile designs and products originate in the camps and the price of goods often depends on the stability of the camps. If a move seems imminent prices tumble as refugees try to realise the monetary value of all their material possessions. Many of the camp women are widowed and to survive have radically changed their lifestyles grouping together to work. With men often absent from the camps⁹ women will run households independently of Mong men and through necessity have taken on new responsibilities and ways of earning a living. These changes have influenced Mong women in Thailand, and those who visit the camps to trade describe the lives of camp women as they themselves attempt to take on new lifestyles, and adapt to new circumstances in their home villages.

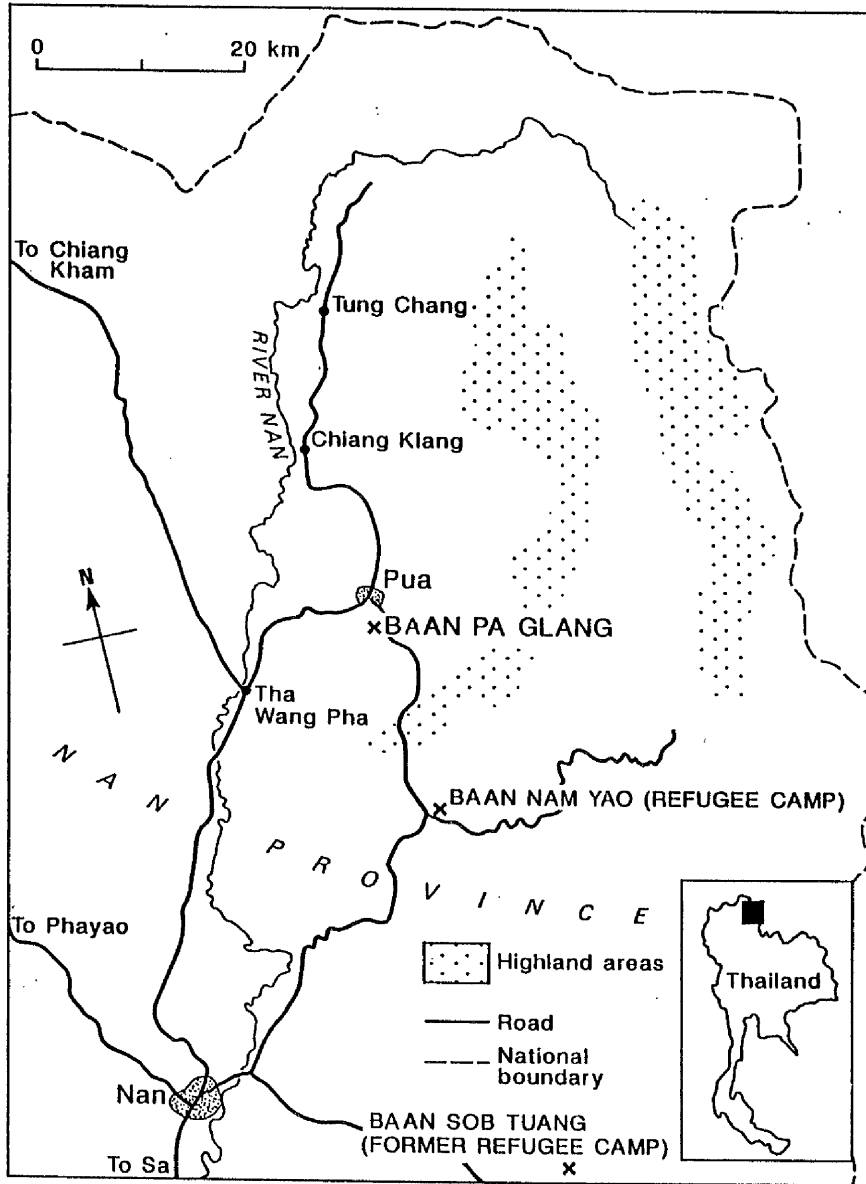
⁹Although denied by the Thai authorities some Mong claim that men from the camps go back into Laos to fight. Others say men return to farm or earn wages returning to the camps occasionally. Others claim men return to Laos to collect possessions which were left behind. This often refers to silver bars which have long been the form in which Mong store their wealth. These bars are usually buried in a place known to the senior male. Fearing robbery as they fled their homes for the camps many Mong left their wealth (safely hidden) behind.



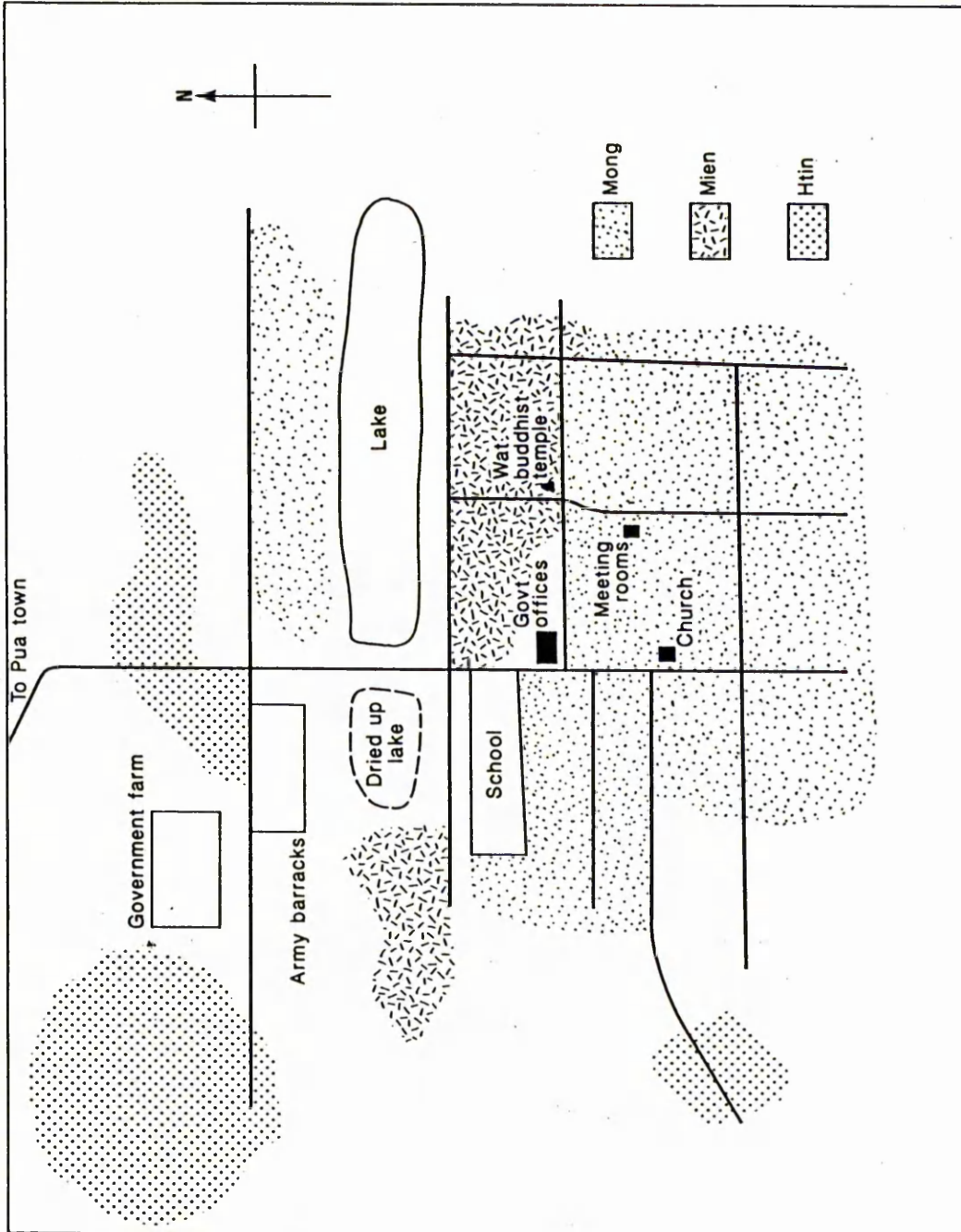
Map 1: Fieldwork Locations, North Thailand



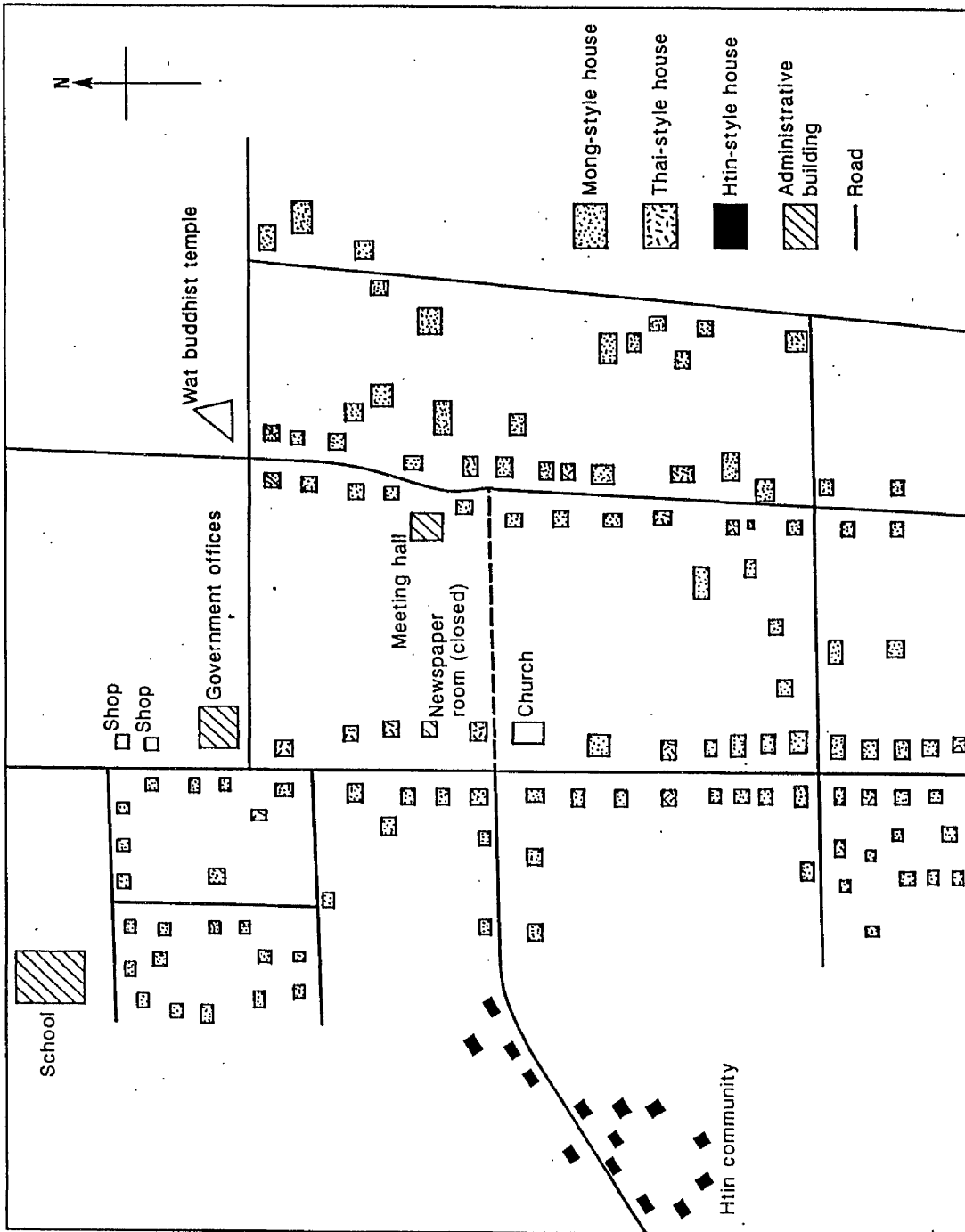
Map 2: Doi Pui Village



Map 3: Pa Glang Location, Nan Province



Map 4: Pa Glang Settlement



Map 5: Khaang Hor Village, Pa Glang Settlement

CHAPTER THREEMONG WOMEN IN SOCIAL CONTEXT

The Mong in Thailand, as I have described, do not form a distinct and easily defined community. Their patterns of settlement, social and economic organisation and autonomy vary according to historical, political and economic circumstances. The representation of any society as contained within defined ideological, social and economic principles is clearly an impossibility, not only because the inevitable process of change requires and promotes flexibility, but also because each individual holds a unique view of their own society which cannot be reproduced into a common whole. Thus the structures of a society should be described as guiding principles rather than an observed or known reality. In the following description and analysis of Mong society and production and social relationships, the *difference* in experience will be explored. I will argue that the commonly identified social structures have not fully represented the diversity of social and productive relationships. In my analysis of the ways in which people find value in Mong textiles, and the ways textiles give value to social relations, the nature of those social relations will be defined according to the *experience* of Mong women. This is not to deny that the patriarchal structures (so commonly identified in Mong social organisation) comprise a dominant ideology but it is intended to expose other

views of Mong society, specifically the views of Mong women. Whilst the lives and opinions of Mong women may not exist in opposition to the dominant rules, they are often found to be in conflict with patriarchal norms. The conflict does not necessarily seek resolution in terms of the dominance of one party over another; instead the aim is to establish mutual coexistence. The difference in experience and knowledge is not unknown to both parties and the dilemma is represented in the production and use of material culture, specifically textiles and hemp, which, it is argued, help to legitimise and reproduce social relationships. It is this process, the production and interpretation of both material culture and social relationships within the Mong village which is the subject of this and the following three chapters.

Mong social organisation

The contemporary pattern of social organisation among the Mong consists of residence in villages. Within the village Mong organise themselves, according to clan and lineage divisions, into extended households which are based on nuclear family units. The lineage is important because, more than any other structure, it identifies "a community of interest between members of groups claiming a common ancestor" (Taillard 1977:47). It is through the three structures of the clan, the lineage and the household that the Mong as an individual is seen to relate to Mong society. Taillard (1977) neatly describes the

Mong as responding to "lineage power" and it is the lineage which I would argue is the most enduring feature of Mong social organisation above the clan and the household. This conjecture is not based on residence patterns, economies of production or political relationships, all of which vary under changing circumstances. Rather it is based on the fact that it is the relationship to the lineage which causes most concern among all members of Mong society and especially among women. Villages like households increase and decline in size and sometimes disappear, but new residence locations will come into being; clan membership never changes (not even for women on marriage), but the relationship of women to the lineage and the considerable concern this causes them identifies it as a central part of Mong society. Whilst the units of village, clan, lineage and household clearly do, in one form or another, exist, in analysis we must question the adequacy of these units in explaining Mong social organisation, since, as I illustrate below, the social units we commonly use to interpret social relations do not explain all social relationships, particularly those between women.

Residence units

The reasons for village residence have been disputed¹ and it is argued (Cooper 1984) that the clan and the lineage form a residence unit most suited to the Mong social and economic structure but that village residence has become necessary as available land has become limited. Villages in the more populated areas now rarely move to new land. It has been estimated (Wongsprasert 1986) that in Chiang Mai province only about 3% of highlanders practise shifting cultivation; most rotate the use of fields and

¹Since most labour appears to be organised within the household the question as to why villages exist at all has attracted attention. It appears possible that the large villages of today are a relatively new phenomenon. The Mong have no word for village and Cooper (1984) suggests the village is not really a Mong concept. Older studies of the Mong describe villages as hamlets with 6-8 houses. Others claim that villages were mainly inhabited by a single clan. The Mong, it appears, may have lived in small economically viable units based on lineage and clan until land became exhausted after which they moved on, either as a group or splitting up and moving as single households. Geddes (1976:90) however, suggests that adherence to clan units only occurs in densely populated areas and sees the village as a fundamentally important structure. The large villages of today do not seem to be compatible with the swiddening economy and the increasing scarcity of resources. The economic rationale claimed for larger villages is usually co-operation in the production process, assurance against famine and the provision of market facilities. Social demands can also be seen as forming a binding framework for village existence. Indeed Geddes (1976) sees the function of the Mong village as a trading unit to be of great importance, along with economic, social, religious and political advantages. Cooper argues against any substantial evidence to indicate that trade, social, religious or political reasons are the basis for Mong village formation. Instead he suggests that villages have emerged partly for protection and security but mostly due to lack of pioneering opportunities in a situation of increasing resource scarcity.

others practise crop rotation. Although some new relations have emerged as a result of these new settlement strategies, most families in the fieldwork community maintain social relations of production which do not take advantage of potential links enabled by new residence patterns. Thus in the villages of Doi Pui and Pa Glang there are few communal activities. There is a village head who is responsible for communication with local government authorities, but who has no leadership role within the community. In both Doi Pui and Pa Glang the village head was not seen as a leader by members of other clans and was criticised for the fact that he gets a salary but does not represent the village.

The clan is of fundamental importance and Mong men are identified by allegiance to their clan. Women, however, are associated with both their clan of birth and their clan of marriage. On marriage they change lineage but not clan membership. The clan and the lineage are commonly seen as the fundamental social structures of Mong social organisation and there is strict residence segregation according to male clan membership. The Mong are divided into a number of clans (as described earlier) which are organised according to surname groups. Knowledge of practices and the clan's ritual system ^{is} ~~are~~ essential to Mong social life. Within the clans, blood relations are considered as most important and extended families could be referred to as lineages (see Cooper 1984:37; Geddes 1976:53). The lineage can ideally trace descent from a

common ancestor. The lineage head, usually the oldest male, conducts many lineage ceremonies and is seen to represent the authority of the ancestors. The strength of a lineage determines an individual's wellbeing since it is this structure on which most Mong are reliant for survival. Within the lineage exist households extended through patrilocal residence which can contain several generations and several wives. Wives and children of deceased brothers may also be members, as may adopted children or more distant relations who have been accepted into the household. The lineage forms a religious group, and in order to carry out religious activities there is a need for other lineage and clan members in a village. The importance of lineage relatives lies in ritual and religious functions such as worshipping the ancestors and conducting funerals. The household head is the eldest male, but he will defer to elder blood relatives for major decisions and advice involving more than just his household. Women marry into a male lineage. It will never be the same clan as their birth as this is forbidden. Siblings are discouraged, if not forbidden, from marrying into the same clan and patrilateral cross-cousin marriage is encouraged. The relationship between the wife's clan and her new clan of marriage varies in importance according to distance, affection and prospective gains. Distribution of clans in villages varies, but most Mong who move into new villages move into villages where close relatives already live, and who could ideally be classified as members of the same lineage.

The household is based on a nuclear family unit but is generally extended with parents, minor wives and the families of adult sons. When a household becomes too large, elder married sons will set up their own households and clear new land. Sometimes this involves them travelling long distances and establishing their own lineages in new areas, though this is now rarely possible for Mong in Thailand. Sons will often establish their own households as soon as they can after they marry. Usually the youngest son will remain with his parents, but this largely depends on personal preference and practicability.

Analysing Mong social and productive relations from the perspective of women shows how the standard view of Mong social relations as represented by Mong and interpreted by observers of the Mong, differs from women's *experience* of those social relations. In particular women's *experience* of the perceived dominant structures, the household and the male lineage must be clarified. Since experience is translated into cultural products this understanding is fundamental to an interpretation of the Mong textile. The question of whether women's counter-cultures have been obscured by male-centric ethnography has been a central theme of feminist anthropology. Mong women did not articulate to me a counter ideology in opposition to the patrilineal structures of Mong society. They did, however, offer different interpretations and different

emphasis in their experience of Mong society. It is through this perspective that the differing roles and understandings of Mong men and women can be illuminated.

Marriage systems

Marriage as an institution has been a major subject of investigation in anthropological texts. The division of social life into units such as the household, domestic and public spheres, has directed the investigation in ways which obscure links between women. Often relationships which do not fit into the structures which are held to be dominant are ignored, played down or not seen at all.

Thus Mong women's view of marriage is often not represented in the many texts about the Mong.

Consideration of marriage practices generally take account of labour and kinship relations and property transfer.

This is generally considered in relation to the value and control of each of these assets². The strengthening of kinship through marriage, the transfer of labour power and the multidirectional payments have been analysed in structural, Marxist and structural functional terms.

Kinship structures have been used to illustrate the origins of women's subordination and of male dominance.

²For example Goody's (1990) study of Chinese marriage systems which concentrates on the "distribution of women's property complex" and control over property.

Analysis of Mong kinship systems has been dominated by an emphasis on agnatic relationships with affinal relations described insofar as they relate to a male lineage. Considerable attention has been paid to the many forms of Chinese kinship and similarities with Mong kinship relationships can be drawn³. The position of women within patrilineal structures (what Evans-Pritchard called the "agnatic principle") has been debated in relation to many kinship systems. Affinal relationships have received due attention with considerable debate over the relative status of wife givers and wife takers⁴, but relationships between women as opposed to the families of women have received less attention. It is important to look not just at what affinal relations mean to a woman's *family* of marriage and *family* of birth but at what they mean to her, herself. Referring always to the family usually fixes us

³The influence of the Chinese on the Mong and vice versa is undoubted but the extent of influence remains a matter of debate. Tapp (1989) identifies many of these influences and relationships with 'The Chinese'.

⁴Early commentators on this in relation to China included Maurice Freedman (1970) and Arthur Wolf (1970) who took opposite positions, the former holding that the girl's family was inferior, the latter that the relationship was one of equality. Ahern (1974) took the position that the wife givers were ritually superior. Watson (1981) introduces a new position claiming affinal relationships were part of the institutional relationships which maintained class differences. In Thailand Kammerer (1986) discusses the affinal relationships of the Akha and the strength of the alliances over several generations

within patriarchal structures⁵. Thus Wolf's (1972) identification of the previously little recognised⁶ "uterine family" of female relations in China opened up new understandings of women's position. Analysis of what marriage means to women has been criticised for returning too often to the fact that "women are powerless because they are associated with the domestic and ... [that] the family is the site of women's oppression" (Moore 1988:72). Whilst these facts of powerlessness may be very obvious, analysing women's view of marriage puts marriage and other social structures in an alternative perspective. It is not just an institution which illustrates and determines women's lack of power but it also illustrates and determines their perception of their society and their power within the structures identified. Even if relatively powerless, women still have to act and interpret their society whether or not they are seen to change dominant views. This reaction is important particularly in relation to cultural change and will be returned to in later chapters.

⁵A feminist approach to the family as advocated by Judith Stacy (1983) has suggested that we deconstruct the family as a natural unit and reconstruct it as a social one. The argument centres on the fact that we tend to treat the family as a natural and undifferentiated unit when in fact it consists of a complex and variable set of relationships.

⁶Affinal relationships did receive attention but in relation to families and their dominant males as opposed to women's relationships. For example Gallin (1960) and Freedman (1958).

The dominance of agnatic relationships in the Asian context has been held to obscure affinal relationships, and early analysis saw a woman as totally incorporated into a male lineage⁷. However, a model of familial relationships under the patrilineal system cannot be devised since the situation clearly differs with extreme regional (and individual) variations⁸. As Goody writes (1990:53): "The attempt to reduce our understanding to a common set of 'principles' or to an underlying 'structure' may inhibit rather than advance the analytic process".

The approach I wish to take here is an analysis of marriage which considers difference⁹ in experience rather than an analysis which adheres to dominant models. Even in the same society women experience the same institution in different ways. Among women, dissatisfaction with marriage may be known and their relative powerlessness appreciated, but what do they do about it? How do they resist or interpret their marriages? Women's view of marriage is different from men's because their experience of marriage is different. What I wish to show here is *that* difference and how that difference is interpreted in

⁷For example Fei Hsiao Tung (1939) and Freedman (1966)

⁸The debate over wife givers and wife takers has illustrated the regional variations apparent in different parts of China. Variety is also illustrated in the bridewealth / dowry debate in pre-revolutionary China where some identify dowry (McCreery 1976), others both bridewealth and dowry (Wolf and Huang 1980) and others indirect dowry (Parish and Whyte 1978).

⁹In this I am following the arguments of Moore (1988) and Strathern (1987:279), who suggest we should look at the difference in women's experience rather than generalising into types.

material culture.

The need to analyse women as individuals who all have different views is critical. Because women are subsumed within higher level systems the priorities given by men to marriage in supporting these systems may not be the priorities expounded by women. Weiner describes the importance of considering women in all studies: "Studying women does not just add to what we know about a particular society but forces us to view that society from a different perspective. The results are not just that we learn about women, but that the things we learn about women may cause us to reconsider the things we thought we knew about men" (1982:52).

What is of interest in the context of this thesis is how women experience their position and explain it. In accounts of the Mong there are many descriptions of formalised relationships, of kinship structures and of how social relationships should be conducted. Some of these accounts also describe how often the ideal fails to be followed (Binney 1971; Lee 1981) but this does not necessarily tell us how all the actors experience their society (and there is particular neglect of women's experience), nor does it tell us how a society whose dominant model fails to describe it should be characterised, particularly when one model appears insufficient in accounting for the variety in experience. I have already described how material culture should be

seen as something lived and experienced by people. In the same way we should look at relationships between people not just as structures serving to link and strengthen ownership or kinship but as social experience lived by people. If we make women's experience more explicit we can actually see how these relationships are interpreted through Mong myths and material culture. In interpreting this experience we should be aware that the significance we attach to structures varies. As Tapp has noted: "we select our own histories, which are the significant events for us now, isolated from the mass of events which we have truly encountered" (1989:175). Similarly with women's experience of their kinship systems: the structures are defined but what is significant for the individual or woman depends on what they have encountered.

Mong marriage structures

I will first describe the basic social structures of marriage in Mong society before looking at the difference in women's experience of those structures. The norm for marriage is clan exogamy (i.e. two persons of the same clan or surname cannot marry) but exceptions to this norm do occur (Gar Yia Lee, 1981:38). These and other restrictions on marriage with close cognates or affines are generally enforced by parents although the young try to resist. I encountered one case in Pa Glang where clan exogamy was strictly enforced causing the distraught boy to run away from his home. Matrilateral and patrilateral

cross-cousin marriage and betrothal in childhood are stated to be preferential. In Pa Glang and Doi Pui these marriages are now the exception rather than the rule and a small incidence of these preferred marriages ~~have~~^{has} been noted by other researchers (Binney 1971:455). In the past, particularly in China they were said to be preferred and common (Ruey 1960:146, Graham 1937:27) and the marriage of a brother's son and sister's daughter is considered a good marriage alliance. However, Cooper (1978:306) finds the marriage of sister's son and brother's daughter to be preferred. As Binney writes "...real cross-cousin marriage prevents the dissemination of resources and property which is thereby kept intact and continuously associated with one or two groups ... due to the more stable relations developing from such a marriage and the fact that property is maintained within a narrower framework of relationships the wealthier (family units)... exhibit a higher incidence of cross cousin marriage" (1971:462). The practice of paying a fine (from the girl's father to the boy's father) if an early betrothal did not result in marriage is recorded in China and recounted in Thailand.

It is often stated that the "ideal" marriage is one where "a man should court a girl whom his parents designate as suitable, then approach the willing girl's father through an intermediary" (Binney 1971:452). This type of marriage with partners selected by the parents is not always seen as ideal to young Mong who prefer to select their own

partners. This preference for choosing one's own marriage partner often leads to abduction or kidnapping which is much described in texts on the Mong. It is also said to take place when a marriage is not approved by the parents or when a suitable girl cannot be found locally. If girls are abducted, marriage celebrations and payment of brideprice may not take place for some time; months or years. On occasion the marriage celebrations will take place after the girl has become pregnant or given birth. At a wedding attended in Pa Glang the parents had already had three children. Mong society is characterised as one where brideprice is paid, although it may not be paid in full for some years. However, more rarely mentioned is the fact that a girl will bring with her what could be described as a dowry of clothes and animals. In general the brideprice is seen to have more value but this can be disputed according to how value is measured (particularly cultural and labour value invested in clothes). If brideprice is not paid, men can move in with their wives, or widows with their sons to negate the necessity for payment. It is also reported that until brideprice is paid in full the children do not belong to the lineage of the man, with the woman's lineage retaining rights over them. (Binney 1971:467). Lineage membership is discussed more fully below.

Polygyny is usually found among richer families and the reasons given for taking more than one wife ^{are} ~~is~~ to ensure the birth of sons, provide more labour and broaden kin

relationships. Polygynous marriages are not experienced by every woman, although the threat of such marriages is widely feared and abhorred by a large number of women. The levirate is said to be practised whereby a widowed woman is taken as wife by the deceased husband's brother. In some accounts (Binney 1971:501) the elder brother cannot take a younger brother's wife. The implications of the levirate are that death need not affect the social relations established between two lineages by marriage. However I did not encounter any widow moving in with her husband's brother preferring to stay in her own home and farm her own land. Binney notes that although women in his study village did not move home their brothers-in-law did claim them as wives and visit them. Widows in Pa Glang and Doi Pui did complain that if they re-married payments had to be made from their families to a new lineage but widows did, on occasion, re-marry without these payments being made and took up residence in new lineages. Patrilocal residence is the norm and most women do go and live with their new husbands although several women in both Pa Glang and Doi Pui returned home from unhappy marriages. Women also lived with daughters after unhappy second or third marriages. Some women who were divorced lived on their own. On marriage women are to an extent incorporated into the lineage of their husband, but they retain their own clan name although their children belong to their husband's clan.

The above description is of the norm as described in numerous texts. There are many variations to the rules according to different clans and different author interpretations. However, the basic structure for women revolves around them being incorporated into the lineage of their husband on marriage. It is women's ability to change lineage which illustrates their flexible relationship to lineage membership. Women change lineage on marriage and subsequent marriages but such changes, as I shall show, represent huge emotional and physical disruption in their lives.

Mong Women and the experience of marriage

In Mong society the above identified dominant structures of patrilocal residence, a preference for patrilateral cross-cousin marriage, betrothal in childhood with prescribed kin, marriage by force (often referred to as kidnapping or seizure), levirate (marriage of a widow to the deceased husband's brother) and polygyny are all described in the context of a society based on household units and male dominance (Binney 1971, Geddes 1976, Gar Yia Lee 1981, Cooper 1984). The function of these social structures is seen as strengthening links between households and securing rights over land.

The majority of Mong women live highly regulated lives within most of the structures identified above. But there are increasingly exceptions to the rules and as I will now

demonstrate, a structure seen by one person as protective is seen by another as restrictive. My study of contemporary Mong society illustrates that, in contrast to the above description, female headed houses exist (particularly those of widows), that childhood betrothals are rare, that abduction is a preferred form of marriage by women and does not represent to them male power but female choice, that women passively and actively resist polygyny, that the majority of women associate polygyny with unhappiness, that widows tend not to marry their husbands' brothers, that some married women do not live with their husbands and that some live with their own parents, with sons of a different lineage or with daughters. These realities do not fit into the traditionally held dominant structures, but are an alternative view of Mong relationships. The question arises as to whether these alternative realities have always been the case. I would suggest that the experience and views of women have not changed substantially but that their abilities to express their preferences have, in certain circumstances, grown. This is usually, though not always, associated with a situation of economic independence. However, other researchers working in more remote villages have also noted that women do defy Mong social structures¹⁰ and my own observations would suggest that in some cases when the social structures fail to

¹⁰for example Gar Yia Lee (1981) notes the incidence of young married girls returning to live with their parents.

provide adequate protection for women they will choose alternative ways of living irrespective of financial circumstances.

The differences in men's and women's perspectives towards their society derive from a number of sources. Men exercise certain rights which are lived in a modified or direct way by men and women, but are influenced by the interpersonal relationships and responsibilities which women exercise. The dominating influence of the patriline in Mong women's lives is not denied by them but accepted and incorporated into their experiences and it is ^a women's ^a relationship to the clan and the lineage which determines much of her position in Mong society. In contrast to Mong men a woman can change lineage (on marriage and re-marriage) and become a member of a different lineage whereas a man, in general, cannot.¹¹ A woman's relationship to her clan of birth is enduring. She never changes clan although she does change lineage. Since she never changes her own clan name, but changes lineage, she can marry someone of the same clan of her deceased husband. A woman's relationship to a lineage is impermanent. When asked for their name, women display

^{but conflicts with her name change!} ¹¹Lyman (1968) briefly records a ceremony for a man with no living relatives to change clan name. Cooper (1978) says a man can assume the clan of his mother if he is illegitimate and wants to marry a non-blood relative of his genitor father's clan. Geddes (1976) also notes that in extreme circumstances a man can change clan but that "normally a person's own identification with a particular clan and that which others make for him render change impossible after the early years of childhood" (1976:60).

this reality by giving the name of their clan of birth followed by their clan of marriage. A woman according to Lee (1981) "never adopts her husband's clan and therefore, is still of her parent's clan but not of their spiritual world." A Mong women can never rejoin her own parents' lineage and ritual circle, but she can join those of successive husbands. Although some women claim not to believe in this, in order to accommodate their daily realities, most do abide by these rules, at least conceptually if not physically. However, because women do not always manage to live within the dominant social structures the contradictions they encounter, related to the way they live and the way they should live, cause them considerable unhappiness.

Women and the spiritual household

Gar Yia Lee (1981) describes a woman's relationship to her own household through the placement of a daughter's placenta under either the bedroom floor or the door of a house in contrast to a son's which is placed under the central post of the house which houses the household spirits. These burial places, particularly in the bedroom, were used by Mong in both Pa Glang and Doi Pui and are described in many texts (Graham 1937, Geddes 1976). The placement in fact seems to describe the unmarried woman's relationship to her own household. Gar Yia Lee says the boy's placement represents his central role in the household whereas the girl's placed in the

bedroom "has no symbolic meaning beyond its practical convenience. A daughter does not have any position of social importance for the household and lineage and her placenta is not given a prominent place" (1981:62).

Clearly the place of a girl's placenta in relationship to the boy's does have meaning which could be interpreted as marginality to the household. However, a girl clearly does have a position of social importance in a household and more investigation is needed of the mother/daughter relationship. The interpretation that the bedroom is not important because it is connected with the seat of domestic and reproductive power is implicit in Lee's analysis and incorrect.

/s The mother/daughter relationship is of great and enduring importance; examination of Mong women's cognatic relationships ^{has} ~~have~~ received scant attention beyond acknowledgement that a woman's affinal relations make use of her blood ties to varying degrees, usually to satisfy economic needs. The emotional and individual links a girl has with her mother and family are also of significance. A woman on marriage changes lineage and on death joins the ancestors of her husband. However, immediately after death she must travel back to her place of birth: "when you are born your placenta is buriedwhen you die before you go to the underworld you must find your placenta and pay money to pass into the underworld and then you find the graves of your parents and pay more money" (Doi Pui woman 1987).

A woman is able to return to collect her placenta from her original lineage, indicating that there is some flexibility in her relationships between her lineage of birth and lineage of death. Although after death she will be worshipped by the descendants of her husband's lineage and according to Bernatzik will be reborn into her husband's lineage: "The married woman not only loses every connection with the sib from which she is descended ... but also after death, her soul arises anew in the next child of her husband's family" (1970:43). Bernatzik falsely perceives women as losing every connection with their own family on being incorporated totally into the lineage of their husbands. The incorporation debate has long fuelled analysis of women's position in their household of marriage and material referring to pre-revolutionary Chinese society can be usefully drawn on here. Some aspects of traditional Chinese society in relation to marriage practices and the condition of women are similar to traditional Mong society¹². Contemporary analysis far from seeing total incorporation acknowledges the wide range and uses of affinal links. Walton's (1984)

¹²In relation to marriage systems a Chinese "model" cannot be drawn since there was clearly regional variety to a large degree. However, the patrilineal descent system, the incorporation of women into the households of their husbands, and systems of clan and village exogamy are some of the issues which have been debated and can be of use in discussions of the Mong marriage system. Major differences between the Chinese and Mong systems include the system of concubinage, chaste widowhood and proscription on widow re-marriage and the lack of a system of levirate.

historical study of affinal relationships should lead to a re-analysis of the commonly held view of the dominating importance of agnatic relationships¹³. It is clear that Chinese women as with Mong women are not swallowed up by their lineage of marriage but, we must ask, what is the nature of their relationship to their lineage of marriage and how strong are their links to their family of birth.

Typically Chinese women have been represented as dominated into a situation of extreme powerlessness¹⁴. On first view it is tempting to characterise Mong women in this way too, particularly when viewing those women who appear to be marginalised by the lineage. The following description of Chinese women could also describe the situation of Mong women: "Chinese women posed an implicit danger to the long term stability of the family structure. They were the liminal or marginal members who were constantly violating family boundaries: entering and exiting as brides, they produced not only the sons of future

¹³The incorporation debate was led by Freedman who saw the ban on the inheritance of widows and of divorce as indicating that a woman was fully incorporated in her lineage of marriage. However, the continuing attentions of her blood relatives in life and after her death, the fact that some women managed to live outside of marriage in sisterhoods who swore not to marry and the fact that divorce was found to occur in some Chinese societies were some of the issues which indicated that social structures supporting women outside of their affines were important. More recent debate focuses on the nature of relationships rather than whether they exist.

¹⁴This view is replicated by Stacy (1983) who emphasises the importance of the family to the detriment of the individual, male or female, with power invested in the senior patriarch and the ancestors.

generations, but also the bonds of conjugal solidarity that threatened to tear brothers apart. Conflicts between married women within the extended Chinese family were an additional source of structural weakness. Village exogamy isolated the young bride, making her vulnerable to exploitation at the hands of a demanding mother-in-law. Weak ritual ties with her natal family and the unacceptability of a return to her natal home forced the bride into near complete dependency on her husband's family" (Mann 1987:44).

However, although I will argue that the Mong woman is seen and experiences Mong society as an outsider in relation to the male lineage, this is not her only experience. At different times in her social life the Mong woman, according to her social status, acts as both insider and outsider in relation to the male lineage. As I will show in the following chapters, an examination of the use of material culture illustrated to me how a woman, as an insider, acts within the patriline and shares with Mong men a central part in reproducing social relations. But as an outsider the Mong woman represents a potentially destabilising and destructive force in relation to the patriline. The contrast in experience can be seen between the woman who lives as wife and mother with her husband and children and the woman who encounters separation, divorce or widowhood.

Changing lineage

The incorporation of the Mong woman into her lineage of marriage completely severs her relationship with her lineage of birth. In the ideal case a woman is either abducted for marriage or the marriage is arranged. As soon as she enters the house of her husband she becomes a member of his lineage and the brideprice payment, given during the wedding ceremony by her husband's family to her own parents, confirms her membership and represents the exchange of her labour power and the labour of her descendants. She will then forever remain a member of that lineage on death and after in the "next world". How her relationship with her husband's lineage is acknowledged is immediately through her change of residence and later through the payment of a negotiated brideprice. Before any negotiations on brideprice have taken place a woman who has crossed through the door of her intended husband's home is argued to have accepted his ancestors as her own. Her new position cannot be reversed: "You join your husband's ancestors the first step you take over his threshold...your own parents will not accept you any more, even if you visit your parents, it would be a terrible thing to die in their house. You cannot die in their house, the spirits would be very angry, you do not belong there" (*Lao Xeem*¹⁵ *Yaaj*, Doi Pui resident).

¹⁵*Xeem* means clan or surname.

Membership of lineage is therefore changed once commitment to a man and his household is made and a woman can never return to the lineage of her birth. *Pang*, a minor wife in Doi Pui explained her initial commitment to her husband saying: "I had to go with him, I had already slept with him". Her commitment began as soon as she agreed to it. This membership of a husband's lineage should determine a woman's residence in his house. However, the reality in Doi Pui was that several women did return home, some running away from unhappy marriages, others when a marriage abduction had failed, others when brideprice payments had not been fulfilled and their marriages were not successful. In order not to upset the ancestors they often lived in a divided-off section of the house and could not partake in family rituals. As I illustrate below, women experienced many difficulties in accommodating their physical realities with their spiritual status. However women's understanding of their relationship to their husband's lineage and their actual practices in a real world where they must cope with separation, poverty, widowhood, divorce and re-marriage displays some ambiguity.

Brideprice payments

Although not critical, brideprice payments are important to lineage membership. In that brideprice can be paid over a number of years, not all at once and sometimes not

at all reveals that it is not central to changing lineage. Indeed, Lee (1981:46) notes that, in his study village, 22 out of 51 (ever) married women had never had their brideprice paid in any form while, four others had ^{had} it partly paid. The payment is mainly a settlement over the labour-force potential of a woman and her children. The lineage change is settled by the ancestors according to tradition. Thus a woman who runs away from her husband can be forcibly brought back if brideprice has been paid and children of that marriage belong to the father. But the women and sometimes the children need not return if brideprice has not been paid. In Doi Pui the family of *Daum Xeem Yaaj* had not been paid brideprice and they argued ^{that} their daughter could therefore return home. However, she always expected her husband to come and try and take her son away.

A man who cannot afford brideprice should not take his wife to live with him; (he however can move in with his wife's family, live in a separate part of the house (with his wife) and labour for them). Similarly parents of a bride can move in with their daughter's new family if they don't accept payment of brideprice. This was the case with *Txab* a destitute widow in Doi Pui with only one surviving daughter. Brideprice payments become a very real problem to women if they wish to re-marry. In the case of a widowed woman she can only re-marry if her potential lineage pays the lineage of her deceased husband. Thus when widowed *Pai Xeem Lis* re-married, her

new husband paid eight silver bars to her old lineage. Such payments are interpreted in various ways by women: "If you are a widow and want to re-marry your future husband must give money to the first parents-in-law. They don't even give you one baht even though it's your body they are trading" (*Txab*, a Doi Pui widow, 1987).

If brideprice has been paid, the children of a marriage belong to the lineage of the husband. The children of a widowed woman belong to her deceased husband's lineage but can be "bought" by her new husband's lineage. This happened to several re-married women in Doi Pui. *Pai Xeem Lis* had six children, but her new husband, already with a large family, only paid for the youngest to come with her. On rare occasions children can assume the clan of their mother's father. This happens in cases of patriuxorilocal residence where brideprice has not been paid¹⁶. It has also occurred in Doi Pui when *Daum Xeem Yaaj* left her husband and took her son back to her parents' home. Her case also illustrates the way women resist the structures into which they are compelled. Her mother speaks about her daughter: "in Mong custom they never let you do it like this, but I don't care. I don't believe in this custom. Many people tried to tell her she

¹⁶Cooper (1984) gives an example of the case of a man moving in with his wife's family when she assumes his ancestors but the children do not. How she assumes his ancestors is not made clear, residence is not patrilocal; however, the man probably has his own partitioned section to the house and in that section the woman is living with his lineage ancestors.

couldn't do this. She was a minor wife and we didn't agree with the marriage but when she was young she went to sell jewellery and a man cheated her and she got pregnant. She didn't know the man had a wife. We told her 'you must marry or you will destroy our surname'. But the first wife treated her badly and she came back. She never had a wedding anyway. Many people love her but she doesn't want to marry again....I don't believe she can't join back to our ancestors, even though the Mong say she can't. Her son has joined our ancestors too" (Doi Pui 1986).

Daub returned home with some ease because she earns her own wage as a peddler. She is living in a context of change which may make it easier for her to return.

H However, Gar Yia Lee (1981) working in a more isolated location, notes that two young girls with sons also returned to live with their parents, indicating that this practice does not just occur in rapidly changing villages.

Patrilocal residence

It is during the early years of marriage, before the young couple have established their own home and when a woman lives in the house of her in-laws that she feels most isolated. She knows she has been accepted by her husband's lineage but she is unfamiliar with her husband's relations. The basic experience of patrilocal residence

for women is discontinuity and separation from a known family into the house of strangers. Although many women are happy to be with their new husbands, most expressed loneliness and some confusion. In contrast, men's place within their family gives them a feeling of continuity and permanence. A Hmong wedding song recorded by Lemoine expresses this timeless feeling: "According to the sentence, we are in the cage of father and mother, we sing like the birds of father and mother, we come from the house of father and mother, our words are the words of father and mother" (1977:3-40).

In contrast to the security and continuity expressed by this song are the words of Mong women: "for the first year I refused to sleep with my husband, I didn't want to marry him. I cried every day. My mother-in-law said I was wrong and everyone scolded me even though I worked hard. After a year I gave in. My husband's family believe in the ancestors but my family are Christians. It's all very different" (*Mor Xeem Tor, Doi Pui* 1986). Separated from her own family and friends with whom she grew up the new wife in a new village is a lonely spectacle. Often with very heavy labour loads she has little time to make friends and finds herself isolated and dependent on her husband's family. With the introduction of cassette tapes women separated by long distances through marriage on occasion send messages back to their own families. Using the medium of song through which Mong women can express their feelings, a girl from Doi Pui sings from her new

home: "We live under the same moon and the same sun, why don't we see each other. I miss you, I cry whenever I go to the forest, I miss my mother, I cry to myself" (Doi Pui 1987).

A woman's relationship with her mother-in-law will determine much of her workload and general happiness. In the first case above, the marriage involved a woman from a Christian family whose expectations had changed in relation to traditional Mong society. In the second case above the girl had married as a minor wife but it was known that her husband mistreated her and she did not get on with her in-laws. In her new household a newly married woman will assume responsibility for many domestic tasks which serve an extended household. She will take over work for her mother-in-law and may therefore do tasks for her male and female in-laws. Often portrayed in labour terms as a family servant, the youngest daughter-in-law generally finds her labour load heavy. Over time it will ease, particularly if she moves out to her own home, if a younger new wife arrives or as her children grow and bring home new wives. The power over domestic labour usually lies with the most senior woman in the household. It is this relationship which often causes the great unhappiness of new wives. It is the bad relationships between wives and with the mother-in-law which can cause the splitting of households. The poor relationships between women in the same house were often cited by men as reasons not to take a second wife or for splitting their household. I

often encountered women who spoke negatively about their in-laws sometimes indirectly cursing their clan rather than the individuals themselves. Thus when one Doi Pui woman loudly scolded her children in front of many other women, they would tell me that reading between her words it was obvious that she was not angry with her children but with her -in-laws and was abusing the name of her husband's clan.

It is unsurprising that women prefer to marry within their own villages if at all possible, and remain in close contact with their own family. Women married in the same village as their parents always commented on their fortune. Of the focal households in Doi Pui 10 out of 28 (36%) contained women who married within the village. In general, one third to one half of marriages appear to be within a woman's village of birth. In Cooper's (1984:67) study villages 22 out of 47 (47%) daughters of household heads had married within their village of birth and 20 out of 42 (48%) sons married women from within the village. Separation from their families through marriages over which they have little choice often leads women into unexpected lives as is shown in the following life story.

Before her marriage *Zaag Xeem Xyooj* was living in Pa Glang village, close to town where she could visit and buy essentials. She worked in her family's fields and travelled to them by bus. She had electricity newly installed in her village and water from wells. When she

was abducted she had never before seen her husband. He had noticed her working in Pa Glang on a visit to relatives and made enquiries about her. When it was decided by his family that she would be suitable as a partner, he came to Pa Glang with some friends and abducted her. He took her to his village on the border with Laos. It is a village involved in border skirmishes and unofficially guarded by the army. It is more than ^a a day's walk from the road. Zaag now has to walk miles to the fields, she lives in an atmosphere of uncertainty due to the marginal identity of the village and she does not have a secure livelihood. She began her new life working for a mother-in-law she did not know. She collects water from a far distance and in the evening has to work by candlelight. Her hopes for the future are vague, not like her girlish dreams. Three months after her abduction she returned to Pa Glang for her marriage ceremony. When she left after her wedding she did not take with her her customary dowry of skirts since she thought ^{that} her new home could be burnt to the ground, ^{or} ^{that} they might have to flee suddenly and leave everything behind. Zaag had no choice in her marriage. Her abduction was decisive. She was eminently suitable for this marriage not least because her own political status, like her husband's, was marginal; she had settled in Pa Glang under dubious legality having come from Laos with her family. Her family did not protest, because they knew the family into which she was marrying and the ties could be favourable. Zaag herself was clearly not happy but like many Mong women accepted

0 T her fate with an air of resignation, ^T there was nothing she could have done to avoid it. Any protest would not have been acceptable to her own family who would have expected her marriage and condoned the union between their two families.

These years of a woman's life, although, bringing many new and welcome experiences, often, after the birth of children, involve intolerably high labour loads. For many women, married without choice to strangers, loneliness and lack of direction can lead to suicide¹⁷. After the splitting of her household from that of her in-laws and with the birth of children, women experience some stability providing their husbands do not take second wives and providing they are not widowed. It is in her married status, as head of her own household that women are conceptually accepted within a lineage and act, within their capacity as cultural producers, to reproduce social relationships. However, it is clear from the above discussion that women's relationship to the household and spiritual household is not clearly defined and changes

¹⁷Although no overall figures exist on Mong suicide rates, there are many reports of individual cases from ethnographers and Mong themselves. Patricia Symonds, working with the Hmong, witnessed one suicide during her fieldwork of a woman whose husband had taken a minor wife (personal communication). Figures for rural Chinese society (outside the Peoples Republic of China) which operate similar systems of patrilocal residence and labour relations peak in the 20-24 age group and fall by 60-70% of the peak by age 35-39 (Wolf 1975). Similarly reports of young female suicides are common in China, where the government hopes to discourage traditional attitudes to women. 101

during their lifetime, being redefined to accommodate realities. I will now consider further the situations where women have to redefine their relationships to their spiritual household and lineage.

Women as outsiders

Although all women know that their membership of the lineage is potentially impermanent it becomes most obvious to them if they are separated, in the process of divorce, are re-marrying or are widows. Women are firmly fixed to the lineage of their husband and remain so until re-marriage. Thus, just as girls are always aware that they exist in their parents' lineage until marriage so married women are always aware that membership of their husbands' lineage may come to an end. Women can and do leave the homes of their husbands, and although spiritually they are fixed in their lineage of marriage, they can also change that, on re-marriage.

Why it is important to belong to a lineage is illustrated in the daily life of women in marginal positions. Their distress is related to survival in this world and the next. If a person has no lineage then that person's position when they die is untenable. On death in order for the soul to enter the next world it has to be guided by members of one's own lineage. Thus Mong like to die in their own homes with their relatives. They cannot die in the house of another lineage without upsetting the house

spirits and bringing misfortune onto the house. What you have done in this life is reflected in the mortuary rite you are given. Thus if you are not respected or have no children your rite will be small and your position in the next world will be poor (Chindarsi 1976). Therefore the size and importance of a funeral will determine a soul's passage into the next world. One's place of residence and the fact of belonging to a lineage ^{are} ~~is~~ fundamental to continuing to live in this world and the next.

The separated women

Husbands and wives may separate but remain married. This separation may not be formally acknowledged and often occurs if a husband takes a second wife. In these cases the first wife may build her own house and separate ^{many} ~~much~~ of her finances from ^{those} ~~that~~ of her husband. There are several cases such as these in Doi Pui involving women of all ages. If the woman is young, she may return home to her parents and on occasion a mother may go to live with her married daughter or a married son. The separation varies in degree. Some women separate everything from their house to their finances and children. Others continue to live in the same household, but separate part of their financial and their daily life (this is probably the more common response).

In Doi Pui one woman informant had set up her own life independent of her husband; two women lived semi separated lives; three girls had returned home from unhappy marriages and two women lived with their daughters. Many women who are unhappy with their husbands will leave, often taking children with them and returning to their parents. In these cases the women are said to be "temporarily" staying since, being of a different lineage, they should not remain under the roof of their parents. In Doi Pui two of the three girls, who were "temporarily" staying with their parents, had one son each and all three partially supported themselves by selling trinkets at regional fairs. One of the mothers "temporarily" staying with her daughter, *Maiv Xeem Yaaj*, had left her third husband. Her daughter had a small shop and let her mother sleep there. The second mother left her husband in a nearby village and ran a small shop with her daughter, living in a separate part of the house to her daughter's husband. All the separated women knew that they could not re-marry without negotiating divorce. They all also knew that they could not have a funeral outside their lineage and those with male children expressed vague hopes that their sons would conduct their funerals despite the fact that their sons were growing up in isolation from their fathers' lineages. Although knowing they could change lineage again on re-marriage, the women were caught in a position of dependence, tied by their lineage to their husbands, but at the same time marginal both in a physical sense in that they chose to live apart from their

lineage and in a spiritual sense because although they needed their husbands' lineage they could also change lineage if they chose to re-marry. If they chose not to re-marry their destiny would be very uncertain. The following case studies explore these dilemmas in more detail.

Ntsuab has separated her physical life almost totally from her husband. She lives on her own with her children, runs her own shop, built her own home with money from her shop, keeps her own children and employs labourers to work her orchard. Her husband had left her to live with his minor wife in the home of his parents. Her husband took a minor wife when *Ntsuab's* youngest daughter was seven months: "He didn't say a word to me he just left. He visited me every month to show he wasn't leaving me. He did this ten times, then he stopped coming....he says he will never let me re-marry. He won't divorce me and he won't help me".

Ntsuab's concerns centre around firstly providing for herself and her family, and secondly ensuring her spiritual wellbeing. There is acrimony between *Ntsuab* and her husband's family. *Ntsuab* claims ^{that} she has laboured for them for years, but has retained none of the profit since her separation and has had to start again. Her husband's family claim ^{that} she should be working for them and contributing to the household and, if not doing this, she should divorce. *Ntsuab's* mother-in-law says: "*Ntsuab* doesn't respect her husband anymore. If he doesn't want

to divorce and she does, she should give the children back and the brideprice. If he wants to divorce her he can let her go, but he should pay her one bar of silver".

Kab, Ntsuab's mother-in-law supports her son, but also likes Ntsuab and would like her to return to the house. For Ntsuab this is impossible and her life has changed. She says: "Life is different now, grandma and grandson are not close anymore...now my life, everything is at an end, we had many years together, but now it is the end". Of most concern to Ntsuab is her situation in regard to the ancestors about which she says: "if I divorce and don't re-marry who are my ancestors? I will have none". Her main concern was who would conduct her funeral if she was divorced and she believes ^{that} as a woman she cannot divorce her husband. As she explains: "In Mong law women cannot divorce. If I divorce, my own parents have to return the marriage money [brideprice]....if a husband wants to leave his wife he doesn't have to return any money".

Ntsuab is emotionally distressed by her husband's desertion, feels wronged and cheated, and is insecure both financially and in relation to her position in Mong society. She is tied to her husband's lineage, but not living in their household and is marginal to the activities and benefits of the lineage. She is not necessary for the lineage to continue, since her sons are acknowledged to be part of her husband's lineage, but she cannot ensure her own future without guaranteed access to

^{of}
~~to~~
 a male lineage and thus she tolerates her membership ^{of} her husband's lineage, reluctantly joining them in new year celebrations. The arguments continue about what *Ntsuab* is entitled to, having left her husband but still remaining in the lineage. Her experience of the household and its structures ^{is} ~~are~~ therefore contradictory. It offers her spiritual wellbeing but at a cost she cannot bear to live with.

The divorced woman

If a marriage is very unhappy, divorce can be negotiated. If brideprice has not been paid or only partially paid then a woman can theoretically return to the home of her parents and to their clan, but not to their lineage and she would be expected to re-marry. It is however very difficult for a woman to divorce, not least because her parents have to return the bridewealth, which after many years they may not want to do, or may be unable to provide the required amount as in *Ntsuab's* case above. The incidence of divorce is fairly low, but many ethnographic accounts mention at least a few cases of divorce¹⁸.

¹⁸ For example Gar Yia Lee (1981) notes some divorces in his research location.

On divorce all the contents of a house should be divided and so must the money. The children can also be split. In Pa Glang village when a family with five children split up, each parent had two children and the fifth went to live with the father's parents. Fair splitting of resources only occurs if both partners agree to the divorce. If one partner can prove the other partner to be unfair then the village can arbitrate in their favour. If a man wants to divorce a woman, he will often accuse her of being lazy and unwilling. If this is proven the woman will often be divorced with little recompense. A woman can accuse her husband similarly, but her position is difficult since her family-in-law will generally side with their son. It is possible but rare for a woman to get fair recompense in this case. Any wealth stored in silver will generally stay with the husband's lineage, since its control is under the authority of the senior male. A man of the Vaaj clan in Doi Pui explicitly stated women's position in cases of divorce: "even if you are divorced you still join the ancestors of your husband. A woman cannot go back to her parents, the ancestors won't accept her". However, he acknowledged women's marginal position when referring to a woman who had been involved in divorce in Doi Pui the previous year: "if this daughter divorces her husband and comes home, maybe they can set up her funeral in the (Buddhist) temple". In his view a divorced woman with no lineage in the village obviously ^{could not} ~~can't~~ have a funeral and join her ancestors so perhaps, he speculates^d, the Buddhists ^{would} ~~will~~ accept her.

could not
 |d
 |would

The reasons for divorce obviously vary. Female infertility should not necessarily precipitate a divorce since a man can take more wives. However in declining economies, retaining an infertile wife may be seen as an unaffordable option. One woman Kab, from Maa Saa Mai had been divorced twice. She was in her early 30's. Her first husband divorced her after taking a minor wife and finding ^{that} Kab could not bear children and was frequently unwell. On her divorce Kab received only 1,000 baht. She was offered half of the rice store but could not transport it so left it where it was. Her second husband also did not know of her poor health on marriage and subsequently divorced her. On this occasion she was a minor wife and the family did not like her. They also gave her 1,000 baht and a feast so ^{that} she did not lose face. She then lived with her brother since her parents ^{were} ~~are~~ dead. But she felt she should not be dependent ^{on} in a family where she felt she did not belong and at a time when the village economy was going downhill, so she took a job demonstrating batik to tourists in Chiang Mai. Kab said her brother felt uncomfortable with her in the house. Very lonely and unhappy she was not sure of her future. She thought, given the chance, she would marry again but commented that "I've been married twice and I know how to suffer with men, I've cried all my life".

Divorce for a woman is not a good option. A woman has nowhere to go unless she returns home, where her parents may not feel happy about accommodating her for fear of "upsetting the ancestors". As *Ntsuab* described it: "If I divorce I can't make a ceremony, I can't go back to my family because the ancestors have cut me off. To use a family name you must respect the ancestors". Even if bridewealth is repaid, which seldom happens, many women said it made little difference to them; they still would have no lineage. Their children would still belong to their husbands' lineage and should not live with their maternal grandparents. If a woman loses her children, then she has no one to conduct ceremonies for her but if she tries to keep them she has few resources to provide for them and cannot necessarily rely on her parents to help. In these respects it is easier for a man to divorce; he can forgo the bridewealth, split the belongings and remain with his parents, children and land.

Divorce is rarely negotiated in a formal sense. Women try to find a way out of their situation. Some, nowadays, if very unhappy simply leave, sometimes taking their children with them. After this the husband may demand money back, or he may not. But most women are compelled to stay in an unhappy environment, sometimes using their traditional form of protest through suicide as a way out of their marriages. The divorced woman experiences extreme

marginality in relation to Mong society. Although divorce serves to separate worldly existence, it is no answer for the future of a woman's spiritual life.

The widowed woman

The case of the Mong widow also illustrates her physical and spiritual marginality to the lineage and all it represents. On her re-marriage she changes lineage and is often forced to leave her children behind, because they do not belong to her but to her husband's lineage. Until a woman re-marries she remains a member of the lineage of her deceased husband. Ideally she would become the minor wife of her husband's brother. However, this is generally disliked by women and their sisters-in-law. If she wants to re-marry, she can change lineage and the lineage of her deceased husband will receive bridewealth for her. She cannot, however, take her children with her unless further payments are made. If she has adult sons or other means she can live in her own home and rely on her children for support. Older women with established families and married sons do not face this dilemma and will be cared for within their families. It is the poor and young widows who face a difficult life of contradictions. Young widows often find themselves as minor wives through lack of opportunity and choice. Sometimes the deceased husband's family ^{does} ~~do~~ not want to support the widow or take her back into the family; often a widow does not want to return to a situation from which she escaped years ago.

1, 1, She would rather be head of her own house, or, failing that, be a minor wife and loved by her husband. Widows are often alienated by married women who fear ^{that} their husbands will take them as minor wives. The reality of a widow's dilemma is extremely difficult and is often reduced to a choice between keeping her children or marrying again and leaving her children. This was the dilemma faced by Ntxheeb.

Ntxheeb was left as a widow after 16 years of marriage and with 6 children. She was living with her parents-in-law but was clearly very lonely. When she related the story she claimed she could not earn enough to eat; this may have been the case, but it could be a justification for her choice to re-marry and leave her children. Her new husband did not want to take her children and he would have to pay her first husband's parents for them if they came. He paid for her youngest child who was still under three years of age but Ntxheeb had to leave five of her children behind. Ntxheeb had no children by her second marriage. Two of her daughters have died, her youngest daughter in childbirth. One son followed her to the village and was allowed to stay after he literally camped on the village outskirts, but he did not live in his mother's household. Her second adult son also moved to the village to take up a business selling goods in the market. Although her second marriage was into a successful and wealthy family, her own children could receive no benefit. Both of her sons are heroin addicts

and all their mother's inherited wealth through her second marriage ^{was} ~~is~~ controlled by her stepson. Her choice was undoubtedly a painful one that still causes her great distress. Ntxheeb had no control over her children who had to remain under the authority of her husband's lineage. Ntxheeb was only 30 when she was widowed. Her choice was either to remain alone and bring up her children or re-marry and leave her children. Women are theoretically provided for through their husband's family. However they, like men, prefer to re-marry if widowed. Given the chance most widows will decide to re-marry.

Paiv was widowed with 4 children and re-married leaving her children with her parents-in-law. She had no children by her second husband and when he took a minor wife after 10 years she ran away to a third man. On the third occasion no brideprice was paid. Paiv spends much of her time travelling to fairs to sell jewellery and staying "temporarily" with her daughter. She is concerned about who will conduct her funeral and ensure her wellbeing in the afterworld but she cannot bear the reality of her life with her opium addicted husband.

Txab did not re-marry after her husband died at 33 leaving her with two young children. She based her hopes on her son marrying and setting up a home with him. Her son could conduct the ceremonies of the lineage and could ensure her wellbeing in the next world through his

attentions to her after her death. Her children helped her continue to farm the land but her son died aged only fourteen years. Her husband's relatives were poor and unable to look after her. Now she lives with her daughter's parents-in-law, having forgone the bridewealth, and sells trinkets in the village square to tourists. Her life she describes as "too hard": "a widow's life is terrible. Now people look down on me because I am poor. The boys came to my house to tease me through the walls, they knew I was alone and I would lock the door. Mong women are afraid I would become their minor wife so they would not talk with me or be friendly, all my life I have been lonely, there is no one to help me". Being separated from her own lineage and with her son dead she now has no one within the village to conduct her funeral.

The widowed woman faces difficult and limited choices. The reality of staying a young lonely widow with a family of in-laws ^{whom} ~~that~~ she may not care ^{|| stit} for drives many women to re-marry and leave their children. Often they make poor second marriages and also experience the sadness of abandoning their children. The fact that they cannot take children with them because they belong to their husband's lineage illustrates women's lack of control over the products of her labour and the fact that her relationship to a lineage is impermanent. For their spiritual wellbeing almost all women should endeavour to stay with their husband's lineage, but their present reality often compels them to leave; a move which although preferred in

the present does not necessarily ensure their future spiritual wellbeing. In contemporary Mong society women can leave with more ease and attempt to support themselves. All widowed, separated and divorced women I knew who lived alone had turned to peddling. In more traditional societies Mong women will protest their condition through suicide.

Women's experience accommodated and expressed

The experiences of separation, divorce, young widowhood and polygyny are not so uncommon over a lifetime, as many ethnographic accounts, capturing just one or two years of village life, would indicate. However, many women will fortunately not be forced into any of these conditions although they will undoubtedly witness the condition of relatives. These accounts of women's lives illustrate two main points: firstly that women have limited control and choice in determining the direction of their lives and secondly that potentially all women, but especially women in the above described marginal situations are seen as outsiders in relation to the major structures of Mong society. This status is a result of women changing lineage on marriage and it is this lack of permanent ancestors that makes women most vulnerable. Whilst I do not deny that within these structures women exercise some control, choice and if nothing else, passive resistance or demonstration, they do not have influence to determine how these structures should affect them.

b) In the cases described above, women's main concern in experiencing marginalisation was lineage membership. Thus whether their own parents could accommodate them and who would conduct their funerals were central concerns. In many cases women defied lineage rules and returned to live with their parents or other female relatives who internally accommodated the violation of lineage law. Although the strong patrilineal structures tend to obscure women's cognatic relationships these are in fact enduring, and very often mothers help their daughters and daughters their mothers. The relationships between women and their parents are not cut off by marriage in the same way that their lineage is changed. Especially when young, women try to maintain close relationships with their own families. The links between mothers, daughters and granddaughters are as central to women's experience as the links connecting men to their brothers and fathers through the ancestors. However, because these links have no formal structure and are often denied because they cross male structures, they can be difficult to see. In addition because women do accept the dominant ancestrally imposed rules and virtues, their relationships are often only verbally expressed in relation to the established order. However, women do express themselves in other ways and if the focus of enquiries allows women's expression to be seen, then their relationships can be understood.

Clearly Mong women's experience of their society varies according to individual circumstance. A problem in explaining these differences in experience within a comprehensive framework is that women can only express themselves through male models of their society which tend to hide those who do not conform to the standard. The problem of "muted" women¹⁹ unable to express their realities in the way in which they see them has long been known and attributed to the male bias of the ethnographer, the discipline of anthropology and the structures of communication. The problem in defining Mong woman's experience of her society lies in the fact that it is so varied in relation to the structures identified as common. However, there are some experiences within the common structure which are known to all women and it is on the basis of this common knowledge that we can begin to understand women's experience. All women are aware of the implications of separation, divorce and widowhood, whether or not they experience them. Similarly women are aware of the threat of minor wives or the problems of polygamous households and all women experience patrilocal residence. In this sense all women are potentially outsiders. These common experiences and understandings introduce us to a Mong society which is not solely defined in terms of the ideal patrilineal relationships although these structures serve to constrain and limit the existence of other social structures.

¹⁹Ardner (1975) coined the phrase "muted women".

However, although the position of the Mong woman as outsider is a common experience, it is not her only experience and as I have already suggested, the Mong woman can also be an insider, involved in maintaining and interpreting Mong social structures. It was through the examination of material culture that I first became aware of women's central role in the reproduction of Mong social and cultural relationships. In the later chapters I will illustrate how these relationships, the woman as insider and outsider, are expressed through material culture and how objects act in supporting and re-producing social relations over time. However, before considering the role of the object in representing and reproducing social relations we need to understand how that object is produced, what social relations of production exist in Mong society and how production as a whole is understood by Mong women.

CHAPTER FOURMONG PRODUCTIVE RELATIONSHIPS

I have argued that Mong women exist as both insiders and outsiders in relation to the Mong lineage, ^{I have also suggested} and that the units of social organisation cannot be seen to encompass all Mong relations instead exhibiting valid differences in experience. If this is the case productive relationships will also reflect this difference and the question of how Mong produce (especially how they produce textiles) and co-operate in order to produce is raised. Some studies have given undue emphasis to the relations of production in defining social relationships, for example Boserup's "Women's role in economic development" ⁽¹⁹⁷⁰⁾ which limited an understanding of social relationships (especially of polygyny) to economic determinants. Whilst relations of production describe some aspects of women's position in society they are insufficient on their own in defining women and their status in society. As Moore has informed us "Cultural valuations given to women and men in society arise from something more than just their respective positions in the relations of production...If women are thought of as subordinate to men, while actually possessing certain degrees of economic and political autonomy, then it is difficult to see how the status of women...could be .. read off from their position in the relations of production" (1988:35). Thus this examination of their productive relationships will emphasise the

1. Not a
not quotation
marks
date of
publication

importance of considering women as individuals before placing them in the context of broader social or economic units.

Patterns of labour co-operation

(Reference to households refers to the lineage charts at the end of this chapter (Figures ^{1, 2 & 3}~~4, 5 & 6~~)).

1, 2, 3

The basic kinship units of Mong society exhibit little co-operation between clans. This is one of the reasons which leads Cooper (1984) to suggest that the Hmong social structure is far more compatible with an economic system of shifting cultivation than with the type of settlement observed in contemporary village units. Even today it is very common for families to move on when times are hard, if not to a new pioneering field location to a new village where relatives live. This move is almost always based on a nuclear family and some extended kin making up a household. Typically the debate over inter-clan co-operation has concentrated on economic and political relationships. It has been a major feature of works concerning the Mong economy. Co-operation as seen by Van Roy (1971) and Hanks (1964) between households and villages is disputed by Cooper who writes that there is "no village wide labour configuration" among Mong who practice swidden agriculture. Geddes agrees and is quoted in Cooper as saying "I have never found any incidence of fields being cleared by any form of co-operation wider

than the extended family.....I found no co-operation at the village level in any productive process" (Cooper 1984:99).

Co-operation between clans and households does occur on a village level when, for example, paths need to be cleared, or in a lowland setting a well is to be installed - all of those wishing to benefit must participate. Similarly in Pa Glang a regular night patrol is organised to protect the village and every family must provide a member for duty on a rota system. When electricity became available certain families joined together to co-operate and share maintenance and the expenses of installation. Labour contributions (understandably) must be seen to be reciprocal and for the common good. If one party is seen to benefit over another co-operation may not take place¹. Co-operation within a clan depends on the family relationships, and although hospitality between clansmen is a norm, especially to strangers visiting a village, being of the same clan does not ensure anything beyond basic hospitality. In fact clan links do not presuppose closer ties. For example a family of the *Xeem Yaa*j clan moved into Doi Pui village in the late 1960's taking advantage of distant links with the dominant *Yaa*j clan. However, their relationship was considered too distant and

¹Hence when a development group working in Pa Glang wanted to introduce a village fund there was considerable disagreement about who should benefit, many families refused to co-operate and the aid was withdrawn.

although tolerated they were generally considered to be outsiders to the main *Yaaj* clan. When they initiated some trading activity in the village and became a partner with another *Yaaj* family, members of the *Vaaj* clan with influence in the village eventually forced the two families apart. Both the *Vaaj* and the *Lis* clans were suspicious of the new *Yaaj* household and themselves had close family links with the *Doi Pui Yaaj* family which had formed the partnership. If there was profit to be made it was generally felt it should be within the original village families.

Closeness of kin relationships is one determining factor for inter-clan co-operation and it is preferred that co-operation is through the male line. This divides women within families, thus *Glau Xeem Xyooj* after her marriage continued to spend many of her days with her mother *Kab Xeem Yaaj* in her mother's shop. The shop was cared for by *Glau's* husband and he sold his goods there on condition that he also sold the goods of his mother-in-law. *Glau* mixed with her mother socially but for business the relationship was more formal. *Kab* often complained that she had given her son-in-law space to sell but his relatives of his own parents family would not. In the village her son-in-law had an uncle of the *Vaaj* clan, the brother of his mother. But his uncles' wife considered him to be of another clan and refused to give him space in her shop.

Thus although people of the same clans do co-operate there are limits to this depending on the closeness of family relationships, personal preferences and whether the links are through the male or female line. The unspoken clan "rules" are therefore flexibly applied. Thus a boy whose own clan was *Xeem Thauj* was related to his uncle's *Yaa*j clan through his mother. In addition his sister had married her maternal uncle's son. Affinal relations were considered strong enough to enable co-operation between the two clans and the boy thus worked in his uncle's shop and lived in Doi Pui (household 2). Rules of relationships are very often crossed by personal preferences. *Maiv Xeem Yaa*j, (household 3a) as second wife should have lived and worked within her household of marriage; however she felt herself rejected by her new family and did not like her husband. She set up her own stall and ran her own business without the support of her mother-in-law, who instead preferred to co-operate in labour exchange with her married daughter (household 17).

I would generally agree with Geddes and Cooper that labour co-operation is generally to be found within the household

and lineage.² Beyond these units labour is rarely shared on the same activity. However, it is perhaps necessary to extend the concept of household to include women's perception of their household. As I illustrate below co-operation outside of the male lineage does occasionally happen, particularly in production activities where the produce is not convertible to storable wealth (such as cultural production), among women and in the new economies. In order to analyse these relations among women I will first describe the social relations in Doi Pui as a whole.

Social relations in Doi Pui

The village of Doi Pui was first established as a settlement in 1954 with the arrival of ten families. The original settlers were of the *Xeem Yaaj*, *Xeem Vaaj*, *Xeem Lis* and *Xeem Haam* clans. Now there are 81 households, 147 families and 848 people. The original Green Mong settlers consisted of four households of the *Yaaj* clan, three of the *Lis* clan, two of the *Vaaj* clan and one of the *Haam*

²The competition between clans in the villages of Doi Pui and Pa Glang was intense and co-operation minimal. The observations of Geddes and Van Roy were based on agricultural production. The rationale for this lack of co-operation has been argued to be related to the need for each household to be a viable unit with dependence on others the exception not the rule. This is important to the maintenance of village survival, dependence being discouraged so that in situations of crisis each family would have ensured resources to survive. This therefore argues against the legitimacy of the village as a co-operative unit. It would also suit the migratory swidden mode of production.

clan. Shortly after arriving in Doi Pui the *Haam* clan moved on again to nearby Maa Saa Mai village. The *Yaaj's*, *Vaaj's* and *Lis'* form the major clans of today's village. The original clans who founded Doi Pui had left their village to avoid trouble from resident Chinese and after several temporary stops arrived in Doi Pui where they joined five White Hmong families. Eight years later the White Hmong moved to join the White Hmong in nearby Chiang Khien village.

New families distantly related have moved in over the years. In 1971 several families arrived, having distant relatives in the village. They arrived before the tourist boom in the village and ten years later, their economy suffering from lack of land, twenty of these families moved out again to nearby Nam Sum village. Other relatives joined existing clans in the village which really grew and began to look permanent as a result of tourist visits which attracted other Mong, Thais and Chinese to set up trade. In Doi Pui over the years several households have taken advantage of other relatives to move into the village. Relatives of both women and men were used as a link, although the more successful links tend to be through males.

In 1980 one family of the *Vaaj* clan, claiming a relationship to the village through a grandfather's half brother and the brother of a wife, moved to Doi Pui and ~~are~~^{is} now, through trading activities, one of the richest

families
 families (11)

clans in the village (household 15). In contrast one
 women, *Mor Xeem Thauj* (household 18) had moved back to her
 village with her husband to try and escape the poverty of
 their village. Her mother is related to the wealthy *Lis*
 family by marriage but neither she nor her elder sister,
 also in the village, profit from this. *Mor* had hoped to
 make money from business but both she and her husband
 became addicted to opium and then heroin. Other clans,
 claiming distant relatives have moved into the village.
 One distant family of the *Yaaj* clan arrived in the late
 1970's but most members became addicted to opium or
 heroin. Other smaller clans tend to be poor and include a
 family of the *Thauj* clan who live on the village
 outskirts, trade, grow lychees and farm, and a household
 of the *Tsaab* clan who make a living as knife makers.
 Households of the *Lis*, *Yaaj* and *Vaaj* clans have
 intermarried and grown and some households from each clan
 comprise the wealthiest and most powerful in the village.
 On several occasions families in *Doi Pui* and *Pa Glang* with
 small clans or no family at all have been compelled to
 leave the village when support is needed, to join
 relatives elsewhere. The loyalty of clan members and the
 tight family structures would suggest that the clan,
 lineage and family units are the most important economic
 structures. The fact that larger villages exist today
 does not mean that people are interdependent although some
 interdependence has emerged particularly in relation to
 the demands of a larger village. However these structures
 do not describe all aspects of social organisation.

Women and the household in Doi Pui

Many of the women in Doi Pui had married into the village from outside. Of the second generation women of Doi Pui, some married in as distant relatives and others married within the village men of a different clan to their own. Some of the third generation women in Doi Pui are Thai, the third generation Mong boys having been educated in Chiang Mai and even Bangkok and marrying Thai women. However, the Thai women tend not to live in the village. Most of the Mong men married to Thai women are in employment such as teaching and thus tend to live in urban areas or in the villages in which they have been allocated to teach. Thus most of the resident third generation women in Doi Pui are Mong. Like their mothers they have changed lineages within the village, have come from other villages as distant relatives or cousins and bear no remembered relationship to their husbands' lineage. Several women in the village have married men who belong to the clans that their mothers were born into. Women change lineage but not clan, however, their children take on the clan of their father. Women, although retaining their clan name, will also identify with the clan of their household of marriage.

For example as shown in figure 2A, *Rha* married into the household of *Xeem Yaaj* (household 5) and is a *Xeem Lis* by birth, but her mother married into the household of *Xeem*

Lis (household 10) and is a *Xeem Yaaj* by birth. Her daughter, therefore, has married into the same clan as the clan of her mother's birth. *Ntxawm* is a *Xeem Yaaj* by birth. She married out of the village into a *Xeem Thauj* household. *Kaab*, her daughter, is a *Xeem Thauj* by birth but has married back into her mother's clan, *Xeem Yaaj*, on her marriage to her cousin, son of her mother's brother, and moved into the village of her mother's birth (household 2). Through matrilineal cross-cousin marriage this is fairly common. Women are constantly crossing clans and making links between clans. *Glau* married into a *Xeem Xyooj* (household 3) but is a *Xeem Yaaj* by birth. She married a *Xeem Xyooj* (household 17) whose mother is also a *Xeem Yaaj* by birth in Pa Glang village. For identification purposes unless otherwise stated the clan name of women will be that of their household of marriage, not of their birth, since that was the name they gave as an "official" name related to their residence. Women knew many of their relationships through their clan of birth but (young women in particular) were vaguer when it came to their clan of marriage. One elderly woman of 78 traced for me her relationship to another woman (who had moved into the village from Pa Glang) going back three generations through her clan of birth. Thus, although women marry into a new lineage they retain many links with their clan of birth. However, although they and their husbands make use of links through the female line their family and lineage for the purposes of residence and ancestors are defined through the male line.

In Doi Pui many of the households which feature in the study are of the *Yaaj* clan which comprises the largest clan in the village. However, many of the women married into the *Yaaj* clan were born into the *Vaaj* and *Lis* clans of the village. In figures 1,2 and 3 the focal households have all been identified through the women informants in two ways; some according to their clan of birth (in red) others according to their clan of marriage (in green) and some according to both (green and red). This identification is based on whether they were born in the village (red) or not (green). In three cases mothers had moved to join their daughters who were, therefore, associated with their clan of birth (households 3b, 19 and 23). The sub-households are often independent households although technically according to Mong traditions they should be resident with the main household (3a and 3b). Others live with the main household but technically according to tradition should not (2a and 12a). Others contain mothers who have moved in with their married daughters (19, 23, 3b). Of the main households and sub-households in the study 12 of the women informants retain strong links with their clan of birth, whether through their being resident in the same village as their parents (households 5, 6, 7, 13, 17, 18), having their mothers move in with them (households 3b, 19 and 23), having moved back to their parents' house on divorce (households 2a and 12a), or having male children move into the village but in separate households (household 9).

Because women class themselves with their clan of birth as well as their clan of marriage, particularly if they were still resident in the village where they had been born, it becomes necessary to establish what we mean by the household as the unit of production and how the family fits into this structure. I would agree with Moore that the household and family are important "because they organise a large part of women's domestic and reproductive labour. As a result both the composition and organisation of households have a direct impact on women's lives and in particular on their ability to gain access to resources, to labour and to income" (1988:55). The household in the Mong context does appear to control much of women's labour power but it exists as one unit in a complex structure of power relations. As has been shown the experience of the household by Mong women is very varied and we are compelled to question whether an institution based on the male lineage and clan which can so marginalise a woman would be central to her perception of co-operation or social relations. Although they may well recognise it as an important and a decisive factor in their lives Mong women hold broader views of relationships and networks of production.

Whilst recognising that men's control of resources in the household context is important there are other reasons for questioning the household as the most satisfactory unit of analysis. As Harriss (1981) points out relations among

people in a household are often not determined by the household as a unit but by other groups or the state. In Mong society women are fairly isolated and more dependent on male authority within the household, but they do have links with other women and other kin which, if we restrict ourselves to an analysis of the household of the male lineage would not necessarily become clear. As has been illustrated above the Mong units of clan, lineage and household have been used to identify Mong social relationships. Although they are all of importance it must be recognised that women cross clan and lineage lines and do not see their society as so strictly delineated by these structures. This is demonstrated further below, however before looking at specific relations of production let us first consider one type of household, the polygynous household, as women experience it rather than as it is commonly described as an economic unit of production. Women's views of the practice of polygyny illustrates a very different perspective of Mong society. This practice which is often described in terms of control over labour power, can be analysed with a different emphasis. Boserup's (1970) "Women's role in economic development", identified the importance of the polygynous system in extending rights over land. However, whilst she examined the economic roots of polygyny she failed to look at the broader implications of the system, not only in relation to economic change and what happens when extra women become a cost to a household, but also the household from the women's point of view. The reaction of women

confined to polygynous households and the way women are able to express in different ways their perception of their relationships and their society once again questions the validity of the household as an institution of economic and social support.

Polygyny and the Mong woman

Polygyny is not experienced by all women but the possibility of polygyny exists in the minds of most Mong women. As expressed by a woman in Pa Glang: "All of their lives a woman fears the minor wife".

The incidence of polygyny

In villages with few resources men are not able to take minor wives but in wealthier villages minor wives are not uncommon. Geddes conducting fieldwork in the late 1950's when resources were more plentiful writes: "A majority of Mong men who survive until middle age will have had more than one wife simultaneously. Sometimes they will have three wives and occasionally more..." (1976:125). Geddes' analysis of household heads shows that 34.9% of marriages were polygynous³. Twenty years later Lee (1981) notes that in the village of Khun Wang there is only one man

³Whereas I interpret this to be a large proportion of marriages, Lee (1981) wanting to prove that the norm for Mong marriage is nuclear says "Only 26 of the 65 households are extended polygynously". This is in fact 40% of households.

with two wives though four other men had more than one wife not long previously, though now the wives were divorced or deceased. In Doi Pui there are 21 living women who are or have been a first or minor wife. Outside of these women three other women expressed fears that their husbands were actively seeking minor wives. The topic of minor wife frequently came into conversation and almost all of them were clearly concerned it could happen to them. In every extended household each generation had a fairly close relative who was or had a minor wife or was threatened by the possibility of becoming one. 12 out of 80 families (i.e. 15%) were directly affected. The figures for Doi Pui are probably slightly higher than most villages today because it is a comparatively wealthy village. However, if one looks at a profile of a village over time households which are currently nuclear may go through a period of polygyny and then become nuclear again. Thus the experience of polygyny either as reality or fear is more common than usually represented.

Realities of polygynous practice for women

Most scholars of the Mong when discussing minor wives have quoted the ideal rather than^a the reality. Thus they note the higher status of the first wife, the gains in labour power and children and male status, and the assurance of family continuity and survival. Most however also note the perceived unhappiness of wives in this situation but few comment on the reality of these lives and the profound

/e affect the threat of a minor wife has on the lives of women. The very existence of polygyny as an institutional norm reduces the power of women in a family. The threat of the minor wife was occasionally used in arguments between husband and wife. Only a woman of high performance, in labour and child-bearing terms can argue her case, and even then without much assurance.

The standard rule for taking a minor wife has often been quoted by researchers (Lee 1981, Geddes 1976, Cooper 1984) and amounts to the fact that: a second wife can be taken with agreement of the first wife and subsequent wives with the agreement of all wives. All wives should be treated equally in all respects. The reality is somewhat different: "When he took the minor wife he didn't ask me. The first I knew she was already in the house, I cried and cried....At first they were good to me but 10 years ago they tried to get rid of me. I was really frightened and tried to sleep in the same room which I had hated doing in the early days. They agreed in the end and gave me a separate bed and blanket, and they lie together all night and hold each other.....now I don't cry because I have no more tears but it hurts in my mind I took fields for myself from the forest and cut the weeds myself, I look after myself; I eat outside the house unless they ask me in..... he doesn't love me; she (the minor wife) says I'm too old, he has asked me to go three times, but where can I go?" Doi Pui resident, aged over 60.

"Life is very different now. We were not very happy at the time, he scolded me a lot because I didn't like his gambling friends, then he left and when he came back he had a young girl with him. She was only 16. At first they went to live with his parents but he visited me every month and brought his minor wife and we all slept together. He did this to show he would not divorce me. He did it ten times and then he stopped coming. Then my youngest child was one year, now she is five" Doi Pui resident, aged 38.

"They didn't ask me because I was too young, but they (her husband and parents -in-law) told me she was coming, we had only been married three years, I was not yet 15" Doi Pui resident, aged over 70.

"Yes, he asked me. We have been married over 16 years but I only have one daughter. His relatives told him he must take a minor wife and have sons. I can't say whether I agreed" Maa Saa Mai resident, aged 34.

Far from agreeing with their husbands' decision all the women with whom I talked were distressed at the prospect of a minor wife. Their position in Mong society prohibits them from protesting in order to prevent the marriage and instead they protest throughout the rest of their lives. All women with a minor wife argued, they all said they never talked more than was necessary, and some refused to

talk to each other at all. The position of first wife did not necessarily enhance her status. Much depended on the husband's relationship with the minor wife. In most cases I encountered the minor wife has the support of the husband and the first wife feels rejected, particularly in a sexual sense. The youth of the minor wife is often quoted as a factor in power relations, with the minor wife claiming sexual superiority over the first wife: "it's her fault, she couldn't keep him under her foot" (minor wife, Doi Pui). All first wives expressed the pain of having to sleep in the same bed with a man whom they loved and a strange woman. All of them, if possible, sooner or later moved to a separate part of the room and some to a different room. Some moved to a different house.

The men treated the women more or less equally in terms of labour contribution. But again there were exceptions and a favoured wife was seen to work less or do the easier jobs. Personality largely determined the work and position of a woman^a and in general the women split their household and field chores operating independently. One third wife said she kept her head low and worked hard and was generous with everything thus earning the love of the children and her husband. But the second wife had behaved very differently, dominating the first wife, making her life miserable and eventually causing her suicide. In almost every family favouritism is inevitable: "Usually the first wife makes the funeral clothes for the husband but in my family the first wife was dead so the second

| a

wife came to me and said - he loves you more than me so you can make his clothes - She was already living in a separate house, so in the end it was me who made his funeral dress" (third wife, Doi Pui 1987).

Household power relations

The possibility of a minor wife therefore greatly reduces a woman's bargaining power in a difficult relationship. The actuality of a minor wife is not only a humiliating experience for first wives (in itself reducing power) but the fact that one wife is superior to the other causes an unbalanced relationship. For example in a monogamous relationship a husband and wife would share knowledge of the silver and family wealth. Many first wives complained that their husbands shared this knowledge with the minor wife and not with them, and the third wife of a wealthy man in Doi Pui said it was her and not the second wife who had knowledge of the silver.

Wives often clear their own fields and one first wife in Doi Pui was excluded from family meals and grew her own food. Although this is rare it does happen. Often women in polygynous households cannot divorce having nowhere to go and in one case in Doi Pui the first wife survived from her yearly sale of a quarter rai of opium. She had her own savings account and looked after herself; only eating in the house when she was asked. The main difficulties were her feelings of insecurity and loneliness. Although

she usually was asked to eat with the family, and from fear persuaded her husband after some years that she should sleep in the same room as he and the minor wife (the very situation she had fled from years previously), the possibility of divorce or exclusion existed and caused her considerable worry. Very often a first wife in this situation will commit suicide. This had happened in the case of the first wife of the *Xeem Lis* lineage founder (household 9) and other historical cases were related to me.

Reasons for polygyny

The mechanism which allows for minor wives may in the past have been intended to benefit the women in a patrilineal system. As Lee writes: "the Mong exhibit ambiguity about polygyny. On the one hand some men approve of it if the husband is rich and the wives can get along with one another like sisters... However, in the case of poor men its practice is often frowned upon.... On the whole it is tolerated if it is done through obligation as in the case of the levirate, and when the first wife is barren or unable to perform her duties effectively or for various reasons cannot bear sons" (1981:50).

Since wives rarely do get on and the ideal cannot be obtained, the taking of minor wives only in the two situations of infertility or leviration is arguably agreeable to both men and women. The levirate is suitable

for widows, who did not want to leave their children although it is not always possible or wanted. Other justifications for taking a minor wife are often related to labour power though many other factors contribute to this decision. The necessity for a son to continue the family line and care for parents in old age is well known and if a woman appears infertile or just has daughters (in Mong belief it is the woman who is responsible for the child's sex) a minor wife can be taken. The opinion of a man's clan is more important than that of his wife in marriage matters illustrating the marginality of women's influence. Thus a Doi Pui girl became a minor wife to a man from outside the village whose first wife was no longer able to conceive. His motive in looking for another wife was to have a son since his wife had only had one daughter in 16 years. His wife thought he would otherwise not have taken a minor wife since they were happily married but she anticipated future trouble.

Infertility and female children are "blamed" on women. This frees men from the considerable guilt experienced by their wives whose feelings of guilty responsibility deplete their power in the husband/ wife relationship. In Pa Glang *Xaiv Suav* had had five wives, though only three remained with him; he had divorced the other two and they had re-married. *Xaiv Suav* was probably infertile. None of his wives had produced children by him and they remained cynically quiet about this. One had been pregnant on marriage, another had been his brother's widow

and already had a son. Although most people knew this it was a fact he tried to keep quiet. If no children are born a man can hide his infertility by taking already pregnant wives or ignoring their infidelity. In Doi Pui *Kawn Xeem Vaaj* had a poor relationship with her husband who was distressed that his wife had given him five daughters. It was a fact she bemoaned on every occasion I saw her. Her husband was violent towards her using her inability to produce sons as a reason for beating her and on one occasion breaking her arm. Of course this behaviour would not be condoned by other Mong but its existence was known and no action was taken. The husband, according to other Mong, was understandably frustrated, though they agreed he shouldn't beat his wife. This desire for sons continues in the young. One 25 year old man in Doi Pui speculated in conversation to me that he might find a minor wife. Despite being very attracted to a Thai-style life having had a Thai education he was uncertain about Mong traditions, but had three daughters and desperately wanted a son.

However, there are clearly cases where a family has a son, where extra labour is not required and where a minor wife is taken. In Doi Pui a now deceased man of the *Lis* clan took three wives. He was probably the richest man in the village and clearly did not need additional family when he took his last (and third) wife because he refused to take her children (which included two sons) already having a large family himself. His third and only surviving wife

believes she was taken in part to spite the second wife. The first wife had committed suicide allegedly out of unhappiness and because she was nagged by a dominant and jealous minor wife. Their husband was distraught at her death and enormously humiliated. He rejected his second wife by taking a third. The second wife remorsefully moved into a separate house and died soon after.

More than one wife indicates a man's potential status through his productive power. Thus wives can be taken effectively to be servants. This is often the case when a girl is married to a boy younger than herself, and represents the wishes of the parents for more help. This happened to *Mog Xeem Vaaj*, now a 70 year old in Doi Pui who was married at an exceptionally young age and whose husband took a minor wife before he even knew whether his first wife could bear children. Thus if a first marriage is arranged the boy may take a minor wife which is a love match (though it also corresponds to the wishes for more labour and a house servant). One older couple in Doi Pui claim to have married only for love. When the second wife, who was a widow, became pregnant at an old age they were both embarrassed but the explanation was simply that they were in love and they married. In another case, when the husband of *Rha Xeem Yaaj* took a second wife the union was said to be a love match in part because he could hardly afford a second wife and had many children already. She was, as is common, already pregnant when

they married. When he died at a young age and unexpectedly *Rha*, the first wife, was openly pleased to be free of him.

The reasons are therefore varied: field labour, sons, status, house servants, kin connections and love. Whatever the reasons for polygyny, the structures which allow for a minor wife seriously deplete women's power and self determination in relation to their husbands. Why women accept the position of minor wife is also varied. Often they are divorced, are widows or are unmarried mothers. These women will find it difficult to marry and will be forced to accept the position of minor wife. Some young girls become minor wives after being seduced by men unaware that they are married, or not fully aware of the problems of a minor wife. Other girls however are well aware of the implications as are their parents who will try to prevent such marriages which are thought to be unhappy because of family tensions. Some women look for acquired status through an established man.

An unmarried pregnant woman can point out the father of her child and demand he marries her. If he refuses she should receive a payment from the father. This payment enables the woman to pay those who helped arbitrate in the matter and allows her to build a birthing hut for herself. One month after the birth of the baby she can move back into her parents' home and the child can accept the ancestors of her parents until she marries. The

status of an illegitimate child whose father is unknown is uneasy. In general the child will, after birth, take on the mother's unmarried lineage as ancestors until either the mother's marriage or the child's marriage. Chindarsi (1976) reports that a girl who does not know the father of her child may put the child to death. If she does know the father she will try to marry him and if she is not successful the male child may later try to join the clan of his known father⁴. Loneliness, the difficulties of raising a child alone and the dilemma over lineage membership will compel unmarried women to accept the position of minor wife. The fact that polygyny, although so strongly disliked by women, is seen to be necessary for whatever reason and the fact that women in certain situations are compelled to seek such marriages illustrates Mong women's lack of determining power. The

⁴In traditional society it is less likely that a man will refuse to marry his pregnant girlfriend, especially if the man is young. Traditionally men marry young and have fewer girlfriends. Gar Yia Lee (1981) notes that most people in Khun Wang village (80.6%) married between the ages of 15-21 years. Also obligation to marry the girl is much stronger in traditional villages. In China records indicate very young betrothals and marriages. Mickey (1947:50) describes four marriages with couples aged between 12-18 years. Older women in Doi Pui had been betrothed and married very young. One woman married at 12 a boy of the same age, with her husband taking a second wife before she was 15. Early marriages are also noted by Geddes (1976) and Chindarsi (1976) who suggests they were encouraged because of the need for labour. In these conditions of early marriage, pregnancy before marriage is less likely and if it does happen marriage is more likely to take place because other options are limited and pressure from relatives is intense. As I discuss in the next section later marriages (partly due to schooling in Mong villages) in changing villages have led to many complications.

pressures on a woman to belong to a lineage are such that she will often accept a much disliked position within a family. However, women often passively resist such marriages creating tensions in a household which make many men choose not to take a minor wife. Many men in Doi Pui spoke of these tensions as a main reason for not taking more than^a one wife. Other women protest through suicide, many return home or get divorced, entering the state from which their minor wives have fled. Running away from a polygynous relationship is a major cause of separation and several of the case studies below are those of first or minor wives who have left their husbands.

The major social structures in Mong society were identified above as being the lineage and household, which may or may not be polygynous. As was raised then, we must question whether these social institutions, which do not adequately accommodate all of women's needs, can be seen by women as being the important social structures they are held to be. Particularly since, as I will describe, most women at some time in their lives exist outside the lineage and all are aware of their future marginal potential.

A common analytical approach to polygyny has been in economic terms whereby polygyny is seen as part of the process of appropriation of land rights and eventual class

formation: "...additional wives became, in fact, simply additional field workers who facilitated the accumulation of use-rights to more land....[in this there are] ..interconnections between the social processes of accumulation, class formation and changes in gender relations" (Leacock and Safa 1986:174). However, it is also clear that the institution of polygyny cannot be seen solely as promoting the gradual appropriation of men over women's labour power. By treating it so, women's reaction and their power expressed in other ways is negated. Land and labour appropriation and class formation may be an effect but it is not the only effect. Women's reaction to the institution of polygyny is a constant expression of their position, even if that position is one of increasing or permanent marginalisation. In addition the dissatisfaction with the polygynous household once again raises the issue of whether the household should be treated as such an all encompassing institution in Mong society. Thus a consideration of control over labour and the products of labour cannot be considered in isolation from the fact that the institutions we use to describe societies cannot be assumed to mean the same to all members of that society. In addition, the reaction of women to the dominant powers and social structures is significant because it offers alternative perspectives of these dominant social structures. In viewing the dominant structures through an alternative perspective other dominant perceptions which arise from them must be

questioned. One of these issues is the fact that the less tangible products of labour, that is domestic and reproductive labour, are often ignored in analysis.

Social relations of production

Just as we must question the household as a defined unit of production so the commonly represented products of labour must also be subject to re-evaluation. For Mong women making textiles is labour and women invest a considerable amount of time into growing hemp, harvesting, stripping the fibre, spinning, weaving, dyeing and sewing textile products. Making textiles, however, in most ethnographic accounts of the Mong has been classified within the domestic sphere of activity along with a range of activities related to the home and children. These activities, though often not regarded as labour in the West, contribute more than a service to a household's economy. In fact, as I will demonstrate later, the Mong textile not only serves a practical purpose but carries spiritual wealth which determines social position in an afterlife; ^{it} serves a central part in reproducing social relations and is held to represent a lifetime of production power of men and women. This evaluation of the textile can only be demonstrated if the Mong woman is understood in all her roles.

The woman as homemaker is one frequently underestimated role. There is good evidence⁵ that in Mong and other rural households with no women a process of impoverishment takes place. Even households with several able-bodied men can be reduced to poverty. The reasons, of course, can be related to insecurity, lack of potential or unwillingness to invest in a barren household, but they serve to illustrate the multifarious roles of women. The role that women play in providing material and moral support which socialises community members has been identified as one of their most important contributions (Stack 1974). However it is often neglected because of the concentration in analysis on the household as a productive unit and the marginalisation of domestic and other women's activities within society.

If we start to consider the domestic sphere of activity, control over labour power loses some of its clarity. Within the domestic sphere women are considered as reproducers, both through their control over the family and household members and through their contribution to cultural and social reproduction. Engels' (1972) analysis of labour and control over labour revolved around the control of surplus which was produced when agricultural

⁵In Mong and other minority and Chinese households in China many all male households are poverty stricken. The lack of women may be due to poverty in the first place which meant brideprice could not be paid. However, in households where women have left or died a process of increasing impoverishment takes place (Harper 1988, 1989).

systems took over from subsistence systems. Engels argues that the control of surplus and the control of property became the priority of men who were in a "natural" position to dominate women. In feminist writings Elenor Leacock (1972) has followed Engels in arguing that the development of private ownership of the means of production has resulted in women's subordination to men. This theory has been used repeatedly to justify much disputed "natural" male dominance and the relative equality of the sexes in nomadic as opposed to sedentary populations.

The control of surplus as I shall discuss below is also used by Cooper (1984) in his analysis of the Mong to justify male dominance. Whilst I may agree that men have taken control of the public sphere of production (which has been partly motivated and partly enforced by the state and by necessity for survival) control of the domestic sphere has been neglected in analysis yet is of crucial importance to the public sphere. The domestic aspect of life is essential to the production and reproduction of society and we must ask with whom the control of domestic production and reproduction lies. Whilst identification of the domestic sphere has been very important in analysing women's production, the division into domestic and public spheres of activity as formulated in the 1970's (Rosaldo 1974) must be treated with some caution. It can be of limited value because some analysis draws heavily on western concepts of what is domestic and what is public

and artificially separates the two areas (Moore 1988). However it is a useful tool of analysis when looking at existing materials on Mong society. It is also valid in identifying women's roles as mothers, although this is arguably also a culturally defined category. The lack of attention to the domestic sphere has been raised by many women writers (Vogel 1983, Mackintosh 1981) in criticism of both Engels (1972) and Meillassoux. Meillassoux's (1981) discussions of the control of reproduction have emphasised the control of women as reproducers rather than as labour, but according to Moore (1988) he nevertheless tended to "subsume reproduction under the general concept of the reproduction of the labour force". This Meillassoux justifies because "labour and the individuals who perform it must be reproduced and this in turn involves control over biological reproduction and the persons who are the means of that production: women" (Moore 1988).

What emerges from these debates is the importance of analysing the different types of production which involve more than just the reproduction of labour power. It is necessary to consider the social and cultural reproduction of society and to consider the place of women in relation to their productive activities, viewing these aspects as central to societies' basic needs. This identification of the nature of labour and women's labour is critical to an

understanding of the textile product because not all labour is the same and not all labour is organised and controlled in the same way.

Labour activities

The work patterns of Mong men and women reflect more than just a work load. They are life responsibilities which a woman takes seriously as her domain and they give order to her life. They are no less important for being smaller tasks. Although *Plaj* from Pa Glang is now in her late 70's, has a gas hob and piped water from a storage tank, no pigs and no children to feed she still rises at five in the morning to do her tasks. She takes her chickens seriously, preparing their feed by scraping corn off the husks and grinding it before her husband rises at about 5.30. Late at night, although there is no need, *Plaj* will sit up and make batik under her electric light, often until past 11 pm, and long after her husband has gone to bed. This routine reflects a life now gone but well remembered. Hence a Doi Pui woman^a who sells in the night bazaar said nostalgically, "in the old days we made 20 skirts a year, now we make just one. In the old days we woke with the sun, now we sleep until lunch". Working well is of great importance to the Mong. A sense of useful production runs through every activity. Working hard earns respect. Craft making is, of course, work. A lazy woman is a despised woman and there is a batik pattern called lazy woman because of the ease with which

it can be learnt and applied. Many women in Doi Pui expressed feelings of boredom, especially the older women whose families were away, trading or working in the fields. One woman expressed it like this: "In the old days we would sing on our way to the fields, it was hard work but we were all together". Another, sitting in her empty house one hot day confessed that the thing she really missed was the smell of a rice field early in the morning. "Yes, life is easier for me now, but it is boring". Thus whilst we may identify gender specific work roles, analysis of those roles must be broad because labour cannot be separated from other daily activities and the meaning of work goes beyond specific results.

We can, of course, identify gender specific tasks. Work specific to men includes felling large trees, burning fields, hunting, looking after large animals, doing carpentry, basket and metal work and doing heavy field work such as ploughing. They have also traditionally done the opium dealing. Tasks specific to women include clothes making, preparation of foodstuffs and cooking, collecting firewood and looking after smaller animals, including the collection and preparation of fodder and collection of water. Childcare is a shared task although women often assume most responsibility. However, traditional divisions of labour are not strictly enforced. Although women generally cook, men are equally capable. Although women generally care for the animals, men also do this task. It is not my intention to explore

the relative abilities of men and women; what is more revealing is the importance we attach to the tasks. Hunting is of course no more or less important than weeding. But going out of the village has become more important as outside contacts have become significant in daily life.

Gar Yia Lee (1981:91) analyses the different types of labour identifying six different forms: agriculture, animal husbandry, hunting, gathering, handicrafts and fishing. He concludes: "Of these agriculture takes up the most time and requires the hardest work". However, Lee's classificatory groups emphasise male labour and if one considers the nature of women's work throughout the year the same conclusion may not be made. Women's domestic labour (which Lee does not identify) or farm labour could arguably be seen to be as demanding as agricultural labour. In terms of labour contributions it is very appropriate to note that all of the tasks of the man have come under early pressure to end, as restrictions on movement and changes in the environment have occurred. He can no longer hunt successfully or clear new land, often larger animals are the first to be sold as resources dry up. The woman still has the domestic and farm tasks, childcare and field work as before. Perhaps as a result of these changes women are seen by many to work harder than men. This is a view held by researchers, local Thais and some Mong themselves. However, many Mong are aware of

these views and Mong women will defend their husbands against accusations of laziness and say "our work is just different".

Women, nevertheless, do have a heavy load: they are up early to collect water, light the fire and prepare food. Late at night they will be making batik or sewing. Whilst their husbands participate in village discussions the women will be cooking, cleaning, caring for animals and making clothes. Many women claim that they have never rested with idle hands. Cooper (1984) suggests that overall women contribute more in terms of labour ; "by the time the children are working in the fields the man will be more involved in management activities". He says the women do more repetitive work requiring less strength and he identifies a division of labour based on marginal physical distinctions between the sexes. In fact this seems to be more of a justification for distinction than a reason. Similar justifications exist among other groups. The Lisu for example leave heavy/high work to men yet women's tasks also include steaming rice and carrying these pots from house to house is heavy work - as "heavy as the logs that men carry for fire wood" (Hutheesing 1987:89).

Control over the products of labour

As discussed above, Engels' analysis of labour and control over labour revolved around the control of surplus which was produced when agricultural systems took over from subsistence systems. The control women exercise over resources, the conditions of their work and the distribution of products is vital to an understanding of women's condition. However, whilst this is fundamental to an analysis of women in any society, economic power relations do not exist in isolation and analysis must be extended beyond the economic to social and political relations. It would appear that within the changing economies of Mong society as the products of labour become more easily converted to storable wealth, men do appear to control the physical products of women's labour. The control over the tools of production and the results of productive labour in the ideal concept of Mong ownership suggests that no individual had authority over another and no individual had rights in the results of productive labour because all power and authority was invested in the patriline. This analysis is based on the authority and power accorded to senior males, and the considerable power and authority invested in the ancestors.

As land and land ownership has become important in the Thai state, the ownership of fields, houses and surplus has similarly increased the authority base of men. This change has been taking place for several years and has

been noted by researchers since the 1970's. Thus control over and access to resources by women is increasingly limited. In Doi Pui this is illustrated in relation to land and legal rights. *Mor Xeem Thauj* wanted a Thai identity card which her husband had already secured for himself but not for her. She needed his help to get one but he told her it wasn't necessary for her to have one. She disagreed but unlike her husband she did not have access to the outside and she did not speak good Thai. In the control of silver wealth many women with minor wives complained that their husbands no longer told them where the silver was buried. *Ntsuab Xeem Yaaj* (household 3a) complained that her husband had taken the silver bridewealth for her daughter who (unusually) had been raised alone by *Ntsuab* for the past 5 years. An appropriation of labour power is illustrated by Lee (1981) in his analysis of household distribution of goods where he reveals that although in the majority of cases returns are used by all members, in some cases returns from common opium plots are kept by the male household head. It is the male household head who will decide its use, often on family expenditures such as marriages. In these cases the wife and her sons have their own individual opium plots and retain the profits themselves. Lee notes that many variations in control of labour and control of products exist and his patterns are generalisations.

The potential for exploitative relations of production existed prior to accumulation of opium wealth for the reason that within Mong society several mechanisms exist in relation to the authority of the patriline which reduce the power of women. These mechanisms which in traditional society may have been seen as complementary to respective sex roles are in the present economies restrictive. The power of the patriline in relation to control over products is fundamental to this analysis. In that the centre of economic relations is situated in the patrilineal extended household and that women have a flexible and impermanent relationship with the clan and patriline of marriage, their control over surplus products is limited. In changing economies women are assuming some independent production and I will comment further on this later. In more isolated economies, which are increasingly influenced by fast changing economic and political circumstances, women's control over production is limited essentially because they do not control the surplus. Almost all women in Doi Pui confirmed the fact that the male household head retained surplus money. Most women who worked in shops passed most of their earnings to their husbands as head of household. They retained some for personal use on small items for themselves or their children. The knowledge of where silver wealth was stored was confirmed to be the priority of the senior man. Thus the transfer of products into storable wealth does seem to have increased the power of men to the detriment of women although the mechanisms for this relationship existed

prior to changes in the nature of produce.

However, as discussed earlier not all the products of labour can be seen as surplus or potentially storable. The importance of acknowledging variety in types of labour has already been made clear. As there is a difference in labour so there will also be variety in the products of labour. Thus whilst control over the products lies in the lineage it must be remembered that, although patrilineally based, the lineage is composed of both men and women. Most examples of male control over production subsume the importance of the social and cultural under the power of the economic. The question to be asked therefore is to what extent does patrilineal control over labour and the products of labour control women's productive relationships. Labour relationships are influenced by gender and by other social structures in Mong society. Having identified that the commonly seen structures in Mong society do not adequately define Mong women's experience, I will now examine how co-operation between women takes place across these structures.

Co-operation among women

If we look beyond agricultural production at other productive relationships we can see other forms of co-operation. Formally acknowledged relationships tend to obscure unofficial labour exchange and relationships of exchange. Thus when *Zaag Xeem Vaaj* (household 11) sits in

the shop of her brother, of the *Yaaj* clan, (household 8) chats with his wife and then temporarily minds the shop her labour is not acknowledged. Co-operation with affinal relations depends on convenience, need, personal relationships and reciprocity. It was through the study of textile manufacture that I noted some co-operation between related women who through marriage were living in different households with different clans. *Rha Xeem Yaaj* (household 6) helps her mother *Yeeb Xeem Lis* (household 10) set up a loom; *Rha Xeem Yaaj* (household 6) rolls her hemp at the house of her uncle of the *Lis* clan (related to household 10) using his family's rolling stone; *Glau Xeem Xyooj* (household 17) comes to chat and learn about hemp and batik, informally, from *Pheev Xeem Yaaj* (household 6) who has married into the same clan of *Glau's* birth; the daughter of *Rha Xeem Yaaj* married into the *Lis* clan uses a large foot-operated spindle machine owned by her father's sister. In other activities too, related women who were separated by marriage continued to co-operate: *Glau Xeem Xyooj* (household 17) sells goods for her mother *Kab Xeem Yaaj* (household 3) in their shared shop; the married daughter (out of village household) of *Ntsuab Xeem Yaaj* (household 3a) sends her mother money because *Ntsuab* has separated from her husband. In some cases women co-operate with men and women who are not relatives and in these cases the co-operation comes close to wage labouring although it is often seen as labour exchange: women undertake reciprocal labour in exchange for goods which cannot be obtained in their own household. For example in



Photograph 2: It takes three (a mother her married daughter and her sister-in-law) to sort the warp threads and set up this loom.

Doi Pui "buying" a back basket from a basket weaver will cost three days labour. The arrangements are made and the work performed by the women.

Within the male extended household, co-operation within the nuclear and closely related extended family is considered the norm. However the following cases show that there are exceptions: it is very rare for wives of the same husband to co-operate. Even in agricultural activities a woman will often farm separate fields from her minor wife and regard those fields as her property. In cases of separation and divorce these fields are hotly contested; *Txab Xeem Yaaj* and her ^{husband's} minor wife (household 7) both have their own shops and their own fields. The minor wife grows cabbages with their husband, and *Txab* has nothing to do with this. They both retain small profits themselves from their shops and look after their own children; after the husband of *Zaag Xeem Vaaj* (household 13) took a second wife, she cleared her own fields from the forest, cultivated her own opium plot, raised pigeons herself and even opened her own bank account for her savings, all separate from her husband and her co-wife; *Rha Xeem Yaaj* (household 6) also had separate fields from her co-wife. After the death of their husband both wives would go to the same fair to trade on the same day but using different transport. Although sharing the same house they would not share looms or any information and were openly competitive about the quality of each other's weaving and other produce. Again the above exceptions to

the rule do not make a new rule but women within a household do not necessarily see themselves confined to shared production within that household. As the above examples show, within the household production can be individual and separate from other members, other wives and even husbands. Women, according to their understanding of their society, co-operate with married daughters, mothers and other people of their choice. Thus whilst not co-operating with a minor or first wife some women will take care of another wife's children.

However, although the relationships identified above illustrate that women make use of their cognatic kin in productive relationships we have to ask whether this changes the nature of their productive relationships as being centred in the male lineage. I would suggest that the above cases do not break the norm of co-operation within the male lineage and household and there are many examples of these norms being adhered to. However, they do show that there are productive relationships which cross outside a woman's clan of marriage, and that a woman's labour power cannot be seen as subsumed totally under her husband's control because she can act with some independence, albeit with his implicit consent. In fact it is the possibility that women will act outside of their lineage of marriage that gives them relative power as has been explored in the previous chapter. It is important to consider the Mong woman as an individual as well as a member of a lineage and view her as operating in both

capacities. The important feature of women's ability to act with some independence and cross clan and lineage lines is not how, or whether, they act in this way but the fact that the possibility exists for them to do so. In this way their subordinate position within patrilineal structures is constantly expressed and rather than being dominated into submission their actions serve to constantly define and re-define the dominant and subordinate structures and the way they relate and thereby inform the community of changing roles and new adaptations.

Conclusion

This account of women's productive relationships has introduced new perspectives to the study of Mong relationships of production. Although the units of clan, lineage and household are important in Mong society an emphasis on these units tends to obscure other relationships, particularly those between women. Consequently, although the norm of co-operation in production processes within the household and within the clan can be acknowledged, there are exceptions to these "rules" which are important to women. In addition women's relationship with their clan of birth is of enduring importance to them. The significance of these relationships to women indicate that Mong women are not

subsumed within male social relations and that they should be considered as individuals as well as in relation to their lineage.

In looking at control over labour within the household and clan it is suggested that control over any person or production is not invested in an individual but according to tradition in the lineage. This is based on the power of the elders and the ancestors and the deferral of authority to the oldest male. It is suggested that although surplus is appropriated by men in the contemporary situation (according to the model advanced by Engels (1972)) not all production produces a surplus and it is necessary to consider different types of production by different members of society. In this context women's labour contribution is considered. Following feminist analysis of labour I acknowledge that women's labour is often under-represented and a focus on agricultural labour tends to obscure other types of labour. Mong women do not see their roles as harder or less powerful than men's because they do not subsume the power of the social under the power of the economic. Although control over the products of labour which produce a storable surplus are being appropriated by men, this is just one form of produce. Control over the social and cultural products of labour in the traditional context, where no surplus is produced, needs to be explored to give broader understandings of authority and social relationships in Mong society. In line with this I discuss the meaning of

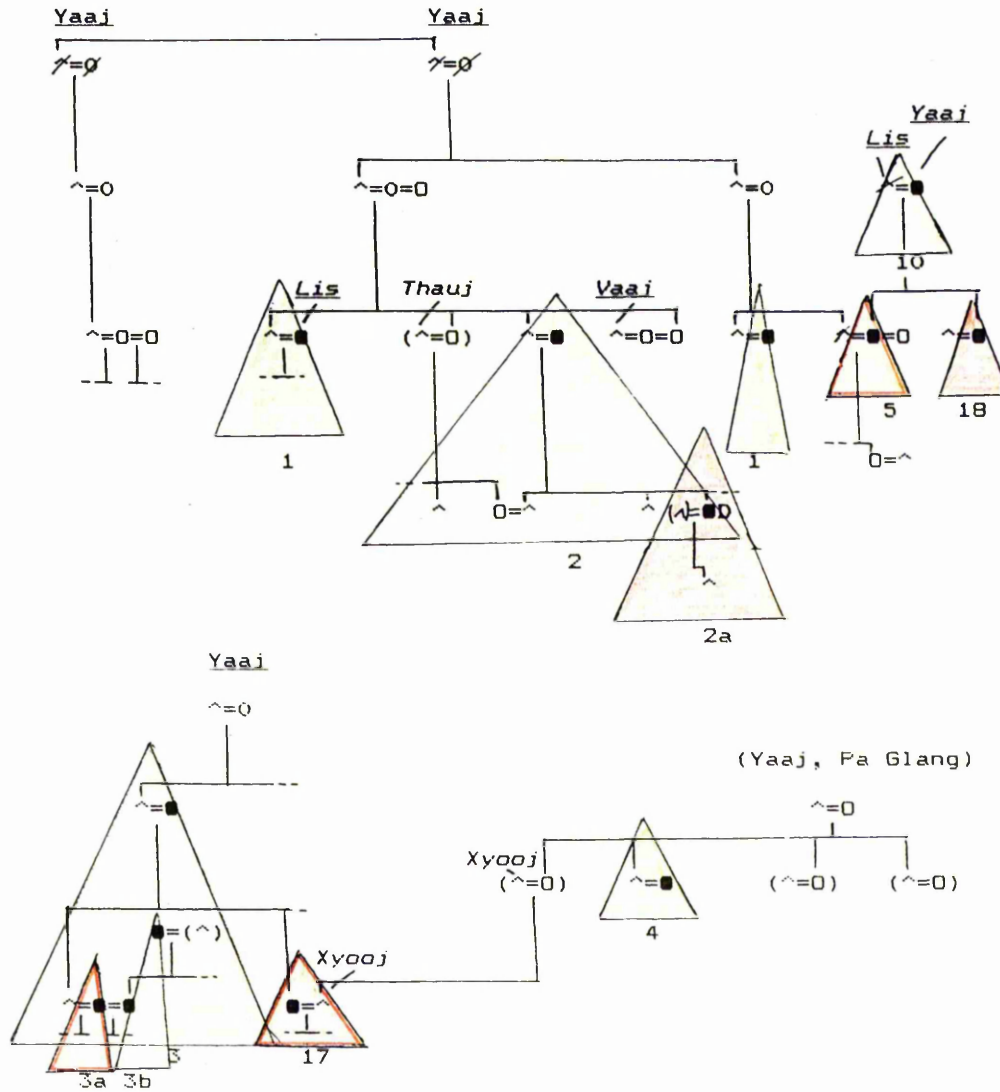
polygyny as an institution whose justification is often held to be economic. However, polygynous households cannot be considered as concrete units when the women who make up the households are so divided and when their experience of polygynous households is not as a productive or fully protective unit. This once again illustrates that production units such as the household are not fixed and stable institutions but fluctuate and change and are conceived as having different roles according to the position and gender of the household member. Women are thus compelled into taking action which contradicts the social rules governing Mong society. ^{At different times in their lives women} ~~However, they~~ are also involved in the reproduction and enforcement of social hierarchies and structures in their cultural production^r, acting as insiders to the Mong lineage. In these contradictory activities the ambiguous status of the Mong women can be appreciated. In the following chapters I will begin to consider how the social understandings of Mong women are reproduced in cultural form, first through an examination of production techniques and then by analysing village textile use.

Explanation of lineage figures 1,2 & 3

The figures are intended to be used as an aid to the text and they illustrate the references to households to be found in the text. The women producers and retailers of commercial textiles are shown to be involved in productive relationships which cross their lineages of marriage. They are also shown to live independently of their lineages of marriage. Thus the delineated triangles indicate the separate households of women informants in relation to their households of marriage and birth. The diagrams are not intended to show the composition of complete lineages.

Figure 1 :Doi Pui village - Simplified lineages and households of women producers - The Yaaj Clan.

Original Families



- - Female informant
- D - Divorced/separated women
- Yaaj - Original settler in Doi Pui
- Yaaj - Descended from original Doi Pui family
- Yaaj - clan of birth
- () - Not resident in Doi Pui
- - women shown in clan of marriage
- - women shown in clan of birth
- - women shown in relation to both

Figure 2 :Doi Pui village - Simplified lineages and households of women producers - The Lis Clan.

Original families

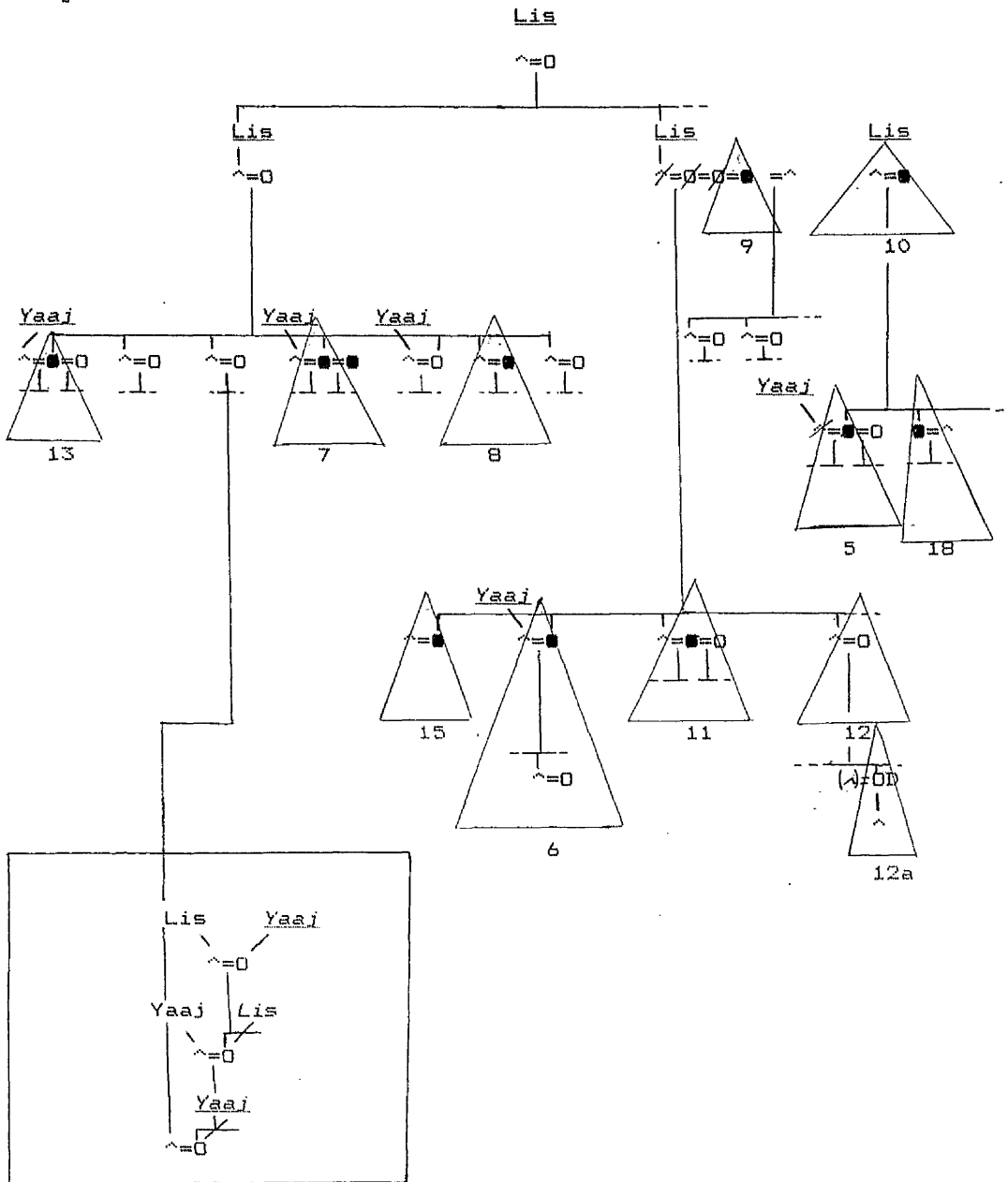
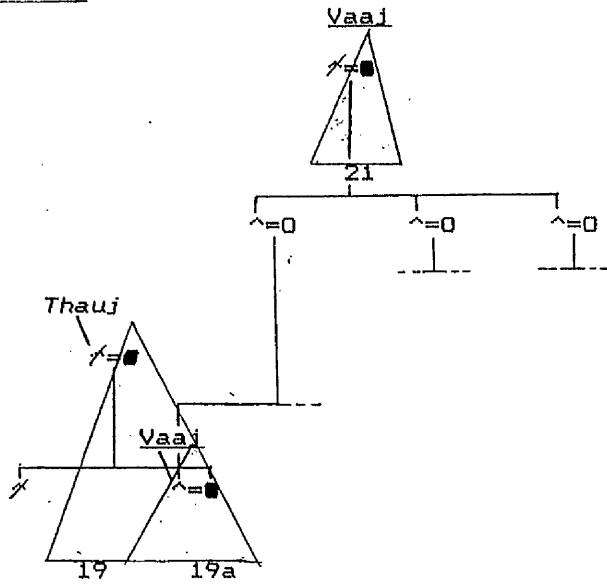


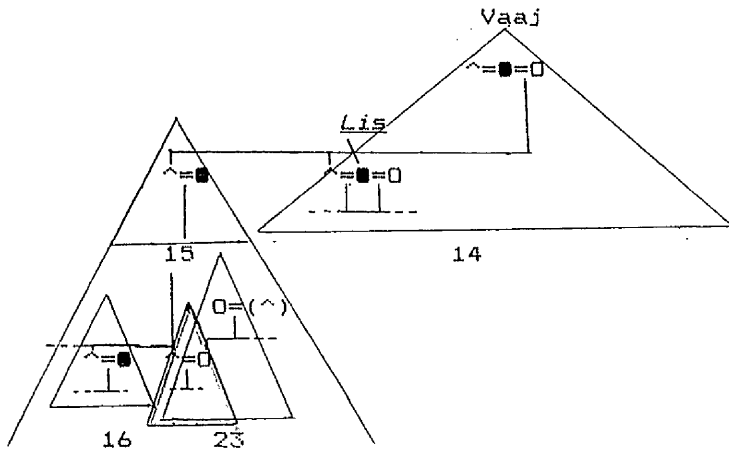
Figure 2A

Figure 3 :Doi Pui village - Simplified lineages and households of women producers - The Vaaj and Thauj Clans.

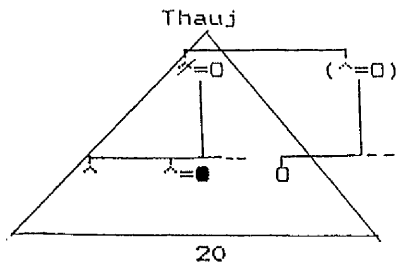
Original family



Resident in Village 8 years



Resident in village 20 yrs



CHAPTER FIVE

MONG TEXTILE PRODUCTION

The production of the textile takes place in the context of the social relations outlined in the previous chapters. I will now describe that production process and I will also begin to outline some of the changing realities in relation to production which many Mong villages are today encountering.

The most important fibre in Mong textiles is clearly hemp¹. Increasingly, however, hemp is being replaced by bought cotton cloth. The reasons for this change are several: As land becomes scarcer all available areas are turned to food production as a priority and as lowland resettlement becomes a reality, so hemp is discontinued since it cannot be grown in the new climatic conditions. The Mong in lowland areas increasingly wear cotton rather than hemp clothes. This is partly because the lowlands are too hot for the heavy hemp fibre but it is also a

¹The traditional material for Mong textiles is hemp fibre from the marijuana family. (Hemp is known in Mong as Maa and in Thai as Kanshong). The hemp fibre used to weave cloth is of the same family as the narcotic variety of marijuana commonly found in India or Burma. The variety used by the Mong is thought to have originated in China where it was grown for the hemp oil in its seeds. Nowadays cotton is very commonly used being widely available but hemp is still preferred ~~for its special qualities~~ and it is grown in most highland villages following traditional agricultural methods. For more details of Hemp and Marijuana see the appendix.

result of Mong, especially the young, not wishing to be distinguished from the Thais by their dress. The result of these changes is the decline in hemp production and use which is contributing to the process of fragmentation of Mong society in Thailand. It is not just the disappearance of this fibre which is part of this process, for the new uses to which hemp cloth are put are also contributing to Mong fragmentation and assimilation, but I will return to this later.

Thus to produce Mong clothes today a Mong woman not only needs hemp but also ready made cotton cloth. Other raw materials she will need are cottons for embroidery, cottons for applique, and silver for decoration. To make the textiles further raw materials are required which include wax for batik, metal and bamboo for the batik tool, dyestuffs (chemical or indigo plant), wood and leather for looms and other thread preparation processes, stone for crushing fibres, needles for sewing, boiling pans, wood ash, alcohol and lime for dying, firewood for boiling off the wax and water for rinsing and boiling the material. The raw materials used, the source of materials and the relations of production inevitably change over time and vary according to the location of villages, relative wealth and purchasing power and different preferences in cloth, colour and effect.

The fact that different villages and households have different access to raw materials is due to political and economic constraints on Mong production. Some households with purchasing ability are able to make choices about the type of material they wish to buy and use in different contexts. Other households cannot afford the time or expenditure. Such choices in themselves involve Mong perceptions of their ethnic context within Thai society and within Mong society, a perception I will return to later. Thus in Doi Pui Mong make and wear traditional costume, promoting themselves as minorities, in part for the benefit of visiting tourists but also because as they told me they feel a strong sense of "being Mong" and are not ashamed of it. In contrast in Pa Glang, few of the women or men wear Mong clothes outside of the village, not wishing to be identified as Mong in the Thai context. They do not wear their costume because of their experience of being Mong over the past several years.

The households in Doi Pui with purchasing ability make extravagant clothes for themselves and their children. The poorer households make just one or two outfits a year. In Doi Pui and Pa Glang articles involving both embroidery and batik are produced in large amounts. In Pa Glang however hemp production is no longer possible due to the hot climate and poor soil. In contrast in Doi Pui hemp is produced in relatively large quantities compared to many Mong villages where hemp could be grown but where land or labour to invest in its production cannot be

spared. The discontinuation of hemp production and use in Pa Glang is significant because of the important role it plays in the cultural construction of the Mong identity and in the reproduction and legitimisation of the social system. Many middle aged women no longer know how to treat hemp and the young have no chance to learn. Cotton is used as a replacement for hemp, but it is not used in ceremonies, where only hemp will do and for these hemp has to be bought from other villages.

Many of the materials are purchased in the small towns where some shops specialise in minority trade. Women buy cloth, dyes, cottons and sometimes materials printed in batik design. They also buy beeswax, commonly stocked in shops catering to Thai temples, and paraffin wax which they mix together for batiking. Materials have long been purchased and in the past were traded over large distances. The residents of Khaang Hor described the trade as follows: "They only came once a year to our village, 6 or 7 of them came in a group with ten horses. They dressed the horses beautifully, put glass on the horse's head and coloured pom poms and they beat a drum as a signal that they were coming..... we heard them coming maybe a day away. Everyone was very excited" (Khaang Hor resident 1987). The traders were involved in opium dealing but they also brought other materials: "They brought thick black and blue material, like hemp, but not hemp, and furry skirts and blankets made from skins. I still have one of those. They put up tents and stayed a

few days ... and then went to Pu Waa, Khaang Hor, Nam Peen and Ban Noong. After our village they went on to Pa Daang, Ban Kor and Pu Kua, then they went back to China. Sometimes two or three groups came at the same time of year" (Khaang Hor resident 1987). These villages were to be found in the hills that form the present day territory bordering Laos and Thailand and several of them have been resettled, four in Pa Glang resettlement. Other materials were also purchased in this way, such as the metal to make the batik tool and supplies of iron needed for agricultural implements. Trading relationships have long been needed to acquire the valued threads, dyes and other raw materials for making textiles. Trade, however, described by residents of Pa Glang who had moved from Laos, was generally with Yunnanese not with other Mong. Materials nowadays are almost all purchased locally and the Mong along with other *Chao Khao* favour two shops in Chiang Mai run by Thais of Chinese descent who used to run the opium caravans in the hills.

The production of hemp

The production of hemp cloth highlights three important aspects of Mong social structure. 1. The importance of the lineage, already identified as central to women's concerns, is perpetuated through the teaching process. The role hemp plays as a channel of communication with the lineage ancestors is taught and demonstrated through treatment of the cloth both in its production and in its

use. 2. The relationship of women to their lineage and their capacity to act as both insiders and outsiders is demonstrated through their relationship to hemp during the production process and, as will be described in the following chapter, in the uses of the cloth. 3. The household as a unit of production is shown to be important, especially in hemp production. However, not all productive relationships are contained within the household and women can be seen to demonstrate their ability to co-operate outside of their households and lineages, especially those who as we have seen in previous chapters are currently in a position marginal to their lineages.

Only married, middle aged and older women grow and weave hemp, although children may be involved in cultivation. Most girls do not learn to make hemp until they are married and are taught by their mother-in-law not by their own mother, though they yearly watch the process when they are children. The learning of hemp production skills from a mother-in-law rather than^a a mother is vital to an understanding of Mong textiles being related to the role of hemp within a woman's family of marriage. Since, as will be discussed in detail in the following chapter, hemp can act as a channel of communication with lineage ancestors it is important that production should be within the lineage. However, due to the above mentioned changes in many villages today hemp is not grown and young Mong are less aware of the processes, the associations and the

important roles of this cloth. This is the case in Pa Glang where the climate is too hot and dry and where women must buy raw hemp thread from women in other villages if they wish to weave. Although women from wealthy households may do this, women from poorer households cannot afford to.

Hemp is cultivated by women on household land according to the amount of available land and labour time. The Mong plant hemp in late April or May using a bamboo digger to make seed holes about ten inches apart into which four to five seeds are dropped at a time. After five days the plant should sprout. The hemp plant is generally fast growing and does not need weeding unless the rains are late in which case the hemp will take longer to grow. The rains are important to ensure a sturdy plant. Hemp is a large and heavy plant growing to three feet in height. The plants are often harvested individually as they mature, by selecting those of the right colour and size on each visit. Hemp plants will be ready for harvesting after three to four months in August and September. Women do most of the work for hemp although men will often prepare the fields and carry the stalks back home after harvesting. It takes some time to prepare the hemp thread and because of other harvesting demands from September to December hemp thread may not be woven until the dry season, though the thread may be prepared earlier. The

cloth that is used to make new year skirts in the months prior to the December festival will have been prepared from the previous year's hemp crop.

The dry season is the time of year when least work can be done in the fields. The maize and rice sown in late April and May should have been harvested in August and November respectively, though late sown rice will be harvested in January. By February the opium planted in late August should have been harvested. During February, March and much of April fields are cleared and burnt. It is at this time in villages that women bring out their looms and begin to weave. Although agricultural demands in Doi Pui village were changing, changes in labour resources mean that the women continue to weave in this season despite increased labour demands for new crops. The new crops are related to the new economies of Mong society which include agricultural and other income generating activities. In addition women prefer to finish the hemp before the beginning of the rains in April or the damp thread becomes unworkable. It is important that the hemp is kept dry at all stages. If it is wet after harvesting it must be dried over the fire or it will develop bacteria which reduces the quality of the thread. When the hemp has been brought home it is placed in the rafters to dry and to wait for time to prepare it. It will take at least five to six days to dry. The hemp is then stripped into long thin pieces which are twisted together and made into a continuous length. The drier the hemp, the easier it is



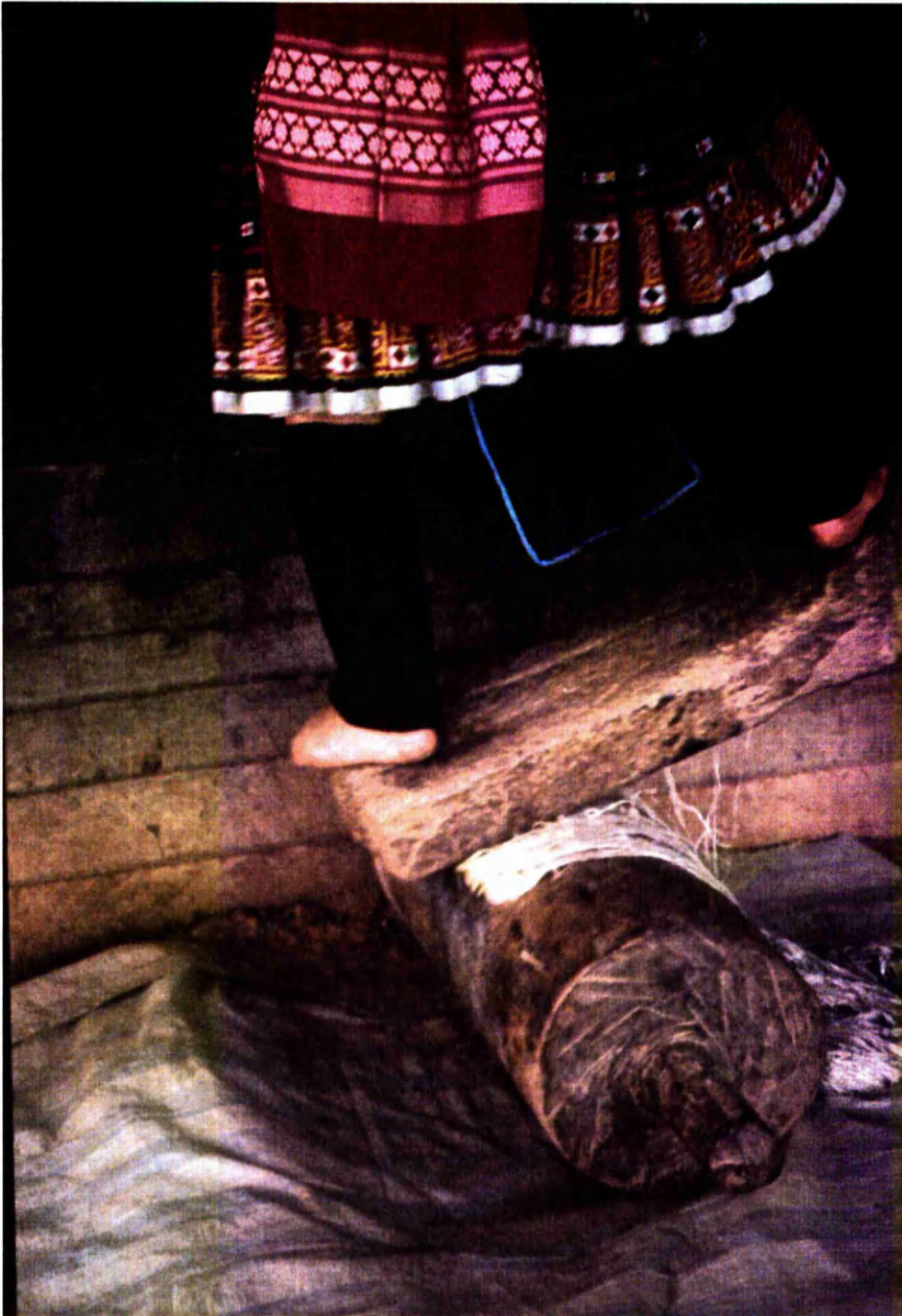
Photograph 3: The hemp strips are wound in a figure of eight around a stick. This work is done whilst minding children, walking to the fields and in any spare moment.

to peel. The inside piece of the hemp stalk is thrown away. The older women in Doi Pui and Pa Glang related how this, along with other sewing chores, used to be done at night after the day's work was done, or when walking to the fields. However the stripping of hemp in Doi Pui village is now done during the day. This is largely because the work schedule for many women is focused around watching their stalls and shops during which time they can strip hemp. Those without stalls and with agricultural demands on their labour time say it can take a month to be ready for the weaving stage. After stripping, the hemp can be pounded with rice powder to make it soft and ease the process of separating the threads. The strips are then separated and tied together and wound in a figure of eight around a stick. *Each thread is made of several twisted fibres.*

The fibre is then wound onto a spindle with the help of a small hand operated spinning ~~machine~~^{wheel} or it can be spun with a larger foot operated machine onto four spindles at once. The thread which is wound loosely together is placed in four piles in a trough of water and a thread from each pile is mounted onto one of four spindles. The water softens the thread and stops it breaking during the spinning process which produces a more even and smooth yarn. Most households have their own small spinning machines, however, larger machines for spinning can be lent to other women. In Doi Pui they were generally, though not always, lent to relatives of the same lineage and if asked women would lend to her kin related through

her clan of birth. From the spindles the yarn is wound onto a large frame in the shape of a cross. The threads are arranged so that each round can be counted as one length. When dry the yarn is removed by tying each corner, retaining the lengths and preventing tangling. It will then be boiled up to three times in water mixed with ash which bleaches and softens the thread. After the first two boilings which last an hour or two each, the yarn is removed and left covered with ash for at least one and sometimes two nights. It is then reboiled in ash solution and left for a further two hours and then washed. The yarn can be dried and then reboiled (or the drying can be omitted if short of time) this time with wax in the water. Some women add wax coloured with indigo dye which adheres to the threads and gives a speckled look to the cloth. Others prefer the cloth to be as white as possible and thus add uncoloured wax to the water.

This process of boiling and reboiling is done during the day when the family are in the fields or occupied elsewhere. The fire is not being used for cooking and very often it is the older women who will boil hemp either performing the task for their daughter-in-law if she is busy or including the hemp of other family members in with her own, if it has been prepared and is ready for boiling. The waxed yarn is then rolled with a rolling stone. The fibres are laid out over a round of wood and a large oblong stone is placed on top. The woman stands on top of the stone and whilst she holds on to the house wall



Photograph 4: Rolling the hemp thread to flatten the fibres requires strength. The stone is lifted onto the wooden roller and must be repeatedly moved into position to flatten each length of fibre. After weaving the cloth this process can be repeated.

she rocks it back and forward to flatten the fibres.

(This can be done again after weaving if the cloth is to be batiked but not if it is to be cross-stitched). This process is fairly hard work. Lifting and moving the stone or wood roller requires strength and younger women or more ^a then one woman may be needed. The yarn is then remounted onto the frame. It is still tied from its original mounting. From the frame it can be untied and unwound in individual lengths and gathered into loose nests and set ready for weaving. There are, of course variations to the above described processes and many women have preferred techniques.

Even by this stage of the process individual preferences and abilities in technique and effect are beginning to show in the thread. The quality of the hemp after harvest depends on timing the harvest and drying correctly. The skill of tying lengths together will help to determine thread strength and the number of boilings and addition of wax will determine quality and colour. All this knowledge is acquired by young Mong as they work alongside their parents. The processes and uses are assimilated information which they begin to practise for themselves after marriage. In all the above processes, women of the same household or their own blood relatives have shared techniques with each other, compared quality of thread, borrowed equipment and performed tasks for each other. Co-operation in production is largely limited to female members of the same lineage, however as described earlier,

women related through their clan of birth will also co-operate. Having their own family members resident in the same village is considered a bonus for women who keep company with their mothers and siblings. The study of production reveals the productive and social relationships of women, which show that some women do cross clan lines in co-operation, although the majority restrict the extent of their social relationships with women of different lineages and clans. They do not gather in large groups to strip hemp or to share equipment and production is essentially an individual and household based activity. Because women make hemp for their families, marginalised women, those who are widowed young, separated or divorced tend not to produce hemp, further identifying them as outside a lineage relationship.

Weaving the hemp thread

The hemp weaving begins as soon as all the threads are dried and ready. The process of weaving further emphasises the individual nature of production. Weaving itself is quite a lonely process for a woman. Sometimes other women will come to talk but usually they are busy too. When setting up the loom the women will ask for help from their relatives. The loom is set up in a woman's compound and is physically isolated from other women who might be weaving. A woman weaves in isolation in her home with her family relatives. She will not take her loom out of her home believing, as discussed earlier, that to do so

will incur misfortune. The only stated inter-household co-operation in this aspect of production is when looms need to be moved. If this need arises widows of other households can be called upon to undertake the task since, as widows, they are considered to be safe from communication by lineage spirits, unlike married women. This will be described further in the next chapter. Thus the roles of women acting as insider and outsider at different times in her social life, are represented in the production process.

At this stage of production although women work alone they will visit each other and compare their progress. A woman may weave solidly for some days to finish her work uninterrupted by other demands. An older woman with daughters-in-law or daughters still at home can rely on them to do the household chores. Although the process itself is relatively isolated and very much a woman's affair the hemp could not be made without the co-operation of family (and sometimes non family) members. Male kin are essential in the process by being the makers of all the machines. Men make all the wooden and metal objects. They make the spinning machines and the looms. Usually a father-in-law will make whatever is necessary for a daughter-in-law but if he does not this equipment can be purchased from other men in the village. It is possible for a woman to work for other men to earn her equipment. Although households prefer not to trade women's labour in this way it does occur and much more frequently than the

trade of male labour. Three days work for a back basket, five days for a knife and many more for a loom. This reflects the fact that women, always potentially outsiders to their lineage and clan of marriage are considered more marginal and can cross clan lines in labour co-operation.

Nowadays, a woman may not necessarily grow enough hemp to weave in a year so she will collect it together over two or three years before she begins to weave. If a woman is serious about weaving substantial amounts of cloth she must prepare several pounds of hemp yarn. To prepare the warp thread at least ten and often twelve nests of hemp are placed on the ground and ash is sprinkled over them to stop them tangling. A thread from each is passed through one of twelve loops wound onto a horizontal pole set on top of a vertical one fixed in the ground. The threads are paired into six by rolling the ends of adjacent threads together. The threads are pulled as a group round two stakes in the ground and an eye is made by winding the thread around two other stakes in a figure of eight. Each complete circuit lays down one length and 12 warp threads. A width of cloth can have from 250 to over 400 warp threads. The finished width depends on the comb and number of threads mounted. Whether the weave is loose or tight and whether the yarn is thick or thin will determine the look of the cloth.

The warp is set up on the loom. First each thread from the eye is threaded through the comb. The comb is pushed down to the end of the warp threads, straightening them as it passes through. The length of warp is wound up with placing sticks at every turn. String heddles are looped around every other warp thread to provide for the passage of the shed. The thread ends are tied around a bamboo stick that is attached to the backstrap. It is the backstrap which gives tension to the warp thread. The weave is a simple ^{tabby}~~plain~~ weave, i.e. the interlacing of warp and weft is over one under one. To ensure straight edges the sides of the cloth are given tension with a thin bamboo stick forcefully bent into a U shape by attaching each end to either side of the cloth. The weaver also uses this bamboo stick to correct threads which are loose or hide knots on the reverse side of the cloth. As the woman weaves she will stop every 6 inches or few passes of the shed to move the bamboo piece and roll up the cloth on the cloth beam which is the bamboo pole in front of her body and attached to the backstrap. The weave is made by passing a shuttle containing weft thread through the countershed formed by pulling the heddle and its attached warp threads. The heddle is moved by a foot pulled pulley. The weaver's foot is in a loop of cloth and when she pulls her foot back it lifts the pulley which extends over the top of the loom and which is attached to the heddle. Each pick of the weft is beaten in with the weaving comb.

tabby

A finished length of cloth is 7-8 metres long and 14 inches wide. A length of hemp eight metres long can be woven in a day's uninterrupted work, though some women are obviously quicker than others. In Doi Pui village some women weave more than 12 rolls, others just 3-4. If a woman is providing for a large family she will need at least 10 rolls. One woman wove 32 rolls in one season. In a large family daughters-in-law will also weave. The average production for one woman is about 10-12 rolls a year. Although the weaving process itself is performed in isolation production of the finished hemp is made possible through various relations. This includes teaching from a mother-in-law, equipment from a father-in-law or husband, help in preparing land, growing and harvesting the crop from a husband and children and co-operation in some production processes with other female lineage members and affinal kin.

Batik

Batik is a skill of which Mong women are very proud. Mong batik is always indigo and white. Sometimes a double dye gives two shades of indigo. Batik involves resist dyeing with wax as the resist medium. The wax is a combination of bee and candle wax, though many women use just candle wax. Beeswax can be collected from the forest but it can also easily be bought from shops specialising in items for Buddhist wats where many candles are burnt. The wax, often combined with paraffin wax, is melted and applied

in short straight lines which meet and cross to make a variety of patterns. The wax is applied either to bought cotton cloth or to hemp which has been rolled (with the rolling stone described during the hemp fibre preparation) to make the weave finer.

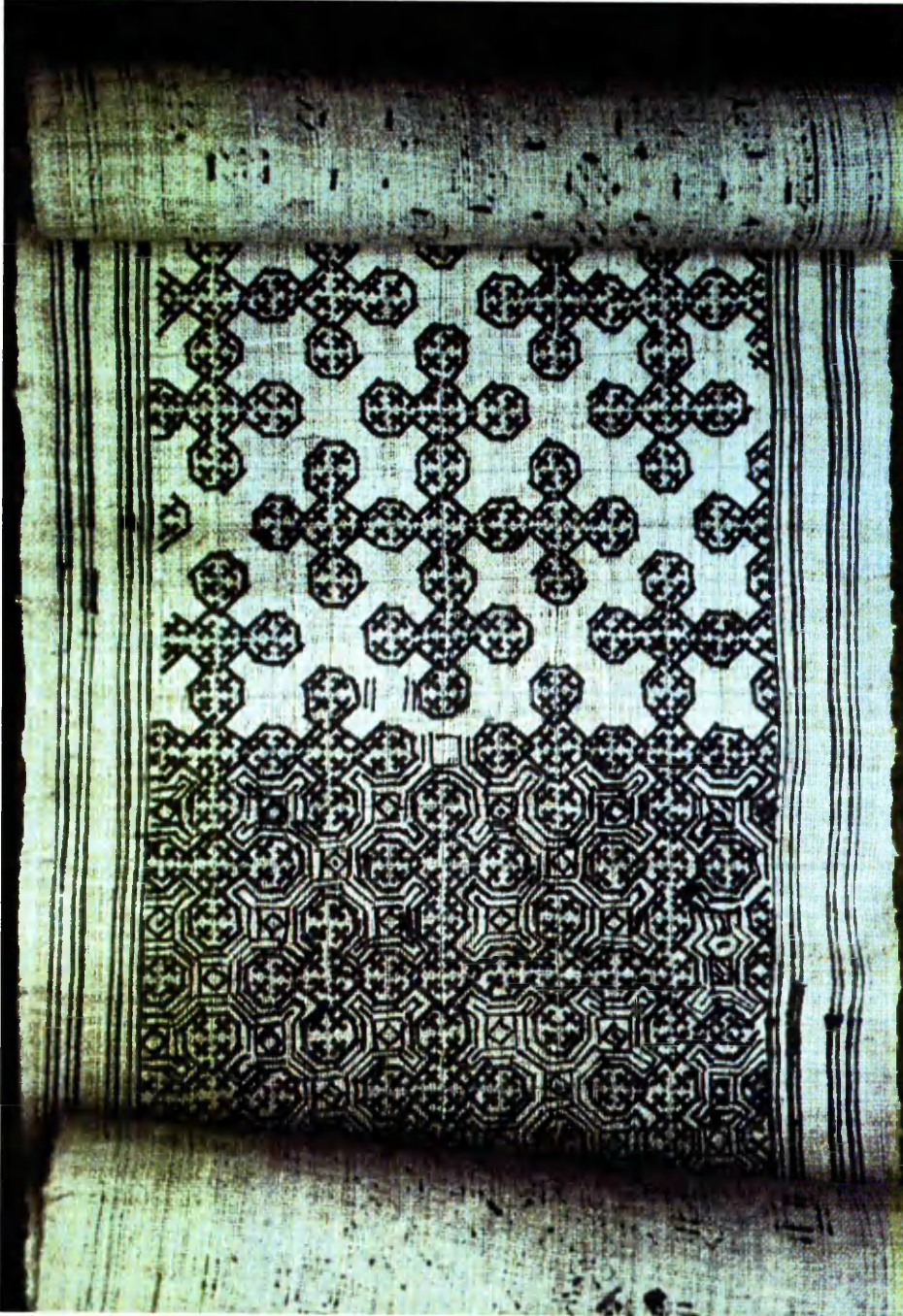
Mong women set up their work boards outside. On top of an upturned tin box they rest a large board. They will work with the cloth on the board surface. Next to them they place a metal bucket of hot ashes from the house fire and add some small pieces of wood. A small tin, usually an old food tin full of wax is placed next to the smouldering wood. The *tjanting*² (the tool used to apply wax to cloth) used by the Mong consists of two or three triangular pieces of metal partially smelted together and attached to a bamboo shaft. The metal only meets at the tips of the triangle and a small gap allows for the accumulation of hot wax between the metal pieces. This tool is usually made by their husbands or fathers-in-law but can be bought or exchanged from other men if wished. Strokes are always made towards the body. To apply wax pushing away from the body would force the point of the *tjanting* into the cloth.

²Tjanting is an Indonesian word for this batik tool now in usage in the English language.



Photograph 5: The tools of batik production. Each woman possesses a selection of batik tools; this woman has a specially designed tool rest made by her husband from an old piece of metal, and attached to her bucket of hot ashes.

Before applying her wax a woman usually draws out a grid on the cloth. Traditionally she would use a piece of metal which leaves a faint mark but nowadays she uses a pencil. The size of the squares depends on how much work a woman wishes to put into the piece and how small her strokes will be. The grid is very important and all patterns are applied symmetrically. Some women follow a tradition of starting to batik all the rolls of cloth they have available before concentrating on one. This is allegedly to inform the spirits that the hemp is to be used in this world not in the spirit world. Since the hemp (as will be further described below) acts as a channel of communication with the ancestors and household spirits the batiking woman should be a lineage member. Usually a pattern is repeated over a length of cloth 7-8 metres long. Sometimes it is divided into squares and different patterns introduced into each square which is then cut from the roll. This can be used on baby carriers and bags. There is a wide range of designs within the batik medium and considerable room for innovation if the women have time and skill. The designs have an aesthetic code. Between each area of pattern runs a blank line, sometimes they run the length and width of the cloth. It is very important for these lines to be clear and straight. The Mong like a dark result which is achieved by applying small patterns so that the white lines do not appear strongly, but can be clearly seen. Although the



Photograph 6: This finished roll of fine woven hemp has coloured wax applied to prepare it for dying. The pattern is as yet incomplete.

designs have names they are not rigid patterns and different adaptations can be employed depending on individual taste.

The cloth is dyed in indigo dye. Some Mong use the plant Indigofera tinctoria but in Pa Glang and Doi Pui village a tin of indigo dye manufactured by ICI was used and has been used for many years. Some women combined both types of dye and had developed the habit of putting indigo plants in their chemical dye bath where they were left for some time; the water being topped up and new ICI dye added. Women claimed it gave a deep colour, however the growing of the indigo plant in many villages is declining for the same reasons that hemp is no longer being cultivated. The knowledge of how to dye cloth is passed from mother to daughter-in-law and also from mother to daughter and sometimes between wider female kin of the same lineage and clan. This practice demonstrates women's enduring relationships with affines and the lesser importance attached to the skill of batik in terms of lineage knowledge. Nevertheless the skill is highly regarded. Some women who could not afford large dyeing vats would bring their cloth to the house of a female relative and dye it there, paying in kind according to their relationship to the woman. Some women were acknowledged experts at dyeing, ensuring that the dye does not leak from the cloth too much and also at drawing the batik. Usually this was related by the women to the time

they had available to practise and create new ideas though some women clearly found it difficult and were referred to as unskilled.

The sharing of dye vats between households is uncommon and the only sharing I witnessed was between Christian Mong who related being turned away from other Mong households where they had asked to share dye vats or use some wood ash for the dye bath. Thus in Pa Glang dying activity was only shared between women of different clans who had converted to Christianity and believed their previous clan affiliations to be negated. The cloth is immersed in the dye, dried and immersed again over a period of hours or days depending on the amount of cloth and the colour wanted. Cotton absorbs dye more easily than hemp and the dying of cotton is quicker. Most women would immerse a length for 3-4 hours, dry it and reimmerse it, repeating this about 4 times for a deep dye, over two days. Often the cloth would remain in the dye pot overnight. Cambell (1978) says that with the plant dye alone women would dip and dry 30 times. Sometimes the dye can be beaten into the cloth. In this case the dyed cloth is beaten with wooden sticks and takes on a shiny appearance. For a two-shaded affect the cloth is dried after ^edying and more areas are batiked. On re-dy^eing the exposed areas will turn a darker blue. After dy^eing the cloth is hung to dry. To remove the wax the cloth is immersed in boiling water and the wax, which floats to the surface, is scooped off and will be reused. The cloth is dried again and is

then ready for sewing into a skirt and other articles. The time involved in these processes is reflected in the perceived value of the cloth. One length of hemp cloth dyed with the indigo plant will be made over a period of weeks and probably involve 20-30 days' work depending on the skill of the producer. A piece of cotton batik using chemical dye will take much less time, about 5-10 days. Thus changes in technology have reduced the time needed but have also had an effect on the perception of value which is linked to invested labour time. This is perceived by the women themselves and by a buyer of commercial pieces who will pay more for hemp than for cotton.

Unlike weaving, batik is not such a solitary pursuit. Women will often carry their tin cans of materials to another house, upturn the can and share a bucket of hot ashes. In Pa Glang one can sometimes find four or five women (usually, though not always, kin) sitting together talking and making batik. However in villages, where commercial batik is not made, women will work in the evening and by candlelight. After doing other work the women will normally be at home, they will not go and join others in the evening but will stay with their families. Women now in their 70's will extol the merits of the neon light as compared to the candles they used to work by until late at night when everyone else had retired to bed. As I have described women who work together are usually found to be kin. However in Pa Glang neighbours

who were not close kin would join each other to make batik and talk. This is possibly because households in Pa Glang were not arranged as in traditional villages so that neighbours were not always kin. It is also because many of the villagers in Pa Glang had become Christian and this was felt to negate clan affiliations and proscriptions on relationships.

Men, having watched their mothers and wives for years, could identify patterns and comment on neatness and design. Some men also make textiles but this is very rare. One man in Doi Pui made clothes for his wife apparently because he enjoyed sewing and batiking. In general men only made textiles for commercial sale and consequently this was most common in the refugee camps. In Pa Glang two men I knew made batik. One man usually made it at night inside the house and away from any comments. However, making batik is clearly regarded as women's work and cloth is linked to the women who produce it because, within a strong lineage structure I will argue that, it is they who are responsible for reproducing and legitimising social relationships through their production. Thus, as with hemp production the physical tools of batik production are controlled by men who will give or sell them to women according to their kinship. Women will use their own labour in exchange for tools with non kin. Women related to the same lineage will co-operate and exchange information about batik but generally produce their own pieces. In the commercial

production, where the cloth value was not related to the lineage, some related women would share production of the same piece and share profits. However, the norm in production is individual labour because of specific links to the lineage. Even among women of the same lineage but different family, exchange of goods, materials and services is usually reciprocal.

Garment production

Once the hemp cloth is batiked or plain dyed it is sewn into garments for daily and festive use. The everyday dress was described in the introduction. Festive garments retain the same form as everyday dress but are more elaborately decorated and a great deal of silver jewellery and special hats can also be worn.

Applique and embroidery

Apart from batik, decoration on garments is applied as embroidery or applique. Embroidery is mostly applied as cross stitch and concentrated lengths in bright colours, particularly red, are attached to the hem of the skirt, the front edges and cuffs of jackets, the reverse side of women's collars, belt tails, hats and bags, and baby carriers. Cross-stitch is applied from the reverse side of the cloth usually without checking the top side and both sides should emerge neat with no loose ends. The reverse and top sides are important and the tiger legend

(as described ^{later} ~~earlier~~) refers to women who wear their collars with the embroidered side down so as not to attract tigers when they are walking in the forest.

Mong apply applique next to the embroidery mostly as small brightly coloured triangles. The triangle is a shape used often in silver work and decoration along with the cross. White Hmong make greater use of applique potential and this is particularly apparent in the commercial work from the camps. Cross-stitch is practised by young girls as soon as they can wield a needle. Often there is little instruction and they are given needle and cloth and copy their mothers, sisters and other relations. Children as young as five are very competent at embroidery and the embroidery on a girl's clothes are done by herself before she marries whereas batik and hemp production are taught to her by her mother-in-law. The link between hemp and batik with a woman's lineage of marriage is clearly important in this distinction. Perhaps in part for this reason embroidery and applique have assumed greater relative importance in commercial production.

In the finished textile merit is given for the technical standards including fast dyeing, clear drawing of patterns, whiteness of batiked patterns, fine lines, tight weaving and neat sewing. Appreciation is shown for innovative designs, combination of designs and colour use. The speed of the women in producing textiles is also admired. Thus the finished products as displayed on her

family, and particularly on her daughter or son at the new year festival, reflect the competence of a woman and this reflects upon the skills invested in her household and the skills as passed on through her lineage. Competition between households and lineages is reflected in the competition between women to produce excellent textiles.

The above described methods and productive relationships necessary to produce the Mong textile begin to make sense when viewed against the social relations of Mong society. Clearly some changes are taking place resulting in the discontinuation of hemp production in some villages, the emergence of co-operative groups crossing lineage affiliations in production and as I will describe the increasing independence of some women producers. In this Chapter I have several times referred to the role of hemp in reproducing and legitimising social relationships. I have also described how the production processes and the uses of the cloth refer to these relationships. I shall now describe how all this social knowledge is reproduced in cultural form.

CHAPTER SIXVILLAGE TEXTILE USE

Thus far I have argued for a broader understanding of social and productive relationships in Mong society taking into account the diversity of experience and the difference in understanding as exhibited by Mong women. I have also described how the textile is made and alluded to some of its uses in relation to the spirit world. I will now show how this social knowledge is reproduced in cultural form. In this chapter I wish to explore some of the uses of the Mong textile in cultural context. What I wish to illustrate is that the textile is used in certain ways and has certain associations which reflect and actively reinforce the social relations and cultural understandings of its context of production. Although control over production which involves a surplus tends to be appropriated by the male, social and cultural production does not involve a surplus and control over production can be seen to lie with both women and men acting according to social rules and regulations. Women act within their lineage of marriage according to the traditions of that lineage as taught to them by their female relatives. However, as has been shown, women are not fully contained within their lineage of marriage and act, at different times in their social lives, as both insiders and outsiders in relation to their lineage. Having identified the social relations surrounding

production in the previous two chapters I now wish to illustrate how power and social relationships are regenerated through time and how objects can serve to legitimize existing social relationships¹.

The importance of the spirits and the ancestors in determining social relationships is central to Mong daily life. I have already discussed the importance of the patriline and the focus on patrilocal residence which acts as an earthly continuation of the line of ancestors. The ancestors and the spirits are responsible not only in the way they pre-determine daily life and relationships but also in a causal sense, they can make things happen. The relationship a person holds with his ancestors is seen as an active force in daily life and a potential force in the afterlife. In examples cited by Tapp (1989) the geomantic siting of graves and the geomancy of the landscape are seen to bring fortune or misfortune. In one case a man's wealth was attributed to the very fortunate choice of a burial site for his first wife. In a second case the occurrence of a number of miscarriages and stillbirths to women in a village was seen to be caused by the alignment of mountains encircling the village which allowed a malevolent forest spirit to plague the village. Diseases

¹Weiner (1986) identifies the relationship between cloth and the regeneration of power in the Trobriands and her work has been of help in directing my enquiries into the functions of Mong cloth in the village context.

and illness are thought to be caused by malevolent spirits, by the souls of displeased ancestors or of the recent dead who have lost their way².

The concerns voiced by separated and divorced women in Doi Pui and Pa Glang constantly referred to their relationships with their ancestors. They could never return to the ancestors of their parents since they had neglected them in favour of the ancestors of their married lineage. As the women said: you have to treat the ancestors with respect or they will not accept you. The role of the shaman in communicating with souls and spirits is carried into many aspects of daily life. Apart from curing ceremonies where wandering souls which have left the body causing illness are recalled, communication with souls and spirits is seen as necessary at many celebratory events, in relation to agriculture, housebuilding and for general daily protection. Clearly daily life and inter-personal relationships are profoundly affected by the actions and potential power invested in the spirits and ancestors. But how is this potential power and influence represented and communicated over time? The roles of the myth, oral history, stories and legends in re-enforcing dominant social structures and relationships are well documented in many societies. The power of the myth has been much discussed but less attention has been

²Chindarsi (1976) gives more details of the souls and spirits of the dead in relation to illness.

paid to the role of objects and material culture in re-enforcing social norms. As mentioned above the Mong are constantly aware of the presence of spirits and the need to confront, placate and please them. In the following examination of the uses of hemp I shall illustrate the central role this material plays in the relationship with spirits and the afterworld.

Hemp cloth and communication

The various uses of hemp and hemp cloth suggest it is not only defined as a material in relation to the earthly world but also as an object that is of significance to the spiritual world. The following description of its uses ^{is} ~~are~~ illustrative of this. In funeral ceremonies undyed hemp plays a significant role. The deceased's body will be laid on a stretcher made of hemp. Lengths of hemp are extended across the ceiling from the body (which is in front of the house spirit altar) and out of the door. The deceased wears hemp (and silk/satin) clothes and has freshly woven hemp shoes. The deceased is presented with hemp squares of cloth called in Mong, *noob ncoos* and made by daughters and daughters-in-law. In each case the hemp cannot be replaced by any other material. This hemp can act as a channel of communication from one world to the next. The hemp which reaches from the altar to the door is said by the Mong of Doi Pui to be a ladder or pathway for the spirits to pass along. At a funeral I attended which was held some years after the subject's death, a

hemp jacket was said to "represent" the deceased and was occupied by the spirit³ of the deceased which was called back, fed and then asked to leave after which the jacket was vigorously shaken to ensure no spirit remained.

Lyman(1968:24) describes the embryo cloth where a long cloth is stretched over the house door to the sleeping compartment of the married couple. The embryo will come from the spirit world, along the cloth and into the woman's womb. The cloth, although not described by Lyman, is very likely to be hemp. At a curing ceremony for an ill person hemp string was tied around the subject and his family while the ceremony was conducted. The illness could be corrected through the hemp string. Another way to cure is to give hemp clothes belonging to the ill person to the shaman who will use them in a curing ceremony. If a Mong is ill it is said that some of their souls have wandered astray. Thus the hemp string which is tied round an ill person will act as a ladder for the souls to return. Similarly if a jacket is given to the shaman the souls will recognise the hemp jacket of the ill person and return. A hemp string tied around a family

³Nusit Chindarsi (1976) investigated beliefs surrounding spirits and souls. His examination of the belief system however, failed to make clear commonly held beliefs about souls and spirits, probably because beliefs do vary between groups. However, it is generally held that Mong believe each person has seven souls. People can also become spirits, for example the spirit "Yewtai" is held to be one of the souls of the mother-in-law, although generally spirits occupy inanimate objects such as doorposts and the forest.

will keep all the souls of the family together and being a circle will prevent any from leaving. Similarly a women^a in a difficult birth had hemp wrapped around her head, in order to call the spirits to help release the baby's spirit⁴. The above descriptions⁵ indicate that hemp can act as a channel of communication. Further examination of the use of hemp indicates that it is of marginal status between this world and the next world.

Hemp - The property of the spirit world

In the house of a shaman a roll of hemp is always kept above the spirit altar from where during ceremonies it is stretched to the door. However, although a shaman has rolls of hemp in the house women who make hemp will not leave a roll in its pure state. This is because hemp in a house can be used by the spirits of the departed to return. A shaman uses the hemp to communicate with the spirits but Mong women do not want to call the spirits. Thus when a woman has woven her hemp and is about to batik she will mark the edges of each roll with wax, just a couple of lines each. This I am told by women in Doi Pui is to inform the spirits that the hemp is of this world and cannot be used or worn by spirits in the next world.

⁴This ceremony was witnessed by Patricia Symonds doing fieldwork in a White Mong village (personal communication).

⁵For fuller explanations and descriptions of all these ceremonies and many others Chindarsi's (1976) "The religion of the Hmong Njua" gives detailed descriptions.

A *noob ncoos* square (a funeral cloth - see below) should be made of hemp or cotton. It must not be made of a synthetic material or it will not decay and therefore will not be able to make the journey with the deceased into the next world⁶. This is the same with funeral shoes which should be made of plaited hemp. Silk shoes can also be worn but according to Mong myth they will be taken by the Chinese once the soul enters the spirit world. It is said that all the spirits in the next world recognise hemp as belonging to the Mong, therefore, the Chinese will only take what is theirs which is said to be the finer cloths and the silk. A person without hemp shoes cannot make the journey. Hence the shaman who recounts the showing of the way funeral song⁷ specifies that he does not have hemp shoes and cannot go all the way with the deceased. The shoes seem to be more important than other hemp articles; they are also unwoven and undyed so they have none of the signs which label them as belonging to the land of the living. On death these shoes are seen to be of great importance and on two occasions through American friends of American Mong I was asked to acquire raw hemp for them⁸. Hemp therefore, like other crops, is seen as

⁶This is also noted by Tapp (1989:319).

⁷Chindarsi (1976:145) recounts this "Tergee" song. It is noted by many others including Radley (1986) and Tapp (1989).

⁸In order not to "tempt fate" the American Mong never explicitly said what the hemp was to be used for but Mong women in Doi Pui on hearing the taped request knew instantly that it was for funeral shoes.

originating from the spirit world. Crops themselves are thought to have souls⁹, and as the crop is transformed from the raw state into a woven, finished product it becomes part of the present world but up to a certain point (batiking) it is still seen as belonging to the spirit world.

Thus we have seen so far that hemp has certain associations and properties. It is associated with the spirit world, acts as a channel of communication but can be transformed into an article belonging to the human world. This use of hemp is a constant reminder that the Mong live in the daily presence of the spirits and souls of the ancestors. A woman who has finished her weaving will be aware that she must batik the corner of every piece of cloth because the spirits would otherwise use it. She knows if she tears her skirt that she must not use old hemp to repair new hemp without causing trouble; she knows if she is weaving she must never move her loom but ask a widow to move it for her. Every married weaving woman knows that a loom mounted with hemp must not be moved by herself, because if it is, the spirits will harm her husband. Why these actions will cause misfortune can

⁹Chindarsi (1976:31).

be speculatively interpreted¹⁰ and related to the relationship between hemp and the woman who can potentially act as an outsider to her lineage. However outside these wider and probably unanswerable issues the fact of the restrictions serves as a constant reminder of the presence of the spirits and ancestors.

Whether hemp is seen to belong solely to either world at any one time is difficult to determine. The daily treatment of hemp made into clothing would suggest it retains something of its special status. For example, there are many associations between women and hemp and cloth in general. Hence, the Mong skirt is held to be a highly polluting article which men should not touch or walk beneath (if, for example, the skirt is hanging on a line). A Mong woman's intricately embroidered collar was traditionally worn face down, the reason given being that

¹⁰It is possible to suggest that the hemp on the loom can be interpreted as representing the family. Hemp has many associations with women and according to Radley (1986:346) can even be interpreted as representing the female. Wood in contrast he sees as male. As this chapter describes, women are often believed to become tigers or leave the safety of the household on being tempted by a tiger and thereby become "outsiders". In addition women stated that if the loom was moved by a woman a tiger would attack her. Thus it could be suggested that a woman moving the loom will be tempted by a tiger or become a tiger and leave her husband, thus separating the household (the hemp and the loom). In turn she, as a tiger, could incur damage on her husband as female tigers are wont to do and as illustrated in the myths described in this chapter. However, I believe Radley's associations between hemp and female and male and wood are weakly supported in his text, no matter how convincing the idea. In addition the interpretation of the loom as representing the household is just one of many possible interpretations and depends on the author position.

the forest tiger would be attracted by the embroidery and attack the woman. Nowadays many women wear the collar face up, but older women and women in more remote villages continue to hide their embroidered collar. This belief concerning the embroidered collar, tigers and the forest equates women with the outside/wild¹¹ rather than the inside/domestic sphere and there are a number of well known myths which describe women becoming tigers and dangerous spirits. The tradition of wearing a beautiful embroidered collar face downwards inevitably raises the question why and every Mong woman can relate the legend of the tiger. In this way, as we shall see, the collar tradition serves as a reminder of the potential outside woman. The following consideration of a number of myths lends weight to this argument.

Myths and women as outsiders

Many of the ghosts which cause illness, tempt men, eat men or become animals which can outwit humans are portrayed as female ghosts and spirits. Other dangerous ghosts are those of widows and women who commit suicide. Sometimes

¹¹This suggested relationship of the outside woman with the forest and thereby nature bears some resemblance to the nature/culture debate raised by Ortner (1974). However I do not suggest that women are necessarily closer to nature than men, rather that they are outsiders as compared with men in relation to the patriline. The formulation that nature is to culture as male is to female has received criticism concerning the stereotyping of the concepts which individual cultures hold about the qualities of nature, culture, female and male (McKormack and Strathern 1980).

women willingly become spirits and ghosts and can change forms. Although men can also do this, in most of the recorded stories women ghosts and spirits are to be feared, whereas men who change into toads and tigers often turn back into a "prince charming" or are rarely portrayed as dangerous animals which will attack or harm villagers. Although it is difficult to judge the relative status of men and women from myths where interpretation is not clear, the actual treatment of men and women tends to reflect this mistrust of women, particularly women marginalised by separation or widowhood.

In Pa Glang *Yag Xeem Yaaj* lived alone with her disabled son having been accused of being a witch. She had fled her village when she was labelled a witch and had become so isolated she feared for her life. Socially she was in a difficult position having few clan members, being a widow and having one disabled son who was easily trapped by the villagers into accusing his own mother. Her other married sons also appeared to be frightened of her and with no support she fled to Pa Glang. Her village was on the border with Laos and guarded by Thai soldiers. The villagers were living under considerable stress and by accusing *Yag* of witchcraft perhaps hoped to alleviate some of their problems or at least articulate some of their frustration. The villagers should have asked her to submit to various "tests" which would prove her guilty or innocent of witchcraft; however she claimed they would not do this. She ran away to Pa Glang where she had distant

relatives and here too she claims the villagers would have thrown her out had she not become a Christian. Now as a Christian the villagers are not afraid of her and she is relieved because she will go to the Christian heaven. If she had not adopted Christianity she believed that when she died her ancestors would have killed her as she would have been reborn again as a witch and had no escape from her fate. It is the fear of women^a as the outsider, with the potential to live outside the patriline which is reflected in her potential to become a witch or cause harm.

Although both men and women commit suicide, it is an act more common among women and their spirits are greatly feared. If a woman commits suicide she will not go to the next world but will remain in the forest as a spirit causing trouble to her family and the village. She must be placated often. One might have thought that this would prevent women from committing suicide, but it is still relatively common, as I have indicated, probably because the realities of her life allow no escape. In addition, as I will detail further below in relation to the funeral cloth, Mong belief tends to reinforce the conditions of this world on the individual in the next. There seems to be no escape from the servility, poverty and hardship of a woman's life; it is as good, therefore, to become a spirit of the forest as to relive a poor life. Detailed below are some of the specific female spirits with destructive powers.

The spirit of the mother-in-law in the clan of *Vaaj* is a much feared spirit. The origin of this angry spirit is the result of a common social problem - competition between wives. The myth recounts the story of a girl who was sold into marriage by her father and his minor wife without consulting the first wife who was the girl's mother. When the girl's mother returned from the fields to find her daughter already married she angrily confronted her new son-in-law and said: "If I die I shall go and haunt you and your children and make them feel sick. If you want them to recover you must sacrifice an ox to me" (Chindarsi 1976:28). An interesting aspect of this myth is that the fury of the mother is aimed at the son-in-law, not at her own husband or minor wife. She incurs her wrath upon the children of her own daughter. This myth serves to separate the daughter from her own family causing her to fear her own mother. Another spirit is the emaciated widow (*puj ntxooj*); she is an evil spirit living in the forest with tigers and trapping the souls of people who have just died.¹² This fear of the female spirit is represented in many myths which refer to tigers and demons, since women are often thought to become tigers on death. Radley (1986) suggests that being a tiger is a quality of the outsider, whether male or female. Since it is more often women who are the outsiders marrying into a

¹²This spirit is also described by Radley (1986:338) and Chindarsi (1976:168).

new clan, it is more often women who are seen as outsiders, capable of betrayal. In addition the woman is seen as unstable and at times hysterical. The Mong represent this quality in their myths where a woman can turn into a tiger and is tempted to do so, to return to nature. This unpredictable nature makes a woman someone to fear and respect.

The outsider is always to be feared and since any marriageable woman will be an outsider she cannot be trusted. This is represented in the myth of a man who went to select a wife and met a demon. The story relates how a rich and happy young man went to seek a wife. He looked far and wide for a pretty woman who would suit him. The demons in the grave heard of this and one changed into a pretty woman. The young man was enticed by the woman into marriage and he went and lived with her. One day his cousin visited and noticed that the young man was distressed and was not like a human being. "Then the woman tried to entice the cousin too, but he would not listen to her." The cousin had a talk with the young man: "Cousin, I see that before long you will be eaten by your wife. You are my uncle's only son. We two are very affectionate relations. Last night I saw that your wife is a demon. Before long your marrow and blood will be all eaten up by that woman (the process is already going on). After that she will certainly tear you to pieces and eat you". The young man discovers his cousin is right and together they conspire to kill his wife. When they do so

she turns into a demon gnawing at the door beams with her tusks before she dies. "After that the young man was afraid to go about and look for a wife. He left this song to teach future generations not to go around choosing wives" (Graham 1954:146). The implications of this song reinforce the centrality of the patriline. The practice of patrilineal cross-cousin betrothal with kin that are known is endorsed, or at least marriage which is arranged by the parents. A woman can deceive a man with her sexuality, she cannot ever be fully known and trusted, especially if she is an outsider. A man's male kin are more reliable and are part of the known world.

In the tiger stories collected by Radley (1986) both the women and men who became tigers were to be feared. But the women who became tigers were a threat to men and the social order whereas the men who became tigers helped to maintain the status quo. Male tigers: in the first story a tiger marries a girl and finds a wife for her younger brother returning him to a Mong village and a stable life. In a second story a man who dies and becomes a tiger threatens his widow's new suitor preventing her from re-marrying. He therefore ensures the future of his children in the care of his clan. In a third story a tiger who returns a murdered son and the killer to the deceased's father is rewarded with the daughter-in-law and wife of the deceased. Because the tiger helped the clan he is accepted into the spirit world by the ancestors. Male tigers are stabilising. Female tigers: the stories

about women tigers are destabilising, dangerous and unpredictable. In the first, the woman died and became a tiger who ate both animals and humans. When a reward for its death was announced the woman's husband went to hunt it. He saw the tiger remove her skin and he stole it and then explained to the woman that he was looking for the tiger to kill it. The woman agreed to live with her husband again but three years later she found her skin and was unable to resist the call of nature so she left her family, although her husband warned her this time not to kill as before and he himself was left with two sons and a workable farm. In the second myth a woman who dies is taken by the tigers and begins to turn into one herself. Her husband finds her and manages to steal her back and under her instructions return her to the world of the living. As Radley (1986:420) notes *Puj Ntxoong* is the female jungle spirit who is leader of the tigers. The prefix *Puj* is the term, according to Lyman for older women or female spirits, "*Puj Ntxoong*, tigers, nature and women all fall under the same rubric, in this case a clan of wife takers" (1968:267). Women are destabilising factors called to the world of the tigers where they will wait to trap other women or deceive men. Chindarsi (1976:168) also relates a story of a *Puj Ntxoong* who steals a woman's husband and tries to kill his wife as she tries to reclaim her husband. Although male tigers do not always fall into the stabilising category (for e.g. some of the stories collected by Chindarsi) the relationship between women and tigers and the power of *Puj Ntxoong* emphasises the outside

woman.

Tiger stories also emerged in relation to textile products. In talking about looms, apart from the fact that a married woman carrying a loom mounted with hemp would cause harm to her husband, it was also stated that a woman carrying a loom with hemp would be attacked by a tiger. This tiger could therefore be interpreted either as the destabilising female tiger who will split a family or as that part of a woman which is unpredictable and could return to the forest, thereby splitting a family. This could partially explain why a woman who moves a loom mounted with hemp will cause harm to her husband. Thus, in the context of the outsider woman as related by the myths and as illustrated ~~in~~ earlier, the practice of wearing the embroidered collar of a jacket face down, in order not to attract the forest tiger to steal a woman away, can be better understood. The stories are used as a means of social control and an expression of power relations between men and women. Thus the practices in relation to hemp and embroidered cloth also serve as social support mechanisms.

Mong and the Chinese

The relationship of Mong with the Chinese is also reflected in the use of hemp in stories. Although not of direct importance today since the Thai Mong are separated from the Chinese, this relationship is enduring in Mong

legend and the legends and uses of hemp thus serve as a reminder of a daily social relationship. The stories which refer to cloth illustrate the relationships between women and cloth, between fine cloth which belongs to the Chinese and the rough cloth of the Mong and between the Chinese and the Mong. This link between hemp and the Mong in their relationship with the Chinese can be found in the practices associated with death. The Mong of Doi Pui dress their dead in both fine silk clothes and in hemp clothes. One Doi Pui woman described what would happen after death: "When they see the fine clothes they will realise how important you are but the Chinese will say 'this is ours' - but I love it (the silk cloth) so when I die I will wear shiny Chinese cloth and also put on hemp but I will have to give the top (shiny) cloth to the Chinese". Another woman complained that: "The Chinese always take one piece, the Chinese silk, because they like it. They always have taken it" (*Kab Xeem Yaaj*, Doi Pui 1987).

Hemp as belonging to the Mong and identifying the Mong is also alluded to in the showing of the way death song as mentioned above, and the enduring concept of the opposition of fine things and coarse things and Chinese/Mong can be seen in a showing the way song recorded in China in 1911: "If someone finely dressed comes to show you the way, it is someone come to deceive

you and not one of your ancestors. If a person wearing coarse clothes comes to lead you, follow him, he is one of your ancestors" (S.R Clarke 1911:77).

A story related by Graham (1954) of the Ch'uan Miao tells of a man with a lazy wife who was forced to wear clothes he made himself with palm fibre cloth. His wife "does not strip off any thread of hemp.... wind hemp thread on her hands or knit the hemp thread on her hands". When he had earned some money, with the help of a Chinese, he made himself fine silk clothing and went to see his lover not his wife, telling her "now I cannot wear your hemp clothing, nor can I use your fire hemp cloth (because he had silk and satins)". This story, therefore, alludes to the status of women, their labour roles, their implicit link with hemp as Mong women, the qualitative relationship between hemp cloth and finer textiles (and as we shall later see between Mong and Chinese) and the relative perceptions of wife and lover, or minor wife.

The importance of cloth, whether hemp, cotton or silk, has long been recognised. Its value as a gift or as payment, its ability to enhance beauty or speak of skill and diligence has been recorded in legends and songs as in the following example from the Ch'uan Miao of Guizhou in China: "A song about a sweetheart's clothing:the girl's waist was slender like a small mosquito. When the parents' daughter put on clothing and did things, there was affection (between her and others) like that of a honey

bee..... the daughter wore a silk belt. The two ends of the belt had fine embroideries. It was made of black, white and green threads. One day the parents' daughter came out to pick bamboo shoots. She had tied on herself a woven blue cloth belt. The two ends were buckled together like a precious looking glass" (Graham 1954:123).

Clearly certain cloths are preferred to others. Silk has been known to the Mong for generations and many Mong in China are able to weave it. Graham (1954:163) relates songs describing the Ch'uan Miao weaving silk. Others wore satins and cottons. However, although the Miao had silk, hemp, a less fine cloth, was considered suitable for the Mong and their life. Worse than hemp are rougher materials such as palm fibre. Another Ch'uan Miao story illustrating Mong perceptions of Chinese relative to themselves relates the marriage of a Chinese woman to an emperor. Silk is the provenance of the rich and usually the Chinese. Her silk clothes are important not only to represent her value and beauty but also to deceive the emperor of her age. The emperor's gift to his wife was also silk clothing of great value. Clothing is seen to be the inheritance of the women. In the Ch'uan Miao stories a girl who is to be married cries because she has no dowry. Her mother says "my girl Lang need not cry. The inheritance of the girl Lang is clothing". This does not impress the girl, in fact it is said to "discourage her heart" (1954:158). Although weaving and cloth are seen to be the provenance of women they do not necessarily hold a

high status. They are necessary for women but not the most useful skill in life. Another story (1954:21) relates the time, long ago, when girls stayed with their parents and boys married away. A man lived with his two daughters: the elder "was left to wind flax threads(the second) could make strings of fire hemp". This does not impress the father who wants only to build a house. The daughters fail miserably in their house building efforts so the sons are recalled and build the house. The story relates that this is how it is that women leave their natal home whilst boys, with skills seen to be more useful stay with their parents. The stories of the Ch'uan Miao also relate the exchange of cloth as bridewealth (1954:105), the great gift of clothes made for a lover (1954:99), and the importance of the great beauty of a bride's clothes and her trousseau (1954:112,113).

From the above stories certain relationships are indicated. Firstly, the association between women and cloth. Cloth is the inheritance of women but is seen as a less important skill. Secondly, that between women, their labour as prescribed by tradition and the perceived status of their labour. Thirdly, the relationship between hemp and the Mong. Hemp identifies and belongs to Mong. Cloth and women are linked because women produce, inherit and make use of cloth. Mong women are linked with hemp cloth, in part because they are Mong. Hemp cloth because of its context of production and use holds meaning for the Mong. In its daily use it not only acts as a channel of

communication between the earthly and the spirit world but it is also a constant reminder of the presence of the spirits and the ancestors; of the potential for women to become outsiders and slip into the spirit world and of the relationships between people, between men and women and between Mong and Chinese. Thus the use of hemp can inform us of social relationships as well as acting to maintain and reinforce those relationships. Further examination of the use of hemp shows how power and social relationships are regenerated through time.

The funeral cloth (noob ncoos)

After they have been married for at least a year a Mong woman will start to make one of the plainest sewn items she is obliged to produce. It consists of a square of cloth, usually red in the centre and edged by two black lines half a centimetre wide. It is hemmed on all four edges and is about a foot square. A woman will make a cloth for her mother and one for her father in preparation for a ceremony when she will return to her own home unannounced and give these cloths and other gifts to her parents. She will also make two cloths for her husband to present. She will make similar cloths for her parents-in-law though these are kept until the parent dies and are then presented at the funeral. The cloths which are given are sometimes accompanied by other items, most often a skirt and jacket. In return the recipient gives silver coins, ^tTwo coins if the cloth has two black lines *not a*

one coin
if the cloth

and one coin if only one line. Most cloths have two lines and a woman and her husband will each receive two coins from each parent. Today the coins are worth about 60 baht each. When the gift is received the children will cook two chickens and sometimes the parents cook a pig. The son-in-law presents the cloths and wishes both parents a long life. The children are also wished a long life by the parents. Generally, the wife, although having made the cloth is not required to say anything formal during the ceremony.

Relationships expressed

Relationships between male kin members are acknowledged by presentation of cloths at a funeral, since male kin usually stay within the same village as their parents, or close to it and will join together for many ceremonies. The ceremony of presentation to a woman's parents is however largely a women's affair. The coins are kept by the women even if they are given to the son-in-law; he will usually give them to his wife in recognition that she made the cloth and that they are her parents. Because parents will receive *noob ncoos* from their own sons and daughters-in-law after they are deceased, it is the gift from their daughters which is most talked about. Relationships between mothers and daughters are most commonly those expressed. Parents will probably not be separated from their sons and a father tends to show less visible emotion concerning daughters. In contrast a

mother fights her daughter's suitors when they abduct her and cries at her wedding and a married daughter often expresses her loneliness in terms of missing her mother. A father sees himself as an active agent determining his daughter's relationships, maintaining kin links and through links and obligations concerning her funeral, ensuring his daughter's spiritual wellbeing.

Proscriptions on relationships between a girl and her male relatives also prevents close emotional ties developing between a girl and her uncle, father-in-law and to some extent father.

The *noob ncoos* cloth presentation is therefore largely a mother and daughter affair but is related to the spiritual wellbeing of both her parents. It will mean good wishes and a reunion with a child often not seen by the parents for some years. It is an occasion to celebrate and it is an occasion highly valued by Mong women. The cloth can only be given by those who are married and usually by family members. This can include nieces who have close relationships to aunts in whose lives they had been involved. Usually the relationship will be between a woman and her niece but *noob ncoos* will be presented to both the woman and her husband. Married grandchildren, too, can give *noob ncoos* to grandparents. On death the cloths will be displayed at the funeral. The cloths from the daughters will be placed under the deceased's back and those from sons (although made by the women) under the deceased's head. They are a subject of some interest

since they represent the extent of the deceased's relationships and are a public display of the range and amount of relationships and therefore of the deceased's power.

Mong interpretations of *noob ncoos*

For all Mong familiar with the *noob ncoos* tradition¹³ the cloths are seen to represent fields in the next world without which a person is destitute and must work as a servant. It is a form of accumulated merit carried over into a second life. The cloth giving not only rewards the parents for their productive life but it also exonerates them from further responsibility. A cloth can only be given by a married child. Unmarried children cannot give cloths, therefore it is in the interests of the parents to ensure their children's marriage for the future wellbeing of the parents themselves. A childless woman or man cannot receive *noob ncoos* except from a person who is very close to them. A person who therefore has had many children, has raised them successfully and has ensured their marriage and potential wellbeing and future child-bearing can be rewarded with the promise of a rich life in the next world. The gap of at least a year and maybe five years after marriage and before presentation is a time during which the young couple may have children

¹³As will be discussed in later chapters some young Mong now do not understand the *noob ncoos* ceremony.

which can be celebrated by the *noob ncoos* gift. Although the cloths are presented with a wish for long life there is also recognition that death is near. The children, like death itself, do not announce their arrival though they may indicate that they will visit within the year. Usually if the parents have gone away it will not be far and they can be called home to celebrate the visit. A person with a large family will receive many *noob ncoos*. At one funeral in Pa Glang the deceased was said to have over 100 cloths when he died at over 80 years old. He had so many that his relatives took out the poor ones not of traditional style and of synthetic material which would not decay and travel with him.

At a funeral a cloth made by a woman but presented by a man is laid under the deceased's head. The cloth presented by the woman is laid under the back, (sometimes the back of a man and on the stomach of a woman. This varies from clan to clan). The head according to the Mong of Doi Pui is seen to be the most important part of the body which is the prerogative of the man and the back symbolises work and is allocated to the woman. Although the Mong claim a marriage means the working together of a man and a woman the separate cloths given by a man and woman recognise their different roles in life and their different status, which will be reinforced in the next world. Should a family member who is obliged to give *noob ncoos* not make the presentation they risk incurring the disfavour of the ancestors.

The representation of women's status

The custom of *noob ncoos* illustrates many aspects of women's lives and woman as the insider. It emphasises both the woman and man as individuals acting to ensure their future because they both control their destiny. At the same time they are linked to each other within the family and need each other in order to produce children who are the source of their future wealth. *Noob ncoos* is, to some extent, also a celebration of fertility. The waiting before presentation is to wait for children to be born and confirm a continuation of the patriline. However if there are no children the gift can still be presented but the parents will not be as rich because they cannot expect *noob ncoos* from grandchildren and the childless couple will be poor. The worshipping of the deceased by descendants is a vital part of Mong spiritual belief. Fertility is naturally of great importance. Men can escape the problems of infertility by marrying a woman who already has children. A woman however if infertile and divorced as was *Kab* (described earlier) will have no-one to ensure her wellbeing in the next world and her poor position will be reproduced. As I have already discussed infertility can be the reason for taking a second wife or, as in one case of male infertility in Pa Glang, five wives. A childless woman, if she remains within the family, can gain the affection of the children of another wife or nieces and of importance is the fact that she can

receive *noob ncoos* from them. Although a minor wife may be disliked by a first wife the possibility for children becomes important to the first wife as well as her husband, and the importance of *noob ncoos* for one's wellbeing in the next world helps to reinforce the institution of polygyny.

Death is an indicator of status and at death the size and wealth of the individual's relations becomes apparent, in the size of their funeral. The funeral of an old man of the *Vaaj* clan in *Doi Pui* was of huge proportions. He had married three wives and thus had many descendants. Eight cows and eight pigs were slaughtered, everyone in the village came and he had a rich collection of *noob ncoos*. It was through the stories relating to *noob ncoos* that it became clear to what extent the conditions of this life are reproduced in the next world. *Mog Xeem Vaaj*, an elderly and childless first wife has three pieces of *noob ncoos* from her niece and two daughters of her ^{husbands} minor wife. On her death she can hope to receive some *noob ncoos* from her minor wife's sons. An unmarried woman will possibly receive no *noob ncoos* at all. *Mog Xeem Vaaj* made it clear that although she was pleased to receive *noob ncoos* from the children of her minor wife this did not make her like her minor wife.

The importance of land to the Mong is represented in the *noob ncoos* presentation with each piece representing a field. However, nowadays money is of growing importance

and this is reflected by *Mog* who says: "Without *noob ncoos* it doesn't mean I will be poor but I have nothing of any meaning to take with me, only money; in the next world all the land is already owned by the spirits so you have to take your own. You can't buy any. All land belongs to the ancestors and their children. I know someone who died without *noob ncoos* and he has to work as a servant and uses money to buy food".

Mog has come to appreciate the fact that land is now not essential for survival and has partially incorporated this into her appreciation of *noob ncoos* by acknowledging that survival is possible with only money. However, only land ownership can give status to a person, hence a landless person becomes a servant. In this way the conditions of this world are reproduced in the next world. A poor person in this world, with a poor funeral and no *noob ncoos* will begin life in the next world with no material wealth. Thus it is perhaps not surprising that young Mong women in unhappy marriages commit suicide. They can see no way out of their predicament both in this world or in the next since the conditions they endure in this world will not necessarily improve and will be reproduced in the next world. On suicide they will, it is believed, become a spirit of the forest and are often held to bring misfortune on their families.

The *noob ncoos* cloth portrays women as insiders in relation to the patriline. A childless woman can benefit from the children of her minor wife. Her status actually parallels her husband's because if she has no children, he also has no descendants. An unmarried and therefore childless woman, like an unmarried man, will meet the same problem of poverty in the next world and it is therefore in both their interests to marry and have children. Of course the fact that the importance of children and *noob ncoos* serves to reinforce the institution of polygyny is poor consolation to a childless woman, but it is, in Mong belief, held to be a consolation and a help to her in her future, as well as to her husband. *Noob ncoos*, in this way reinforces the institution of polygyny. The fact that women present *noob ncoos* to their own parents as well as to their parents-in-law illustrates the reality of the continuing relationship between a daughter and her parents. It also illustrates that a woman can continue to influence and contribute to her own parents' fortune even after marriage.

Conclusions

Weiner (1986) writing about cloth and women's production in the Pacific, notes that the fact that banana leaves as a form of wealth were distributed by women and not by men meant they were ignored by ethnographers as a form of wealth for many years because the ethnographers had primarily male informants. Similarly with *noob ncoos* and

other hemp items, the lack of description of these cloths in the past is because their production by women has not been noted by ethnographers. *Noob ncoos* does not look like a form of wealth; however in its representation it encompasses a lifetime of production power of men and women. The value of the cloth itself is primarily as spiritual wealth and represents the potential quality of life in the world after death. In this sense women are closely involved in the fortunes of death and in the representation of that fortune both in relation to their own parents and their parents-in-law. The amount of *noob ncoos* given publicly records the present and past state of social relations. The act of giving reinforces social relations between a woman and her own family. The cloth must be viewed within the context of social relations outlined earlier in order to examine how power is constructed within a social system and how it is regenerated through time. *Noob ncoos* confirms the status of the deceased and reproduces it in the next world. It also acts to support the social system not only by reinforcing the wealth status of particular individuals but by the process through which it can be acquired, emphasising the necessity of remaining within the safety of the patriline.

Women share with men a central part in reproducing these social relations. The cloth and women who make the cloth have access to an object of considerable value because it is the *noob ncoos* cloth as a cultural product that

supports the idea of rebirth and continuity. The making of the *noob ncoos* square however, although within the domain of women, does not confer upon them particular prestige or wealth above men but it does involve them, as insiders in relation to the patriline, in the reproduction of social and cultural life. Women value the *noob ncoos* ceremony because it is important to their relationships with their own parents even though the process of *noob ncoos*, centred as it is in the reproduction and continuity of the patriline, acts to reinforce their position and carry it on to the next world.

The role of cloth products in identifying, legitimising and reproducing social relationships is, therefore, a function of textiles viewed within the village context of production. Hemp cloth plays a central role in Mong spiritual, social, cultural and political life. As the context of daily life changes for the Mong the relationship of the Mong textile to the reproduction of Mong society changes. It takes on new understandings and is viewed within new contexts. As it does so, conflicts between the old and the changing interpretations of the cloth arise and inform us of parallel conflicts in the lives of the Mong people. In the following chapters, pursuing the social life of the Mong textile, I will begin an examination of this process of change and the Mong commercial textile.

CHAPTER SEVEN

THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE COMMERCIAL TEXTILE

The transition of the textile into a commercial form introduces change as a dynamic aspect of Mong social, cultural and economic experience. Change as a subject of study is fundamental to anthropological understanding, not least because failure to recognise change as an ongoing process leads to the representation of societies as existing in some "unreal static condition" (Leach 1977:283). Whilst Leach encourages us to at least frankly recognise the "fictional nature of this equilibrium¹" (1977:285) others attempt to define the nature of change and thereby place their interpretations within a theoretical discipline. Change has thus been considered as evolving internally as a constant process of 'progress' (Sahlins 1974, Boserup 1965) or as occurring through contact with outside stimulus². Both of these positions envisage change as occurring to a whole bounded society.

¹Equilibriumists did acknowledge slow internal changes but they suggested that change was from some ideal state and that society sought to maintain that state as much as possible.

²The outside influence effect on other cultures has long been a subject of considerable debate in all fields of enquiry. In economics it revolved around the possibility for the co-existence of different economies. In ideology, the total incorporation of subcultures was at first suggested, but later conclusions raised the importance of the position of the observer. Thus, those seen as dominated may not see themselves in the same way.

Within these theories the society undergoing change either evolves into a new form, implying some sort of hierarchy, or is dominated by an external force. Alternatively, the Marxist theory of change accommodates both internal dynamism and external dominance to explain change. Marxist analysis gives priority to the means and relations of production to explain change which creates an economic bias in analysis³. However, these models still explain societies in terms of concrete wholes which interact resulting in dominance of one over the other.

The tendency to focus on producers, the product, control of the product and labour power means that change is often conceived in terms of changing power over production. Analysis which considers the role of consumers in this dynamic is less common and this is a theme I will return to later. In addition the unity of the group is assumed, with all players moving, if not at the same time at least over a period of time, from one stage of change into the next in a fairly uniform process of change. In opposition to these uniform processes post-modern analysis allows for difference: "post-modernism is the break-up and collapse of unitary paradigms in science, of... standardized forms of fashion and of coherent political platforms"

³Cooper for example in his analysis of the Mong writes: "One of the most evident weaknesses of Leach's theoretical approach in *Political Systems* is his failure to examine *real* power relations which he admits 'must be based upon the control of real goods and the primary sources of production'. This study of the Mong has focused on this base" (1984:224).

(Abercrombie^{et al.}_{et al.} 1990:250). Recognising that the modern cultural experience is one of pluralisation, the post-modernist reaction to new experience is seen as having difference. This difference is about the complex differentiation of societies. Thus one society is not passively dominated but reacts with difference and with creativity to new experience. Whilst Mong society is clearly not a post-modern culture it is interacting with such cultures and is becoming increasingly influenced by the forces of consumerism and global markets. In analysing the changes associated with the commercial textile I shall first establish who is involved in this business of the commercial retailing of the textile and how much money the makers and retailers have made from the sale of Mong products.

Highland economies

The importance of the commercial product as a source of income varies widely and depends on other specialisations within the Mong household. The economy of the Mong in Thailand has undergone considerable changes in the last 30 years and examination of texts written since the mid 1960's illustrate that the highlander economies are generally in decline. It is clear that the Mong have broadened and pluralised their economies being forced to find alternative incomes in the light of decreasing agricultural returns on impoverished land, lack of new land and increasingly fierce opium eradication policies.

In many surveys the accuracy of figures must be questioned for several reasons. Awareness of these limitations is essential in order to make sense of economic data. Firstly villagers will not reveal opium income and many highlanders may well choose not to give accurate information to government officials or strangers. Secondly many interviewers often talk only to male household heads and not to women, some of whom have separate incomes (many women retain separate income for use on household spending and on children, so it may not be reported by a male household head). Thirdly what is meant by and what constitutes an income may not be the same for interviewer and interviewee. Finally in some villages the villagers have been subjected to so many surveys that they are tired of answering questions and also adept at giving the answer they think is wanted⁴. However it is worth examining what information there is on highland economies to compare and illustrate changing trends in production and income.

⁴This is certainly the case in Pa Glang where the village has received a large number of visitors being well known as one of the first large resettlements in Thailand. One period of my research in the village coincided with a public welfare survey involving over 25 officers and a survey by the government health department with 5 officers all issuing questionnaires and visiting households. The villagers also said a foreign TV crew had been to make a film in the village in 1986. Villagers told me frankly that they were tired with answering questions and meeting strangers. Some researchers had paid informants for technical information related to details of shamanistic practices and others had paid just for a chat. Consequently the villagers were confused as to what they could reasonably expect payment for.

A large survey of 1,612 highlander households of 9 ethnic groups (Tribal Research Institute 1985) based on data collected in the early 1980's indicated that 81% of income came from agriculture and 19% from alternative sources. Of the alternative sources 50% was from wage labour, 17% each from salaried income and forest products and 8% from handicrafts. The actual household incomes recorded in this survey ranged from under 5,000^{4a} baht to over 168,000 baht. The majority of surveyed households (57%) earned less than 5,000 baht a year (presumably after rice needs were fulfilled although this is not made clear in the survey). Most of these people engage only in agriculture with the major income derived from the sale of pigs and chickens and a little wage labour.

For those who do produce cash crops, opium has "traditionally" produced substantial incomes. Due to eradication programmes some villages have abandoned production altogether, whilst others continue to produce in varying amounts. Geddes' (1976) work from the 1950's estimates the amount of income to be 18,350 baht per household which at that time was a large income, although differences between households are hidden in this average figure. Two decades later Lee's (1981) 1977 study of Khun Wang village illustrated that at that time opium provided 85% of all incomes in the village. Radley's (1986) 1981 investigation of red earth village showed the value of opium to rice production was 73% to 27% respectively.

^{4a} See Appendix 2

In Doi Pui rice production constitutes a minor part of overall income. The average yield of opium in Doi Pui is 4 kilos per rai⁵. Opium prices vary and in 1986-7 the price was between approximately 15,000-30,000 baht a joint⁶. Many households in Doi Pui had discontinued commercial opium production but kept a quarter rai, as permitted by law, for their own use (although some of this was probably sold). In the village about 30 rai were grown for the villagers' own use and 10 families were said to grow commercially. Of these the families each harvested between 6-15 kilos a year. With the price at 15,000 baht the income earned by each of the 10 households was between approximately 56,000 - 140,000 baht. Other households produced 1-2 kilos for sale but they were regarded as "non-commercial" households, although an income from this amount would be from 9,000 - (over) 18,000 baht. Opium addiction common in most villages is changing to ^hheroin addiction. One Mong informant told me every Mong village he knew had acquired at least one heroin addict in the past 5 years. Some villagers traded in heroin, generally to feed their own habit. The turnover of one addict in Doi Pui was rumoured to be 1,000 baht a day. Opium income as a percentage of all income is difficult to average in Doi Pui since many households have

⁵There are 6.25 rai in one hectare.

⁶Opium is sold per "joint" which is 1.6 kilos. The price in 1986 was 15,000 baht a joint and in 1987, 30,000 baht a joint.

discontinued large scale production. In households that do produce my informants believed it comprised 50% - 75% of their income depending on their other activities.

Household incomes are increasingly showing the disparities which Cooper (1984) identified in his study villages. Although his household income averages (1973-1975) ranged between a deficit of -4,076 to an income of +4,056 baht (after rice needs are fulfilled) even greater disparities were evident. He noted that 61% of households fell below the average income of each village and that 13% had an income of over 10,000 baht. Radley's figures (collected in 1981) for 21 randomly selected Mong households showed a range of incomes from a deficit of below -9,000 baht to an income of over +148,000 baht with other incomes ranged broadly in between. Incomes during the 1980's could be expected to rise a little in line with inflation, although the gradual impoverishment of the highlanders is becoming increasingly obvious. The failure of highlanders to keep their incomes steady in real terms is illustrated by increasing rice insufficiency, a larger proportion of wage labourers and increasing opium and heroin addiction.

The Tribal Research Institute survey (conducted in 1981) showed 50% of a sample of its surveyed households were not rice sufficient. A 1987 report on minority health conducted with the Ministry of Health showed that the proportion of Mong households reporting rice insufficiency increased in each of the 3 years before the survey

(1983-1985) from 24.4% to 41.1% (Kunstadter 1987:21). The rice shortages can be related to land shortages (Kunstadter 1987; Cooper 1984). Earnings from wage labour are of increasing importance. In 1981 a UNICEF report showed substantial earnings from wage labourers, both men and women. In both Pa Glang and Doi Pui wage labour is undertaken by many Mong. And yet according to Cooper (1984:189) wage labour was unknown among the Hmong studied by Geddes in Meto in 1965. In 1987 the minimum daily rate in the North of Thailand was 30-35 baht. In reality some labourers earn^{ed} less than this. One year's ordinary labour should therefore pay about 10,000 baht and would be considered a subsist^ence level income for one person feeding a family of three or four members.

The decline in the economy is marked on the one hand by increasing impoverishment and on the other by increasing disparities in wealth as those who turn away from agriculture and *successfully* (there are many who are not successful) engage in alternative income earning activities pull away from the low income earning activities of the agriculturalists. The necessity of finding alternative incomes is of increasing importance. The focal households of this study have turned to alternative incomes with differing success as will be illustrated below. Many of their incomes may be comparable to the situation of Mong several decades ago with sufficient resources. Nowadays they are in most cases considerably higher than the highlanders who

continue to work as agriculturalists with no cash crop and fast declining economies. But among the producers and traders of the commercial product the range of income varies from a few hundred baht a year to two hundred thousand baht.

Figures 4,5 and 6 (see end of this Chapter) illustrate the range of Mong incomes⁷ for producers, peddlers and large, medium and small retailing Mong households. The large shop keepers are making yearly profits of between 120,000 to 36,000 baht, ^M Medium and small shopkeepers from 30,000 *← incomplete sentence* to 15,000 baht. Peddlers are earning from 25,000 to under 10,000 baht. The producers are making from 11,000-2,500 baht. The profit of one large scale retailer who buys and sells ranges between 160,000-200,000 baht a year. Most of this comes from trading with the refugee camp of Baan Vinai and the income from one visit is shown in Appendix 1. The income (not profit) from handicraft sales of the Ockenden Venture project which retails a selection of products from different minority groups was, in the first six months of 1987, 1,760,790 baht (Marketing Report, Ockenden Venture 1987). The mark up price as shown below

⁷In collecting economic information it became clear that some women, particularly the producers, were poor at keeping account of their profit margins. Women retailers were very happy to divulge economic information, but after I had collected information from the main households they were persuaded to withhold information by their husbands who were probably more concerned about other Mong knowing their incomes rather than my knowing. Apart from a normal reluctance to divulge economic information the only other difficulty was in regard to households who traded opium or other drugs.

gives the largest profit margin to the overseas retailer who is also dealing in bulk. Reflecting the higher price demanded for more labour intensive work the batik sheet has less mark up but is more expensive than the bag.

Small Bag - Mark up

Maker	Mong/Local Buyer	Wholesaler	Overseas Retailer
1	1.5	2	9

Batik Sheet - Mark up

1	1.4	2.8	4.2
---	-----	-----	-----

The income therefore varies, with the producers receiving least and the retailers most. Before I describe the Mong and the type of involvement they have with the commercial textile I will describe the product itself and how it evolved.

The products

The commercial textile can be defined in two ways. Either it is intended from the beginning of production as a commercial textile (thus one of the use values is predetermined as that of sale) or the original intention

is for internal use and holds social values. Thus the use value of the textile in order to be sold has to be transformed. Those textiles made with the intention of sale have a defined market and include bedspreads, cushion covers, wall hangings, aprons, baby carriers and rolls of batik cloth to be used as wished by the purchaser. The transformed traditional textile is that made originally for home use and then adapted into a commercial product. This can include items of clothing sold as they are (in which case, depending on their quality, they often assume an antique or collector's status), or pieces of hemp and other materials which are cut and made into other items such as western style skirts, jackets, T-shirts or sewn onto bags and even made into shoes. Many contemporary Thai style fashions will include pieces of *Chao Khao* fabric made into different dress designs.

The evolution of the commercial textile

The commercialisation of minority products has evolved since the early 1970's. At this time the *Chao Khao* were becoming a fashionable subject among the upper classes of Thailand and Thai fashion designers also began to express an interest in their textile designs. Interestingly, as I will discuss further later, the *Chao Khao* at this time had begun to lose their more dangerous associations with insurgents; the wars in the North involving some Mong were being successfully suppressed and the minorities were becoming increasingly impoverished. In other words they

were posing less of a threat than previously to the status quo. The middle and upper classes were spurred on by the obvious interest of the Queen of Thailand. Many respected figures in Chiang Mai and Bangkok became involved in a UN development project sponsored by the Canadian government which supplied CUSO (Canadian University Services Organisation) volunteers to cooperate with the King's Mother's project in producing handicrafts from poor villages. The products were largely sold abroad through foundations in Switzerland, Austria and America. After initial support the UN and Canadians withdrew leaving the King's Mother's foundation to manage the project as an entirely Thai enterprise. The project was then passed on to the public welfare department of the Ministry of the Interior and is now operated from a shop in Chiang Mai.

At about the same time as the UN project was coming into operation a group of missionaries in Chiang Mai began running a shop selling handicrafts. This was in 1973 and was organised by Elaine and Paul Lewis. Prior to the shop opening many missionaries had for several years sold handicrafts from their own houses to visitors and to tourists through hotels. Products were also being sold from the refugee camps almost from their inception and in 1976 CAMA (The Christian and Missionary Alliance) formed Camacrafts in an effort to meet the Thai government's mandate to develop projects which would lead to self sufficiency. Ban Vinai camp, now the largest producer of Mong handicrafts was opened in 1975. Two other camps, Ban

Nam Yao and Chiang Kham holding Mong refugees are now officially closed. However in 1987 they still had over 10,000 refugees⁸, some producing crafts.

The beginnings of commercialised textiles were therefore promoted by a combination of aid workers, missionaries and entrepreneurs. Commercial arts have many different origins (Graeburn 1976), some inspired by outsiders, others created anew to suit a market, some copied in their entirety from other cultures. The commercial textiles of the Mong are adapted from the existing material culture by Mong and outsiders to suit a market. It was entrepreneurs who took advantage of the internal Thai market and scores of small retailers sprung up all over Chiang Mai in the 1980's run by Thais of all backgrounds and Mong themselves; ranging from "exclusive" shops for the upper classes to street-side stalls for anyone. The major participants in the evolution of Mong commercialised arts all had different intentions and motives. The agencies in the camps wanted to provide occupation and supplementary income. Projects run in villages were intended to raise standards of living. Independent traders were motivated through profits. The King's Mother's project was aimed at

⁸In September 1987 54,711 Chao Khao refugees were listed. The largest camp Ban Vinai held 39,041 refugees of all nationalities. Ban Nam Yao had 1,743 persons and Chiang Kham 8,672 persons, 2,000 of whom were resettled in the US early in 1988. Ban Chiang Kham had no official channels for textile production although many of the women in the camp were very keen to produce and tried to trade with visiting traders. The two camps of Chiang Kham and Nam Yao were closed officially in 1989. ← no source

alleviating poverty and projecting a caring image. The Border Patrol Police commissioned and bought crafts as part of its campaign to help highlanders and become their knowing friends and guardians⁹.

The products themselves have different design origins. CAMA initiated much design work, tailoring its products for a ready market in the USA and producing the preferred pastel coloured bedspreads and covers. Figurative work also emerged from the camps as women embroidered pictures which described their lives and experience. Many of the designs were copied from original patterns produced by a male Mong refugee who had been to art college in the Soviet Union. This development in Mong textiles can be compared to the originsⁱ of Eskimo soapstone carving, initiated and sponsored by the Hudson Bay Company and Missionaries. Whilst some argue that the Eskimos have incorporated their own aesthetic tastes into the carvings (Graburn 1977⁶) others suggest "We let the Eskimos know what we like and then congratulate them on their successful imitation of us" (Carpenter 1973:192-197). This is especially the case in those embroideries that include English descriptions of Mong legends and life, so

⁹Many of the older Mong, particularly those in Pa Glang, had received some education from the BPP schools set up in the hills and although the attitude of the BPP to the Mong may have been patronising and their role one of surveillance, among some of the Mong in Pa Glang and Doi Pui the BPP were regarded as "better" than other government agencies. This is probably because attention in the 1980's was on the activities of other units such as the Third Army.

76

li
Bm

W. H. ...

totally unintelligible to the Mong embroiderers that misspelt words roll into long lines of sometimes unintelligible script. Nevertheless these works are very popular with consumers, almost childlike in appearance they attract considerable attention.

Most of the Mong in the camp had long since abandoned or sold to traders many of their old skirts and second hand materials which were taken to a ready market of Thai and foreign consumers. Throughout Thailand skirts and other batik products are purchased by travelling traders from villages and sold either intact, if in good condition, or cut up as described above. Many of these products originate with one person and are quickly copied and are soon found in every shop and stall. The most popular reconstituted items made from skirts and batik in 1987/8 were large colourful jackets made from old skirts, small bags, shirts, hemp made into jackets, skirts and trousers and original items sold as they are made for traditional use including baby carriers, whole 'antique' skirts and rolls of hemp.

Most of the Mong producers and traders were aware through the grapevine of relatives and other traders of the profits being made at each junction. Inevitably there was much debate and some confusion as to exact profit margins but most people were convinced that the overseas sales raised most money. This information was gleaned from American Mong who returned to visit relatives, from

overseas relatives who placed orders and from at least one Mong trader who had been to the U.S. The value of hemp as a "natural fibre" was well known¹⁰ but the producers could not meet the demand, in particular from Japan and refused to lower their prices to the amount offered from the Japanese traders. Instead they continued to trade in small amounts locally. Most women in Doi Pui intended keeping the hemp for their own use and sold just one or two rolls only. The price offered did not reflect their own perception of its value. This may be measured both in the labour intensive production and in the social values it holds¹¹.

The producers (Figure 4)

Village producers in Pa Glang

The focal families in Pa Glang were mainly members of the *Xeem Lis*, *Xeem Yaa*j and *Xeem Xyoo*j clans. There were members of other clans resident in the settlement and a

¹⁰It has been estimated (Suthi 1987) that the money circulating for hemp products in 1986 was in the region of 2,000,000 baht. How this figure was deduced is not made clear. From my investigations (as shown in the text) it is clear that the retailers are receiving at least 6 times the amount of the producers.

¹¹It has been suggested (Suthi 1987) that commercial production of hemp could yield an (estimated) net income of 35,000 baht a rai, which is a significant profit. This would involve the weaving of the hemp into cloth and its sale through commercial outlets. However, none of the Mong women suggested commercial production on a large scale and those I talked to thought it would involve a prohibitive amount of labour if they used their backstrap looms. In addition most were more concerned about home production.

considerable number of people moving in and out, sometimes changing their names in order to take on a relative's residence card. The members of the *Xeem Yaaj* and *Xeem Lis* clans were in a majority in Khaang Hor village. However, clan membership did not determine who produced commercial textiles; what it did determine was the scale of dependency on the income from commercial textiles. The women who produced were of all backgrounds. Some were very poor, others comparatively wealthy. The majority were married, middle-aged women with children and some older women. A common characteristic of all women involved was their entrepreneurial interest in the textile and its marketing. The incomes ranged from 2,500 to 11,000 baht but, illustrating the disparities in wealth, the income comprised from 5% - 100% of the women's total household income. Thus the income of four women earning over 10,000 baht a year represented 10-15%, 20%, 40% and 100% of their total household income.

The origins of commercial production were related to the nearby refugee camp of Ban Nam Yao where commercial production was sponsored by CAMA and the Ockenden Venture, two development groups working in the region. The village itself had been part of a development project which

largely withdrew support after encountering difficulties¹² but selected households had been exposed to commercial trade through the project. Other women had become involved through independent traders who placed orders in the village for specified production. These orders were placed via kinship networks, with women related to the middle person or directly related to the trader herself. The traders provided all the materials to ensure quality and paid the women for their labour. Some women initiated their own production and took the products to market themselves learning about the business through observation and through relatives. Others sold through middle women (usually but not always relatives) who took a percentage. Women produced traditional clothes to order (often for traders in Chiang Mai, some of whom were acting as middlemen for overseas orders) and commercialised items (such as cushion covers and embroidered squares) also to order from traders or for the development project operating in the village.

The producers batiked either lengths of cloth just over a foot wide and 6-7 yards long or pieces of varying size but commonly 8x4 feet. The former long lengths would for

¹²The project operated by the refugee organisation the Ockenden Venture still organised and purchased goods from the village but the scale of its operations had been reduced. According to the villagers this was because they tried to introduce a village fund from the profits of the participants. The participants objected to supporting families who were not involved in the project. In addition the strict quality control meant many products were not purchased by Ockenden.

village use be made into the central panel of skirts but as commercial items produced for sale to shops, they were cut up and made into other articles. The large batik pieces were made to order. The women also made batik baby carriers decorated with embroidery and applique. Batik was done on cotton, hemp and silk; the latter made to order, the hemp usually made for skirts but commercially made to order. Batiking (as I described^d in more detail ~~later~~^{earlier}) involved the design of patterns, the application of wax, the dying and the removal of wax. The dyes used in the camps were of poor quality and the dye leaked. In order to achieve a fast dye the women of Pa Glang were employed to dye ready batiked cloth which had been purchased in the refugee camps. Outside the commercial production every year women would make clothes and other items for traditional use. The following examples illustrate the backgrounds and involvement of different women in this trade:

Laug Xeem Yaa j

Laug's household needed income from her textile production as a supplement to other activities. She had a family of 11 children (9 at home) and an active husband who farmed their fields. They had 20 rai of land near the village and a further 4 rai of good quality land bought a couple of years previously. They had planted fruit trees as a cash crop but they had not yet come into production. They grew sufficient rice and could afford to buy vegetables daily. However, they remained fairly poor struggling to

keep their children at school, which they were able to do although they could not always manage to supply them with more than rice to eat. They all lived in a traditional Mong house with a grass roof and had built a small hut to sleep their eldest son and a few of their daughters.

Laug estimates she can make one roll of batik in two days continuous work. The average profit per roll is 101 baht, thus at 50 baht a day *Laug* would be making slightly more than a wage labourer's daily rate of 35 baht. However *Laug* would never work solidly on batik since she has many daily tasks to do. If the field work is heavy she may go several months without making anything. Her average production for a producing month is 2-3 rolls and working through a trader she makes a profit of 210 baht¹³ a month. This money is used to pay for the children's food at school, buy a few vegetables and clothes and for other maintenance purposes. Her income comprises a relatively small part of the family's overall income at about 10% but should extra money be needed or a crop fail *Laug* would produce more batik. She generally received orders from relatives in Chiang Mai but occasionally sought buyers herself.

¹³ The costs for making one batik roll: Cloth costs 59-87 baht a roll. A roll measures 1 foot by 7 yards (cloth 2ft by 7 yards costs 17 baht a yd). To wax one roll costs 8 baht (A kilo of wax costs 32 baht and waxes 4 rolls). To dye one roll costs 8 baht (A tin of dye costs 195 baht and will dye 25 rolls). Fuel costs are excluded as it is collected. Total costs equal 75-103 baht a roll. The Retail price is 180 - 200 baht a roll. Profit is between 77-125 a roll. The average profit is 101 baht a roll.

Gaa Xeem Yaa j

Gaa was reduced by poverty into a state of apathy and was reluctant to do any work but had no alternative income. Both Gaa and her mother-in-law made textiles and if both were working in one month could earn 5-600 baht, enough to feed the family of 5 children and three adults rice for a month. Gaa's husband had not been working for several months and was seriously ill. Gaa and her family had converted to Christianity and were employed by other Christians in the village to batik and dye materials. Gaa's mother-in-law was employed four or five times a year to batik and dye large amounts of cloth¹⁴, earning about 1,500 baht over ten days. She also received occasional charity payments from her employers of an extra 500 baht and these occasional payments actually sustain Gaa in otherwise unviable employment. Gaa made batik rolls which she took to Chiang Mai to sell. When her husband was well they had a larger income from agriculture but in the past year were increasingly relying on income from textiles which comprised over 60% of their total income.

Txab Xeem Xyoo j

Txab lived in one of the poorest Mong households of Khaang Hor. Her husband was 64 and an invalid doing a little field work but mostly leaving it to his wife to support

¹⁴Pheev, (Gaa's mother-in-law) was paid 180 baht to batik a roll of hemp (30 baht a yard) and 25 baht to dye one piece of 5x2 foot cloth batiked in the refugee camps but dyed outside to ensure a good quality dye is used.

them and raise their 6 children. Txab had some fields 40 km from the village and lived there during busy periods. Txab relied on cash crops. In 1987 she grew cotton which she financed with a 4,000 baht loan from a money lender in Nan. After paying 900 baht interest she made a profit of 3,000 baht. Her corn crop had netted 4,000 baht and she made 800 baht on mangos. She also hired herself out as wage labour to relatives earning 30 baht a day to harvest a root crop, earning about 800 baht for the season. She grew some rice and purchased extra from her relatives to keep her family fed.¹⁵ She managed to keep all her children in school. Four were living free with Buddhist monks in Nan town¹⁶ and two were at the village school. She could afford only one school uniform which her children shared on different days (eventually one child was withdrawn due to bullying from other children over this dilemma) and spent 2 baht a day for school lunches.

Txab's batik production is vital to her. She regularly produces 10 rolls a month which she takes herself to Chiang Mai. Her yearly profit from batik is approximately 6,000 baht¹⁷ and can comprise one third to one half of all her earnings. Her total yearly earnings from all

¹⁵In 1987 the cost of rice rose steeply due to bad harvests and was sold at 520 baht for 100 kilos.

¹⁶Many Mong children have been sponsored by Buddhist monks and attend schools of other religious denominations (including various Christian churches) free.

¹⁷Txab earns about 200 baht a roll of which about 100 baht is profit but the price fluctuates and some months she cannot sell for more than 160 baht a roll, greatly reducing her profit margin.

activities were between 12-15,000 baht. Despite her obvious poverty, Txab had greatly improved her standard of living since moving into the village from a village on the border with Laos where she said her family were close to starvation. This was due to the occupying communist leaders who had taken much of their food and redistributed all that was left among the villagers.

Daum Xeem Lis

Daum lived in one of the richest houses in the village being closely related to the village head. The household had income from salaried family members and from large land holdings. They owned a pick-up truck, were building a Thai style house and did not need Daum's relatively small earnings from the Mong hats she enjoyed making. However she regularly produced hats for a shop in Chiang Mai and not being needed as labour in the fields she could earn about 400 baht a month. The hats were sold through her daughter who lived in another part of Pa Glang and herself made large amounts of batik.

Rha Xeem Yaa j

Rha was a prolific producer of batik. She was regarded as skilled by other women and often came up with new and original designs. She batiked to order and independently, working on cotton for her own sales and sometimes on hemp and silk for sales made to order. The orders for hemp and silk were for Japanese buyers who placed their orders through traders. Approximately 6 times a year she would

dye 30-40 pieces of batik from the camp for sale through her daughter-in-law. Her earnings contributed to the household expenses, although she kept them separately. The household however was wealthy, receiving support from their children all involved in trade or in salaried positions and all living away from home. They also had large savings and employed labourers to manage their fruit trees and other crops. *Rha* estimated her earnings at about 10% of the household income and regarded this as supplementary income.

Txab Xeem Yaa j

The life of *Txab Xeem Yaa j* illustrates how she came to be totally dependent on producing commercial textiles as a livelihood and in the end became a full time producer as an employee of a craft museum. When *Txab* was 14 she was orphaned. Her mother had died and her father had been involved in an opium dispute and disappeared in Laos. Her parents had been quite wealthy. As is customary *Txab* went to live with her uncle who saw her as more of a liability than an asset. She was put to work immediately and whereas her brothers were accepted as family, *Txab* was soon married. She had no choice in the marriage which was imposed on her by abduction and she found herself the wife of an opium addict. Her uncle took the silver bars for her but did not give her the customary animals and other goods for her marriage except one roll of hemp. When her

husband died she found herself destitute with her children and re-married a second addict. Two of his wives had already died of opium addiction.

Txab, aged over 50, eked out a living making batik. Although *Txab* had been born into a wealthy family she received none of her father's fortune unlike her brothers who remained in her uncle's household and inherited their father's wealth. *Txab*, not wishing to succumb to opium herself, ran away from her second husband to live with her eldest son in Pa Glang, to whose clan she no longer belonged but with whom she managed to live (within Mong law) by building a wall between their living spaces. *Txab* managed to establish some supportive help among the Christian community in Pa Glang and survived by making batik all day and every day. Having been born a White Mong she had never learnt the skill and had never been taught by her mother-in-law, so in her middle age she taught herself, copying from her relatives by watching their technique and receiving informal guidance.

In 1987 her seriously ill son sold their home and having nowhere to go she was compelled to move with him to stay with relatives in Maa Saa Mai village in Chiang Mai province. The relatives regarded her as an outsider, which technically she was, though she argued her family had become Christian - to some extent negating these obstacles to their living together. Early in 1988 I went to see *Txab* who had left Maa Saa Mai to work in a craft

museum just outside Chiang Mai. Recruited by the owners she decided to leave a family who did not want her and claimed they could not feed her. She lives with another woman in a small unprotected hut on a main road. By day she makes batik along with several other marginalised women, for tourists to watch. In the evening she walks a mile to buy fish and rice for supper. She is lonely and does not have any guarantee of long term work and works for a daily wage of 35 baht which sustains her only from day to day.

Refugee production

Textile production from the camps is significant both in itself, being a major source of products and new design ideas, and in relation to village production. Producers from villages will not compete with some items which are greatly undervalued due to effectively subsidised production in the camps. Because the camp women receive free subsistence and because they are underemployed they will work for less income. This is especially the case with bedcovers. If the camps are unsettled by rumours of repatriation, the refugees may sell many personal items including skirts. This is important for the women of Pa Glang who will flock to the camp gates to buy, but it also can ^{also} depress the market price. If traders conceive of new style products they are careful not to ask camp women to produce them or the idea spreads too quickly and the price tumbles. All of the Pa Glang producers have been

greatly influenced by their proximity to the refugee camps where the impetus for production has been strongest. Textiles are either produced independently and sold to buyers who come to the camp or they are ordered and organised by a middle person who may be an independent entrepreneur or an aid agency. The products are, in the main, originally designed by CAMA employees who adapted traditional designs to western style consumer items. The figurative work is drawn out by Mong men who interpret their legends on paper and this is then copied in embroidery by the women who, with the help of English speakers, sometimes add embroidered English text. Cloth is purchased from shops inside the camp where prices are high, or is brought in by traders. Procuring cloth is a problem, especially good cloth. If a trader brings in quality cloth it may be replaced by cheaper material by the maker who wants to reserve good cloth for use on her own clothes.

Production of commercialised products is not continuous. Leading up to new year women are occupied making their own clothes. This activity, in December, coincides with the peak tourist season in Thailand and retailers often do not receive their orders. Production also stops for other reasons. After the death of a relative women may not sew for 10 days, and women will not sew if their husbands are thought to be fighting since using the needle during this



Photograph 7: These women in Baan Vinai refugee camp are widows who gather together to produce textile products. They meet in the "widows room", a building donated by an aid agency.

time may cause their death. There are many interruptions to production but in general there are enough people working at any one time to supply the market.

Textiles are undoubtedly a major earner for the camp women and for some the trade dominates their activities.

Because the women earn money from a range of buyers and at irregular intervals their income can only be estimated.

Those who work for CAMA can rely on receiving the income, but selling at the camp gates is often on credit. If working for CAMA, the women can buy material from a shop controlled by CAMA and are paid per metre of finished work. Orders are shared out by CAMA among women who are registered with them. To become registered the women must undergo some training and pass a quality test. If the order is a bedspread then a whole family will work on it but no one person is supposed to have more than four pieces of work at any one time. CAMA estimate they reach about 1,500 - 2,000 women through textile production and put an estimated 150,000-200,000 baht a month into the camp by buying finished products. This would suggest an approximate 200 baht profit per woman per month. If the women sell at the camp gates then they take their products to a market area on market day and wait for the buyers to come. The buyers are often shop owners from Doi Pui or Chiang Mai who come to replenish^{iso} their stocks every 3-4 weeks. Other buyers are from retail stores in Thailand and those acting as agents for overseas purchasers. They will place orders, sometimes leaving material which must

be finished as specified. They will also buy what they see and it is not unusual to see buyers literally smothered by women and their products.

Apart from CAMA earnings the camp women estimate their profits from other trade at about 200 baht a month. (Their gross takings are up to 1,000 baht a month but the price of the manufactured cotton cloth used in the commercial products is high and rising fast eating up their profit margin). Some months women may earn an extra ⁰⁰1-200 baht if they are employed by CAMA. Clearly the camp women are working for a pitiful salary. The fact that they are willing to work for so little depresses the price and prevents any production of similar products taking place outside the camps. The main concern for most of the women in the camp is to make money. This is not to say that they do not take pride in their handiwork but the priority is to produce and sell as much as possible in a short space of time. This has meant that for commercialised products the quality has been seen to fall and has been the most difficult thing to maintain. The use of nylon zips for example (which do not rust) is preferable but more expensive than the use of metal ones. The use of teteron backing rather than unwashed muslin would be preferable and, of course, the use of colourfast cloth. Left to their own devices most women would go for the cheaper options; they can sell because the buyers do not know until they return home of the faults of their purchase and in this the producers and the traders

collude. Many of the traders, including CAMA, try to maintain quality by supplying materials and detailed instructions. Most traders who sell in Doi Pui buy from the camp gates and do not supply materials. There are distinct differences between the controlled and ^{are} uncontrolled products which ~~is~~ reflected in slightly higher prices of the quality controlled items. The Mong are well aware of some quality problems. For example they are keen to achieve a fast dye in their own clothes, particularly with the indigo dye with which they are very familiar. For their own use the technical quality is very different and much higher than commercial products. The reason for this is partly because they are aware that the consumer does not understand the product. Some traders retailing for higher prices demand top quality products but those selling in Doi Pui or Chiang Mai ignore many of the quality issues. Stopping to examine closely a piece of embroidery or double dyed batik in Doi Pui would always raise comment because, as the women who sold from their shops said, most consumers who came to their shops did not even notice it was double dyed so there was no point in selling it to them; they would, after all, buy almost anything.

Women earning income from textiles do so from very different backgrounds. They are separated by residence, political status and clan and lineage affiliations. These differences prevent co-operation and communication among the women to stabilise prices. In the camp therefore the

production yields a vital income but is artificially maintained at almost unsustainably low prices due to the very desperate conditions and the support of aid agencies. Textiles will never be produced in Pa Glang if the work required is deemed too much for the potential profit. The Pa Glang women make products which are generally not available in the camps but they also take advantage of their freedom of movement and their position as Mong women to act as traders. In this way the network of producers extends outside Pa Glang village to almost all other Mong villages in Thailand as village women are persuaded to enter the commercial trade and sell their traditional textiles.

The traders

The skirt traders

Like the producers the majority of skirt traders come from Pa Glang rather than^a Doi Pui village. This is partly due to the proximity of Pa Glang to Nam Yao refugee camp. When the refugees first came to Thailand they found themselves impoverished and in order to acquire money sold many of their personal possessions. These included women's skirts which were taken by traders to Chiang Mai and were either sold whole or cut up and made into other items. The demand soon emptied the camps and new sources had to be found.

The early camp traders were from Chiang Mai and Pa Glang and once trade had been established women from Pa Glang started to travel to Ban Nam Yao just a few hours away where they could easily enter the camp and buy goods. They also bought skirts which they re-sold in Chiang Mai and once the camp supplies finished they turned their attention to the many Mong villages in Thailand. At first they took advantage of relatives, and travelling in small groups of three and four they would descend on a village and buy any skirts women were prepared to sell. When relatives' stores were exhausted they went further and further afield. By 1986 these Mong women from the province of Nan were exploring large areas of Thailand, wherever there were Mong villages to be found. The Pa Glang women became notorious, travelling to remote areas, entering strange villages, taking buses and walking miles, taking lifts in passing trucks and then making their way to Chiang Mai to sell their purchases. Their journeys lasted from 4-14 days and were often repeated before they returned home with their profits.

In the early days of this trade profits were high. One Pa Glang woman related how she had bought 60 skirts from one village alone in Tak province and on any trip she would never arrive in Chiang Mai with less than 30 skirts. At this time women would make at least 200 baht a skirt and sometimes considerably more, thus netting 6,000 baht (minus travel expenses of approximately 500 baht) on each journey. Villagers would sell their hemp skirts for ~~6~~^{DO} 800 ! 600

baht and cotton ones from 4⁰⁰600 baht. In 1987 a good quality hemp skirt passed from villager to trader to retailer would be sold to a purchaser for 1,600 baht and a cotton skirt for 800 to 1,000 baht. However, not surprisingly, skirts soon became scarce in villages too. By the end of 1987 the skirts on offer were hardly worth the travel to secure them. The heavy, batiked and embroidered hemp skirts had long since vanished from villages and women were now collecting old and torn cotton skirts, some not batiked but made from printed material bought in towns. The new source for old skirts had now moved over the national border into Laos where enterprising traders were beginning to operate. As the ^{2.} ^{1.} below 'chart' shows, the profit margins on a hemp skirt are smaller for the village trader than the retailers and thus quantity is important to them.

Hemp skirt - Mark up

Villager	Village Trader	Retailer	Overseas Retailer
1	1.2	2.3	4-6

The women traders of Pa Glang continued to travel but were meeting more obstacles. There was increasing resistance to them in villages, not from women who remained eager to sell skirts, but from men who objected to their wives

selling what they saw as their heritage and objected to the contact with Mong women who appeared to be acting in an un-Mong way. The Pa Glang women also met resistance from their own husbands who, especially now the profits were reduced, objected to their wives' frequent absence. Why these objections became important, why women wanted to trade and how women reacted illustrate in what way social relations are changing and I will return to this later.

The women skirt traders, who also make textile products, currently come from a range of backgrounds. In general the travelling traders are from medium or poor households. The women from wealthy households never traded in this way, and instead became involved in retailing, having a shop, processing skirts or acting as a go-between. Some women who did not desperately need the money became involved because they enjoyed it, but it was the poorest women who were the most regular traders.

The peddlers (Figure 5)

Another group of Mong women has emerged over the past 5-6 years and although not trading specifically in textiles their case is important in illustrating change in women's lives. They generally peddle cheap jewellery and other small goods including pieces of Mong and other minority textile made into small items such as cushion covers or purses. Many of the women of Pa Glang and Doi Pui were becoming increasingly involved in this type of trade,

visiting regional fairs with their goods and dressed in full Mong costume they used their appearance as a magnet to attract buyers. These women can be seen on the streets of Chiang Mai and all over Thailand, in Bangkok and further south on the islands which attract tourists. One group of 9 women from Pa Glang had travelled to the southern tourist resort island of Ko Samui. Passing through regional fairs and towns on the way during a period of public holidays, they set up stalls on pavements and in markets. Once in Ko Samui they scoured the beaches dressed in their colourful skirts and attracted buyers for their bags, materials, jewellery and opium pipes.

As Figure 5 illustrates, the common factor which determines these women's relative poverty and their turning to peddling is the poor relationship they have with their immediate kin. The reasons are various but in all these cases the traditional Mong social system has not afforded them the protection which they need. Many of these women have been described in the previous chapters.

Most of the women peddle goods to acquire their main income and therefore spend 50-75% of their time engaged in this activity. It is interesting to note that all of the married women married out of their village of birth. A few women born and married in Doi Pui also peddle goods from time to time but unlike the majority of peddlers they also have alternative income sources. Of the 10 peddlers

in Figure 5, four have no other income, four have agriculture as the other main income and two are opium traders. In terms of marital status two are separated, two are living with married daughters (and one of these is a widow), one is an unmarried mother, one is an unmarried pregnant girl and three are widows. Of the three married women living with their husbands, two have poor family relationships, one being a minor wife and only one woman has a reasonable alternative income. Estimates of their incomes ranged from under 10,000 to 25,000-30,000 baht a year depending on how hard they worked, how far they had to travel and whether they had street-stall space in Doi Pui. Although the estimates of income are fairly high compared to some incomes, the traders had expenses. They had to purchase rice and other food; many did not keep animals and had to purchase meat to be able to take part in festivals and in order to trade they would incur the costs of travelling large distances. The following examples illustrate the type of women who turn to peddling for an income.

Mog Xeem Taw has a young family to care for and belongs to a small lineage. She has to spend some time working in the fields and also caring for the extended household. With these responsibilities she cannot travel to fairs but she does travel to Chiang Mai in the evenings returning late at night to Doi Pui. She also has space to sell from



Photograph 8: A peddler from Doi Pui, displays her wares on the nighttime streets of Chiang Mai. Whilst selling she also looks after her children.

a tray on the main street in Doi Pui. Peddlers often find space opposite their relatives' shops or as in *Mog's* case they negotiate with the owner of the street frontage. *Mog* was given space by the school teacher whose home happened to be on the high street. As a very competent and hard worker *Mog* earns more than others in her position and estimated her monthly net income at 2,500 baht. Since she has other responsibilities she cannot work every week and her yearly net income is approximately 25,000 baht. She devotes herself to trading rather than harvesting her coffee beans and peaches which between them would have netted 8,000 baht but in 1987 she allowed most of the crop to remain unharvested. This was partly because she did not have^e sufficient labour power but it was also due to a lack of knowle^dge about where to sell coffee beans. This crop was introduced by a development project which failed to provide back up support.

Maiv Xeem Yaa does not work in the fields being the daughter-in-law of a wealthy family. She devotes herself to selling goods in Doi Pui where she has a street-side stall; she also travels to Chiang Mai some evenings and to regional fairs where her net income is between 1,000-2,000 baht each trip. Her range of income is wide and although she would not (or was unable to) reveal her overall net income, from her own calculations it is estimated at 25,000-30,000 baht. *Maiv* is an unwelcome minor wife in her mother-in-law's household. She does not care for her husband and increasingly chooses to spend the

night in a room behind her stall. She turns to her own income for her daily living and that of her children and remits some to her mother-in-law. Her husband is a gambler and she prefers not to give him money if she can avoid it. She also partially supports her own mother who has separated from her third husband and has no permanent home.

Lug Xeem Xyooj is the mother of Maiv Xeem Yaaaj. She has been married three times but left her third husband who is addicted to opium and spends her time travelling to regional fairs to peddle goods. She chooses to spend the time in between fairs with her daughter and sleeps behind her shop. She has no other income although she could return to her third husband should she need to. She estimates her net income at 10-15,000 baht a year from her peddling activities.

Yeeb Xeem Yaaaj married into Doi Pui and lives in a large household. Two of her sisters-in-law are Thai and she therefore, takes on many responsibilities making Mong clothes for their children and her brothers-in-law. She also runs a stall on the high street and travels to regional fairs. Almost all her earnings are remitted to the household, though she retains some for personal use.

Daum Xeem Yaaaj is a returned daughter who has left her husband in another village. She keeps a low profile in Doi Pui and thus does not trade in the village but travels

about 10 times a year to regional fairs. In this way she earns a net income of between 12,000-15,000 baht a year. She chooses not to partake in village activities since she is, theoretically, only "staying" with her parents. Unless she spends long periods of time with her parents, she uses most of her income to support herself and her son.

Rha Xeem Yaa j has taken to peddling since the death of her husband. She keeps her house separate from that of her minor wife and farms her own land. With her agricultural work she does not sell daily but travels to regional fairs. She still has fields but does not farm them, letting them out instead. She has a minor wife who also trades independently and the women maintain their own children, although sharing a physical house.

The lowest income earners are the peddlers who do not own a tray but cluster around tourists as they arrive in Doi Pui, or walk the streets of Chiang Mai clutching handfuls of jewellery and opium pipes and carrying a few small bags. They do not buy their goods but effectively work for a larger shop and their goods are acquired on a sale or return basis. On average they retain about 20% of the sale price of an item. Their profit margins are therefore low and over a year Txab Xeem Yaa j will earn a net income of under 10,000 baht. Several women trade like this in the village square. They are among the poorest in Doi Pui and three are widows with no family and although living

with kin they provide their own income. Maiv Xeem Yaa also sells in this way but her income is boosted by her trade in drugs. As a heroin addict her daily turnover is large but she spends all her income to feed her addiction.

The Doi Pui retailers (Figure 6)

Those who retail commercial products from shops can be divided into Mong and Thai owned outlets. The Mong outlets are mainly concentrated in Doi Pui and these retailers also have shops in the Chiang Mai night bazaar where Mong from other villages and from the town itself also rent outlets. The Thai owned shops are scattered all over Chiang Mai and range from small outlets catering to the cheaper end of the market to large or exclusive retailers. As well as the Mong retailers several "charity" shops are run on commercial grounds by groups mentioned earlier including the Border Patrol Police and missionaries.

As discussed earlier the origins of textile trade in Doi Pui began in the early 1970's when an entrepreneurial Mong of the Yaa clan began to sell from a small shop to the trickle of tourists then visiting the village. He sold Mong and Mien cross-stitch sewn onto squares and other traditional pieces of embroidery, Lahu shoulder bags, real silver necklaces and Pepsi Cola. The first year proved a great success and he was soon copied by other families. Now there are a total of 47 Mong shops and stalls and 32

shops and stalls run by non-Mong. The latter are operated by Chinese Thai, Thai and Nepalese¹⁸. Most of the non-Mong community must rent their outlets from the Mong. The Mong however, own their own space.

In order to trade the Mong retailers must travel to the refugee camps every 6-8 weeks to purchase stock. Most place orders on each trip to be prepared for their next visit. The retailers buy a selection of all the commercial items described above. They will also buy goods from travelling traders and include in their shops home made batik and hemp and other items of clothing, usually purchased but sometimes produced in the household. The women in the shops make up small bags, sew patches onto T-shirts and embroider small items to be sold. Some retailers have both shops in Doi Pui and stalls in Chiang Mai. Thus at the end of a day's trade in Doi Pui they pack up their wares and travel to Chiang Mai and set up their stalls for the evening, returning home late at night.

Collecting financial information was difficult because several of the retailers were involved in illegal operations including opium and heroin trading and illegal

¹⁸The Chinese Thais run 4 (medium sized) ivory and silver shops, one souvenir shop, four food and grocery shops and one small dress shop. The Thais run 5 small restaurants, 5 medium and 4 small shops selling Thai clothes, hats and cheap souvenirs and 6 stalls selling the same. The Nepalese run 2 medium and one large shop selling Tibetan and Nepalese products.

trade in antiques. Some people were, therefore, sensitive to questioning on finances. However, women were prepared to reveal their income to me and so I was able to collect reliable financial information from 10 Mong retailers in Doi Pui who gave details of their income and expenditure. Their very different personal situations meant the income can only be considered in relation to their status in the village. Some appear to receive small incomes but are part of a larger, wealthier household. Others earn large incomes but are heavily in debt. Figure 6 illustrates the different range of income, the major expenditures and the economic status of the outlets surveyed. The backgrounds are various but all the shop owners except one come from large lineages within the village. This gave them access to land on which to build their stores and money with which to run them. The major outlets are managed by men, the medium and smaller outlets by women. Families running bigger outlets no longer grow their own food and employ labourers to work on cash crops. A consistent expenditure is on children but large amounts are spent on vehicles and if incomes are very high, investment is made in land and property in Chiang Mai. All outlets saw a future in fruit as a cash crop and had invested heavily in fruit production. If households had large savings it was largely from trade in opium, antiques and other illegal trade items although savings from the textile trade are not insubstantial. Thus income from the textile trade provided a reasonable income for all the retailers; ranging from 18,000 baht for those with small shops where

they paid little attention to selling and regarded it as a sideline activity to 120,000 baht for those with larger outlets and a serious interest in trading. For those with small lineages and for marginalised women it provided the bulk of their income. For those with large lineages and for households involved in other trading and income activities the textile trade provided a comparatively smaller part of their income. The majority of Mong with shops had already expanded into other income generating areas, including salaried employment and agricultural cash crops.

Other retailers

At the top end of the retail business in Mong items are the traders who buy products and resell to shops and the larger shops in Chiang Mai itself. One trader who buys regularly from the camp and from Pa Glang gave me the accounts of the business. The details of purchase and sale for one journey can be seen in the appendix. The trader's profit (after deduction of all expenses including travel and assistant's pay) is 20,000 baht. The trader makes up to 10 such journeys a year and the yearly profit is therefore in the range of 200,000 baht. Finally the larger shops are retailing minority and other Thai goods. Those involved in charity work retail through many third

world trading groups¹⁹. The largest retailers in Chiang Mai are dealing in a turnover of 2-3 million baht a year (YMCA). The Ockenden project for example has a 2.6 million baht gross income (1987) from handicraft sales.

Although the profits in the 1970's boomed they have since been in decline. Clearly benefits are very uneven with the producers earning least, and sometimes being compelled to sell at a loss, particularly those in the camps. The relative profits of producers depends on whether they also act as retailers buying and selling other goods as well, the combined profits of which raise them above those who just produce. Among the retailers all have suffered from a decline in sales and increased competition but they all make profits dependent on their shop size and therefore the amount of capital they can invest. Economic differentiation depends on original investment in the business (if we exclude income from dealing in items other than textiles) and on the type of market. The more exclusive market with higher quality goods yields higher profits.

¹⁹Trading groups specialising in third world products have grown in recent years. They include charities such as Traidcraft whose main objective is trade, Oxfam who have a subsidiary operation, Oxfam trading, to manage the business side of operations and Save the Children who do not run trade networks but do sell third world items through their catalogue. Other trading groups are not charities but business organisations. Trade organisations involved with Thai *Chao Khao* Products are listed in Appendix 6.

The textile as commodity

The preceding account of the Mong textile economy has illustrated the range of incomes earned from commercial textile production, trading and retailing and the associated peddling activities. The range is broad, from under 2,500 baht to 200,000 baht. In examining the individuals involved it becomes clear that to some extent economic differences are affected by social relationships, by gender, by location, by opportunities and experience. In general those from a small lineage, with poor family relationships and especially women, find themselves earning marginal incomes from peddling goods which comprise a major part of their income. Individuals from large lineages with good family relationships in accessible locations can earn large profits from retailing goods. This contemporary trade of Mong textiles^d products is a result of the movement of the textile into the range of tradeable goods. The reasons why the Mong find it necessary to take up this sort of trade is related to the economic and political changes which have resulted in resource scarcity. The movement of the textile into the range of tradeable goods not only reflects an increasing poverty of resources: the commercial textile as commodity can also inform us of other aspects of change in Mong society.

A limiting factor in the study of commodities has been the tendency only to consider the production of objects that have been apparently pre-classified as commodities. As Appadurai states "let us approach commodities as things in a certain situation, a situation that can characterize many different kinds of thing, at different points in their social lives. This means looking at the commodity potential of all things rather than searching fruitlessly for the magic distinction between commodities and other sorts of things" (1988:13). The traditional textile was described in relation to traditional contexts of use. The value in the traditional textile lies in the controlled use and exchange of the item. Such items were identified by Douglas (1967:69) as specific forms of commodities with specific value and acting as a licence or a coupon providing access to certain powers, relationships, positions and knowledge. These items are neither gifts nor commercial items but lying somewhere in between they act as a type of commodity. But many objects as Appadurai suggests pass through a commodity stage, rather than being a commodity all the time. As I have illustrated this happens to the Mong skirt which is made for traditional use and then sold to passing traders.

In describing the commercialisation of the textile we are introduced to the textile as a commodity in a range of new contexts. The commercial state involves consumers from different societies; it places new values on the cloth including monetary, antique and exotic values; the

contexts and politics of consumption involve ideologies outside of Mong control; and the economies of production involve the Mong producers and traders in larger economic systems.

Within the Mong economy this process of commoditisation has been occurring for many years with the emergence of a range of cash crops. Thus the commercial textile, in some respects, adds to a continuing process of commoditisation. But beyond the economic aspects of this process broader implications include the commoditisation of the Mong image and it is in this context that the commercial textile plays a vital role. Thus, whether or not the textile is a commodity and if it is when it is, is a debate fuelled by many schools of thought, and whilst it is necessary to establish the nature of production, it is essential to then look at the wider context.

Analysing whether the producers work full time or part time, whether they are specialists, whether they form groups of producers and whether the relations of production illustrate class differences, new classes, expropriation of labour power and result in the loss of traditions, are all standard procedures and arguments in the field of simple commodity production and feature to some extent in this study. The study of the circulation of commodities has received considerable attention within economic anthropology. In most uses of the word commodity the main association is with capitalist modes of

production and commodities are seen to exist only where capitalism has penetrated. Marx's discussion of commodities in Capital (1974) emphasises the significance of money and it is from this that the link between commodities and money in post-industrial society is established. The Marxist²⁰ analysis of primitive economies as one of evolution from primitive to capitalist, although sometimes employed is not widely held to be useful in analysing the mechanisms of small scale societies such as that of the Mong. The relationship of capitalism to other modes of production is now conceived "not (or not simply) as succession or evolution....nor yet as some kind of dialectical transcendence and dissolution ... nor even as a transition. On the contrary this capitalism neither evolves mechanically from what precedes it, nor does it necessarily dissolve it.. it in fact co-exists" (Clammer 1978).

²⁰The traditional Marxist, substantivist and neo-classical approaches are now seen as too rigid as models. ~~The Marxist approach sees the destruction of the primitive mode of production before capitalist modes of production via a period of petty commodity production. In the process Marx saw the appropriation of labour power by the owning class. The substantivist debate centres around the existence of primitive pre-capitalist societies. It promotes the independence of tribal economies before the intrusion of capitalism. The formalist debate considers the individual within society and argues for the existence of capitalist and non-capitalist modes of production at the same time. This approach focuses on the relationship between dominant and subordinate modes of production and analyses the relationship between the formal and informal economy. All of these approaches see change as evolution or as dominance of one group by another. The potential for change as a process of interaction is a more recent approach.~~

The challenge in understanding third world economies has moved on to examining the co-existence and combination of many varied forms of production, distribution and exchange (Long and Richardson in Clammer, 1978). In line with this, more recent work²¹ has turned to internal familial relations in analysis of simple commodity production. It is increasingly recognised that the ideal of pooled household resources cannot be uniformly accepted and my own account reveals considerable difference not only in women's experience of Mong society but also in the trading economics as described above. Past analysis²² has tended to focus on the relationships between modes of production, and whether they dominate, co-exist and interact. Because of the generalisation common in analysis of commodity production, players are reduced to employees or clients and opposition is portrayed in relation to capital and/or labour. The analysis of individual players within the household has been limited, mostly because the household as a whole has been seen as the producing or labouring unit. Households, however, consist of individuals with their own power relations. Analysis of the dynamic for change within the household and its relationship to commodity production has provided new insights into the motivation for change.

²¹See for example Harriet Freedman's (1986) article on "Patriarchal Commodity Production" and Tom Brass (1986) on "The Elementary Structures of Kinship".

²²This includes the approaches taken by Marxists, substantivists and formalists.

Cooper (1984:233) in his study of the Hmong moves emphasis from the relationship of modes of production to the "internal dynamics of tribal society" and it is worth considering his analysis because not only does he look at internal family relations, he also concentrates on gender and on differences in labour contributions which are of interest to this account of textile production. His analysis of internal social relations of production attempts to isolate a dynamic of change in the form of the dominance of one producer over another. In this case the expropriation of female labour by the male: "The congruity between exploitation of wives as the dynamic element of domestic labour and the employment of additional non-domestic labour is the key to understanding contemporary change in Hmong communities in Northern Thailand. Demonstration of the dynamic articulation of paid labour and domestic labour is the principal theoretical contribution made by this study to the field of economic anthropology" (1984:238)....."In this sense we can say that the relationship of inequality and exploitation existing between husband and wife is the principal contemporary dynamic of change in Hmong society" (1984:246).

Cooper's argument is that opium brought greater wealth and greater power for men. With the emergence of indirect paid labour: "the supporting ideology was re-interpreted: the material basis for male superiority through respect was no longer mere ability to offer protection and to

wield an axe. The basis for male superiority became increasingly the accumulation of wealth" (1984:247). Thus according to Cooper there is in fact no actual change in relations, Hmong men remain superior but, with the accumulation of storable wealth, they change the basis for their superiority. It is this changed basis, in the form of the accumulated wealth that is the *dynamic* for change. Whilst Cooper's conclusions are attractive his analysis is lacking, particularly in regard to women.

Inequality in labour relations and control of capital has possibly long existed but Cooper argues that there was no stored capital to enable men to take broader control until the emergence of opium as a cash crop at the beginning of the 20th century in Thailand. However, there is some room for debate here in that Mong have long had a tradition of storing wealth in the form of silver bars and the accumulation of wealth in the form of silver currency has long been accepted practice. Trade among the Mong and other communities in China, Thailand and Laos has been part of the economy for probably hundreds of years. There is certainly no evidence to suggest that the Mong have traditionally been an isolated and self sufficient group. Thus it seems likely that some accumulation of wealth has been possible for many generations. What Cooper did not analyse was women's perception of men's superiority, and whether what observers have interpreted as superiority is seen in that light by Mong women. As I have demonstrated, women may not see men's roles as superior, just different

from women's roles. Cooper also failed to look at whether women took advantage of the new opportunities which have arisen as a result of both old and new economies, and the possibility that just as recent commoditisation may have given men the basis for new power so it has also given new opportunities to women. The dynamic for change derived from social relations and control over capital is potentially much broader than he portrays.

Thus whilst accepting that males expropriate value created by women, it is also possible to see women capitalising on new opportunities to break with traditional power relations. It must also be questioned whether the dynamic between men and women and the resulting control over larger amounts of capital is the main reason (or dynamic) for change, or whether other, perhaps broader perspectives for change are of greater significance. Cooper's focus on internal relations opens up new understandings but still concentrates on control over the means of production. Whilst this is clearly of great importance in analysing the Mong textile there are other points of entry into the study of the commercialised textile as commodity. Ajun Appadurai introduces a broader approach: "in Marx's own writings there is the basis for a much broader, more cross culturally and historically useful approach to commodities". This is the fact that "in order to produce not mere products but commodities a man must produce use values for others, social use values" (1988:8).

In this way the consumer of the use values is brought into the analysis. As I have illustrated above the commercial product is of varying economic value to its producers. But economic value is, of course, in itself a result of more complex value perceptions. As Simmel (1978) defines economic value it is never inherent in the object but is a value given to the object by a subject. These values are then carried by the object: "Economic exchange creates value. Value is embodied in commodities that are exchanged. Focusing on the things that are exchanged rather than on the forms or functions of exchange make it possible to argue that what creates the link between exchange and value is politics, construed broadly" (Appadurai 1988:3). Thus it begins to emerge that what is of importance in analysing change is not just the relationship between producers and their labour power or mode of production, nor the accumulated value but the actual product itself, why it is of value, who creates the value, how the value is used and by whom. These questions can be answered through further analysis of the different and changing ways in which people find value in the Mong textile.

Figure 4

Textile Producers

	Laug X Yaaj	Gaa X Yaaj	Txab X Xyooj	Daum X Lis	Rha X Yaaj	Txab X Yaaj
Status	Married	Married	Married	Married	Married	Widowed
Age	40	44	45	72	75	66
Lineage size	Large	Small	Small	Large	Large	Small
Family size/type	Large/Nuc	Small/Ext	Small/Nuc	Large/Ext	Small/Nuc	Small/Nuc
Marriage	Away	Away	Away	Home	Home	Away
Residence	Husband	Husband	Husband	Son	Husband	Own
Relations With Household	Good	Fair	Fair	Good	Good	Poor
Workforce/Hshold Producers/Hshold	Two One	Three Two	One One	Four One	Two One	One One
% time producing	20%	30%	35%	15%	40%	75%
Trade travel	Occasionally	Occasionally	Yes	No	No	No
Other activity	Agriculture Childcare	Agriculture Childcare	Agriculture Childcare Marketing	Childcare	Farm work	None
Profit (baht)	2,500-3,000	10,000-11,000	6,000	4,000-5,000	10,000	Salary 10,500
Income use	Household	Household	Household	Self & Household	Household	Self
Other income	Agricultural	Agricultural	Agricultural	None	Farm work	None
Other major income source	Agricultural	Agricultural	Agricultural Loan	Sons/Salaried Agriculture	Agriculture Sons	None
% income from Textiles (1)	10%	60%	40%	under 5%	10%	100%

Figure 5

Peddlers

	Maiv X Yaaj	Yeeb X Yaaj	Txab X Yaaj	Lug X Xyooj	Maiv X Tam	Daum X Yaaj	Toaj X Yaaj	Rha X Yaaj
Status	Minor wife	Daughter-I-L	Widow	Separated	Widowed	Married	Separated	Widowed
Age	25	28	60+	50+	31	28	29	44
Lineage size	Large	Large	Small	N/A	Small	Small	N/A	Large
Family size	Large	Large	Small	Small	Small	Small	Large	Large
Marriage	Away	Away	Away	Away	Away	Away	Away	Away
Residence	Parents-I-L	Parents-i-L	Married Daughter	Married Daughter	Parents-i-L	Husband	Parents	Own & MW
Relations With Household	Poor	Fair	Poor	Poor	Poor	Fair	Poor	Poor
Doi Pui Stall % time peddling	Yes >50%	Yes <25%	No >75%	No >75%	No >75%	Yes >50%	No >75%	No <25%
Travel	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Other activity	Fieldwork Housework Childcare	Fieldwork Housework Childcare	Some childcare Some fieldwork		Childcare Some Fieldwork	Childcare Fieldwork	Childcare Fieldwork	Fieldwork Childcare
Profit	<25,000	15-20,000	10-15,000	10-15,000	Unknown/addict	25,000	12-15,000	10,000
Income Use:	Self Children Savings	Self To Household	Self	Self	Self Children	Household	Self Child Parents	Self Children
Expenditures	Food Clothes	Personal items	Opium Food	Living Grandchildren	Heroin/Opium Food	Food Agriculture	Food Living Agriculture	Food Living Agriculture
Other income	Shop Agriculture	Shop Agriculture	None/Opium	None	Drug dealing	Agriculture	None	None
Other major income source	Husband Parents-I-L	Husband Parents-i-L	None	None	None	Husband	None	None

Figure 6

Retailing Households

Outlet	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
Shop Size	Large	Large	Large	Large	Medium	Medium	Medium	Small	Small
Manager	Male	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Female	Female
Contributions to Household Economy	>75%	50%	<25%	<25%	>75%	50%	<25%	50%	25%
Night Bazaar	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
<u>Household Status</u>									
Type	Nuclear	Extended	Extended	Extended Son of house F	Nuclear Seperated Women	Extended	Extended First wife	Extended	Extended
Families	1	3	2	3	1	3	2	2	2
Lineage size	Small	Large	Large	Large	Large	Large	Large	Large	Medium
Employ Labour	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Economic status	In debt	Wealthy	Wealthy	Medium	Poor/Med	Medium	Wealthy	Medium	Medium
Grow rice	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes
<u>Income/Expenditure</u>									
Shop Profit	>50,000	120,000	>36,000	50-60,000	24,000	24,000	18,000	30,000	15,000
Other Income	85,000	>200,000	300,000	Nil	Nil	Yes	>100,000	50,000	>50,000
Sources	Animals/Fruit Loan	Fruit Antiques	Fruit Opium	Teaching	Fruit	Sons Salary	Fruit Unknown	Fruit Unknown	Fruit Unknown
Potential Income	Fruit	Fruit	Fruit/Opium	Teaching	Fruit	Fruit	Various	Fruit	Fruit
Savings	None	Substantial	Substantial	None	Small	Substantial	Depleted	Small	Unknown
Major Expenditures	Car Children	Urban land Urban House	Urban land Urban House	Household F	Children House	Car House	Urban Land Urban House	Car Children	House Children
Other Expenditures	Healthcare Food	Car Children Food	Children Food		Food	Children Food	Car Children	Food	

CHAPTER EIGHTTHE CHANGING USE OF THE MONG TEXTILE

In my argument so far I have suggested that the relationship of Mong women in regard to the male lineage changes throughout their lives and results in their being both insiders and outsiders at different times in their social lives. This reality as experienced by Mong women is reflected in their textile products which serve to identify, legitimise and reproduce these relationships over time. In the light of this argument the changes taking place in textile production and use can be seen as highly significant because changes in textile use, which in some cases mean discontinuation of any home use or sometimes any textile production at all, strike at a major aspect of Mong identity. At the same time we can see from the commercial exploitation of the textile that the changes in use are a vital income for some women, particularly those in marginal social positions. Whilst some women under social pressure will discontinue production, others consolidate their positions as marginal women, using the income to support a lifestyle outside of conventional Mong social relationships. Thus the uses of the textile in new contexts affirm some Mong social practices but also contribute to a redefinition of social relationships.

Changed textile use refers to the textile in changed contexts, however, the new contexts of use often appear to be in conflict with the uses already described. In this way the changes and the commercialisation of the textile can be viewed as part of the process of ethnic fragmentation. Change is not confined to textiles consigned to the market but is also occurring in the use of textiles within the autonomy of Mong political and social life. These changed understandings emphasise the fact that changes in textiles and Mong social relationships are inextricably linked. This reminds us that culture should not be treated as a set of objects but as an "evaluation of the relationship through which objects are constituted as social forms....culture...is always a process and is never reducible to either its object or its subject form. For this reason evaluation should always be of a dynamic relationship, never of mere things" (Miller 1987:11). The changes I am referring to are taking place in social relationships, in cultural practices, in living style and in many other aspects of contemporary Mong life. The Mong textile can act as a medium through which change is being experienced in Mong daily life. However, whilst it can transmit new experience and explain new situations it can also, in ambiguous form, disguise changed understandings. This is because sign systems have a number of possible readings, not all of which are available to all readers. Different readings, as I will show, lead to conflict in social relationships.

I have already described the value of the textile to Mong women and men and how those values are defined in relation to their lineage and the reproduction of social relationships. Values, however, are never so clearly defined and unchanging as to be constantly reproduced and the Mong illustrate this in the new uses to which they put the Mong textile. I will illustrate these changes in understanding in several ways: first I will describe some of the conflicts which have arisen as a result of different uses and perceptions of value; second I will explore some of the new productive relations which have emerged; third I will look at those new social relations which appear to be more enduring, (This includes ^t the ^{#skel} relations of marginalised women and urban Mong) and fourth I will examine changes in cultural practices, changes which are affecting large numbers of Mong in Thailand.

Conflict and the commercial textile

In viewing the various uses of the commercial textile it becomes immediately clear that its production and use occurs in situations of conflict. Conflict among the Mong involved in commercial trading has occurred along two main axes: between the old and the young and between men and women. These conflicts are caused by a reinterpretation of culture resulting in conflicting interests in traditions. As described earlier the commercial textile is used in the making of clothing which can be worn by the

It can also be consumer: ~~alternatively it is preserved in the Mong style~~

^{This includes}
or it can be made into new objects, ~~often pieces of~~
~~decorative or functional pieces of material~~
~~material with various functions ranging from the~~
~~displayed as wall hangings or made into~~
~~decorative to the functional as for example wall hangings~~

?
is it a
sentence

~~or~~ cushion covers and baby carriers. Contradictions in the uses of the Mong textile can be seen in its daily treatment in both Pa Glang and Doi Pui. One of the cheaper and more popular items for sale is the Mong T-shirt where a square of batiked and appliqued Mong skirt is attached to the front of a plain T-shirt. Usually old and ragged Mong skirts are cut up and with the 7 metres of cloth scores of T-shirts can be made. Generally bought by western tourists, one young Mong boy decided to sport his own as he went about selling from his shop in Doi Pui. His mother-in-law, on seeing him dressed in this way, became very angry and upset. She upbraided him for his behaviour and went on to bemoan the young of today who, she said, "have no values". This difference in the way the textile is used is not restricted to the young. Many of the households in Pa Glang have links with traders who deal in all types of Mong textile. In one household an elderly Mong man agreed to collect second hand skirts for a close family member who wished to trade them. He thus let it be known to women in the village that he would buy skirts and after collection he sorted, washed and dried them. However, this behaviour upset many villagers who let it be known that he had brought great shame on himself by being associated with women's skirts, by trading in women's skirts and by, himself, touching and washing

women's skirts.

A stronger reaction was received by a group of Mong women traders who entered a fairly remote village to buy skirts. The women traders usually travelled in groups for their own protection and within villages stayed either with known kin or with the village head. In this particular, quite remote village the men, on hearing that the traders had arrived, were angry and forbade their wives to sell their skirts telling them that they would earn just a little money for the skirt and in return were selling "all your work and the pride of the Mong". When some women villagers did approach the women traders and sold skirts for ready cash their husbands hounded the women out of the village. Later, back in Pa Glang, one woman trader received a message from the village that if they should ever return to buy skirts they would be killed. Although the village may not go so far as to take this action the women traders took the threat seriously, not least because they had on other occasions met with abuse and violence in the course of their buying activities.

These reactions to the changing uses of the skirt are based on the perception that the skirt is being misused. The associations and meanings of the skirt in the village context forbid its handling by men; hence the man who washed skirts was doing so in the wrong context. Men should also not walk beneath skirts and the boy who wore a

piece of skirt almost on his shoulder was an embarrassment to the older women. This Mong textile is unique to each family and its value to the Mong, to the household and indeed to each person cannot be absolutely defined although the associations and links with the lineage ancestors, the reproduction of the lineage, the women as potential outsiders and the perpetuation of Mong social life has been demonstrated. The restrictions on handling women's skirts and the negative reaction against their sale are not necessarily prompted by the same absolute values, but the perception that radical change is taking place in all areas is more easily identified and the reaction against change involving a reversal to known usage is the result.

Nevertheless many Mong are prepared to ignore opposition and it is these Mong who are taking a new pragmatic interest in the value of their material culture as a result of their changed circumstances. These misunderstandings of use value arise from the situations of cultural conflict and in many cases the proponents of change have themselves not fully assimilated the new contexts which are necessary to produce the new products. In analysing these conflicts I will first discuss changes in productive relationships.

Change in productive relationships.

Some of the greatest changes in Mong productive relationships can be seen in the artificial context of the refugee camps. Here, where women are separated from their extended families and are sometimes completely alone they group together, ignoring clan affiliations and work at making textiles in the widows' shop. Other women organise networks, again crossing kin relationships, to distribute orders and buy finished products for dealers. Many women continue to work along kin lines, running stalls in the camp where traders come to buy and sometimes their husbands also sew and make crafts, a role for men rarely found outside the camp.¹ Clearly the social and productive relationships in the camp are complex but what is of importance in this account is the influence the camp women and the camp itself have had on the Mong women from villages in Thailand who trade with them. Stimulated by the changed life camp women live, keenly aware of all the gossip and informed daily of new ways of living, particularly from relatives who are overseas, the Pa Glang women easily took to their travelling lifestyles. However their families, and the Mong in many of the villages they visited held very different views.

¹Two men in Pa Glang and one in Doi Pui did make textiles. They never wove, but two made commercial pieces and one older man made clothes for his wife.

As already described women have the capacity to act as both insiders and outsiders in relation to the lineage and it is this that gives them potential power. In their trading activities the women of Pa Glang met with hostility not only from men in the villages they visited but also from their own husbands and male relatives. The women buying and selling old skirts are not only acting physically outside their household in an independent manner but are also challenging the lineage itself by dealing in the textile which has been shown to play an important role in legitimising and reproducing social and spiritual relationships. In villages which are already under considerable external pressures such challenges to internal autonomy are met with hostility.

Although the trade involves the buying and selling of skirts as a new activity it is still predominantly handled by women, particularly at the village level. Some men are involved in retailing skirts but it is women who do most of the work with skirts. It is only in an urban context that men feel able to deal with skirts and as already described, in the village context men are reluctant to handle women's skirts and if they do are looked upon with disdain. The village trade in skirts was open to any woman prepared to make the journey and capable of buying and selling with a small amount of capital investment. The trade certainly raised substantial income but despite this it was always viewed with concern by Mong men. This concern was voiced in material terms; men would suggest to

their wives that the Mong man was the income earner, not the woman. They would complain about their wives' frequent absence and finally, deeply concerned about their wives' image, they began remonstrating with them.

In the beginning women traded with the camp and spent 4-5 days away. As they went further afield and the returns became smaller they would spend more than 14 days away from home on each trip. Growing in confidence the women became more skilled and as time passed rumours began to spread from other villages about the "loose" women of Pa Glang. This unfounded gossip was based on the perception of these Mong women as unusually independent. The name given to an often used batik pattern was also used in relation to trading women. The batik pattern was called *nkeeg faa*, meaning lazy woman or lazy adulteress because it was seen to be an easy design which took little time to complete. Because of this it was often used on commercial batik for sale outside the village but was not popular for home use. The husbands of trading women were beginning to experience some of the frustrations of home and childcare. They complained of boredom and overwork and eventually began to question whether the income was worth losing their wives for such extended periods of time. The trading women, however, had begun to enjoy their new experiences; many talked of the "fun" of trading with other women, of seeing new places and of feeling independent. Some men forbade their wives to trade any

more but to be effective they were often compelled into physical and verbal cruelty and sometimes more desperate action to actually stop them.

During the course of just two weeks the following events took place in Pa Glang. When *Laug* returned from a trading trip she was badly beaten by her husband. He justified this by saying he had forbidden her to go but when he was out in the fields she had left on another journey. *Nza* had returned home from trading in a very remote village with a fever. She was seriously worried about her health and family life. At the time there were widespread outbreaks of Japanese encephalitis, dengue fever and malaria. Her husband had asked her not to go trading and was very angry with her. He refused to take her to hospital and said since she had gone trading against his wishes she would have to look after herself. A more serious family dispute occurred in a *Xeem Yaaj* household. *Tzab* had quarrelled with her husband over her trading activities but nevertheless departed on another trip. After she had gone her husband took an overdose of opium and was hospitalised. He told his relations to tell his wife that she "loved money more than she loved him". The very next day his daughter *Ntsum Tsaab* returned from her trading to a severe beating from her husband and then rushed to the hospital to see her father. *Ntsum Tsaab's* husband had recently acknowledged responsibility for another girl's pregnancy and was currently negotiating with her family. Thus *Ntsum Tsaab's* mother-in-law used

the possibility of a minor wife as a threat to her daughter-in-law to persuade her that she should discontinue her trading activities and pay more attention to her husband.

Despite the friction, threats and beatings, and the fall in returns (caused both by a reduction in trading opportunities and the rise in the number of traders) some women continue to trade. The majority, however, have submitted to family pressure and discontinued their activities. Thus the remaining women in Pa Glang who do trade are those who are very poor and are desperate for an income or women who operate on a large scale, collecting together a range of commercial products on a commission basis and not themselves making arduous journeys to remote villages. It has been noted that in societies which are changing rapidly and where there are ambiguous feelings about the loss of traditional values women become the repositories of traditional values: "Resistance to women's greater participation in economic and political life may be felt especially strongly among groups most exposed to rapid change and ambivalent about it" (Papanek 1977:15). It could thus be argued that, anxious to hang on to the basis for their power the men were compelled to stop their wives acting as the outsiders who have always been a threat to the stability of Mong social order. As outsiders women were not only upsetting the status quo of family life but by dealing in the Mong textile they were also selling the culture which reinforces and legitimises

Mong social order. The increased female absence, the rumours of loose women and the fall in income combined with the difficult daily realities of Mong life in Thailand could be seen to cause a reversion to a former order in a situation of stress whereby traditional themes were called upon to restore traditional relations of production.

However, whether this action should be labelled "traditionalist" is debatable. The action is also pragmatic and in this way all Mong can be called opportunists whether their action is seen as a reversal to a traditional order or as the taking on of new ideas and direction. Change is often wrongly given direction (sometimes with positive and negative connotations), as *reverting* to tradition or *progressing* to modernity, when in fact the adoption of new ideas or a change in direction is based on pragmatic decisions which appear the best option at the time. What does appear to be clear is that the commercial retailing of traditional textiles cannot take place under conditions of traditional social relationships. The conflict generated causes an end to trading activity or to the breaking away of women from traditional relations of production.

Production under new social relations

In order for women to *independently* make, buy and retail commercial products certain changed conditions must have taken place which mean that the women are operating under new social relations. In Pa Glang many of the women who grouped together to work and who continued trading were Christian. They, like other poor and marginalised women, were likely to turn to trade to survive. (In fact the man described above who washed skirts was a Christian and believed that this changed his traditional obligations. However, once confronted by the objections of his neighbours his sense of being Mong overrode his beliefs and he refused to deal in skirts again). However, not all traders were Christian and not all Christians were involved in trade, conversion being dependent on many factors². There was, however, a high number of Christians among producing and peddling women in part because many of these women, who retailed independently, were marginalised by traditional social relations. They

²Christian beliefs are frequently adopted in times of economic stress and as Tapp (1989) has noted among the Hmong conversion is associated with the appearance of messianic ideals. In Pa Glang some Mong became Christian to avoid kinship or expensive ritual obligations. This was especially the case among widowed or separated women where it offered the means to throw off traditional clan and lineage obligations. Some women who had been married several times, but whose families were poor, were relieved that as Christians they would go to a Christian heaven and would not have to confront old husbands in the "next world". One woman who had had two opium addicted husbands claimed this was the reason why she had decided to become a Christian.

are the widows, the returned daughters and the separated women and they found through the Christian community a support system that was denied them at that moment in their lives by their own Mong society. It is clear that in many of these cases the women have, through commercial activities, been able to solidify their marginal position rather than be forced to return to unhappy family situations.

It could be argued that because they are able to support themselves their families have been able to abdicate their responsibility for them. However, for many of these women it seems likely that their alternative would have been suicide, destitution, unwanted re-marriage or tolerance of humiliating or very difficult family positions. Many would probably be in similar situations (i.e. living awkwardly with relatives) but be financially dependent on them as well. The financial independence, although bringing with it many worries, is also a source of security for the women. Whether this security is well founded is highly debatable since the commercial craft industry is so unstable. The rapid rise in demand for commercial crafts in the early 1980's and the decline which has been a feature of the later 1980's reflects the instability of a business which depends on consumer

fashions and a continuous tourist trade³. In addition the supplies of hemp and old textiles are limited, new entrepreneurs are always entering the market making for heightened competition and traders have to continuously search for new sources of material or new products. For those with retailing outlets the effect of market change is reflected in a decline in profits since the early 1980's. For producers and peddlers the effect causes them to either change the nature of their production or abandon it altogether.

Nevertheless, those women who continue in their trading activities do so because they profit from it. *Ntsuab* who had built her own shop and managed her family in a separate economic unit believed that despite the stresses she was better off being independent of her husband. Without the shop she would be compelled to share the same home as him with his new minor wife which she considered far too humiliating. *Rha* and her minor wife were supporting themselves by peddling after the death of their husband where ordinarily they might be compelled into re-marriage or to living as wives of their husband's brother. *Maiv* by running her own stall managed to retain money for her children rather than ^a watch her husband gamble it away. She was also increasingly choosing to

³For example during the 1991 Gulf war tourism in Thailand suffered since tourists from the western nations declined to travel at this time. There was a large fall in the numbers of tourists visiting Thailand and this was felt by all traders.

sleep outside the house and in her shop. Her mother without the option of peddling would probably still have left her third opium addicted husband but may have been even more destitute.

By turning to trade the women are avoiding specific social relations but still exist within their lineages albeit in fairly ambiguous circumstances. At the same time they are creating new understandings of social relationships. They avoid the experience of polygyny even if that is their described relationship to their claimed lineage. They avoid the experience of the levirate, of patrilocal residence and the reality of re-marriage. In doing so they raise new questions among all Mong. Should these women, existing physically outside their lineages, be expected to return brideprice? Should some of their labour power be remitted in kind or as labour to their lineages? At the moment such questions involve just a few families but they exist as part of a wider re-evaluation of Mong traditions. The peddling and trading option does not offer women a real alternative to traditional social relations of production. In many cases it merely postpones or slows down an increasing poverty. Often the avoidance was not permanent and in time the women would accept new social relationships. *Txab*, for example, who ended her days in paid labour making textiles in the craft museum, had supported herself for the last five years from textile production. Had she had no income her relatives would have been forced to give her shelter. However, the

fact that even after her death in 1990 her various relations argued over whose lineage she belonged to and refused to agree over who should collect her body and give her a funeral suggests her life with them would have been very miserable and economically less secure than she could guarantee by her own employment.

From the evidence it appears that the trade in textiles, even when returns are quite substantial does not always promote a change in social relations. In fact it seems the opposite is true, that if social relations are too strongly challenged then trade is discontinued. This indicates that the patriarchal lineage remains a strong focus for social relationships, a focus which is only challenged by those too poor or too marginal to benefit from the existing social order. Thus those receiving reasonable incomes, especially those with shops, tend to operate under existing social relations of production. The women operating in changed conditions of social relations do so when they are in the position of outsider in relation to Mong society, as widows, divorcees or separated women. The trade has replaced alternative economic relationships, but the women appear to choose the most favourable option often from a choice of poor options which in itself is a reflection of the increasing impoverishment of the Mong in Thailand. The trade appears to have coincided with a rise in the physical need of women (arguably the emotional need has long been part of Mong women's experience), a rising physical need which is

part of all highlander experience. I will argue that the commercialisation of the Mong textile and image is not a coincidence but part of the process of impoverishment and fragmentation of the Mong as an ethnic group within Thailand. The commercial textile does not have a major role in promoting change in the village context but in a broader context it plays a significant role in promoting change and assimilation, as I shall discuss below. Its importance in the village lies in reflecting change and acting as a medium through which change can be experienced. Thus the commercial textile acting as a medium of change can be seen to inform the Mong of new social and economic relationships.

Urban Production

An increasing proportion of the commercial products are being produced or at least finished in an urban rather than village context. This work is being done by Mong or Thais resident or semi-resident in urban areas, especially in Chiang Mai. Migration of minorities to marginal areas of Chiang Mai city is a growing phenomenon and the value of textile production to urban Mong has a new emphasis, a new value which is based on links with the old life rather than representing the social and productive relationships of village life.

The permanent residents have bought or rent property in two main areas. The buyers have invested in relatively cheap land near Chiang Mai airport; the people who rent live in a community in the south east of the city. The first Mong rented in that area in 1981 and now six extended families with over 45 people live there permanently, with other families coming and going. All of them make a living from trading in Mong material culture. The women sew bags and clothes during the day and sell them in the market at night; their husbands also sell and travel to the weekend market in Bangkok or to regional fairs. All of them retain links with their villages but mostly find the life in town more "convenient". The families are from Doi Pui and other villages close to Chiang Mai, including Nam Sum and Maa Saa Mai; a few are from further afield from other provinces, such as Kham Phang Phet. Their families reflect the increasing differences in occupation and knowledge. One middle-aged woman is the sister of the headman in Doi Pui; her mother continues to work in the fields, while her mother-in-law trades, leaving her village to go to regional fairs; two of her sons work in the fields and one studies in Chiang Mai. Her Mong neighbours are Seventh Day Adventists, her previous neighbours were Moslems, she herself is a Catholic, though her husband remains a Mong traditionalist. She has some land and has planted fruit cash crops, mangos and lychees but would describe her main occupation as trade in textile products.

Those who have bought land and built permanent houses live in an area which is only recently developed. New Thai residents also live in the area and call the Mong community *Baan Meo*, the Meo (Mong) village. In 1987 six families had well established houses and several more Mong families had secured land. Three families came from Doi Pui, one from Thung Sai in Chiang Rai and one from Nam Sum, the sixth family was a Mong whose parents had lived in Chiang Mai but originally came from Pa Glang. Land in this area costs 80,000 baht a rai, and most households buy two thirds of a rai. The families earned their income from different sources, some from past opium trading, others from new business. Compared to their relatives in Mong villages they are all comparatively wealthy owning solid houses, land and material possessions including such items as vans, fridges, televisions and videos. All the women trade in the Night Bazaar and three families had, in the past, made large amounts of money from this, although now business was fading. One well educated woman had applied to a large company for a job as a saleswoman selling electrical items to the *Chao Khao*, a job she had done before, selling televisions.

Like the Mong in rented accommodation these Mong still had fields, but increasingly they were turning to cash crops and employing labour. All the families retained links with their villages. Some families did return to village life but the majority had no wish to go back and only one family also had a permanent home in their home village and

commuted between the two houses. As time passed these families were growing apart from village life; their children, one mother complained, spoke Mong with Thai accents, and at New Year they went "like tourists to a Mong village, just to say hello, but never to stay".

For all the women, making goods and retailing them in the Night Bazaar was stated to be their main occupation. For those in rented accommodation, it was also one of their main incomes. But beyond providing an income the commercial textile has another role; it has provided the women with a reason for work that is still linked with the Mong life. Frequently conversations with women involved in the textile trade revolved around the meaning of their work. For women brought up within a traditional style of village life, work involved field and farm labour; it meant feeding pigs and collecting fuel, weeding fields and bringing in the harvest. The rhythm of each day and each season was related in terms of the labour to be done; and as described earlier working well is of great importance in describing a woman's character and energy. For these women the life of a trader, particularly in an urban context, was difficult to come to terms with. Some Mong women were registering the belief that their work had lost some of its meaning and importance. However, I would suggest it is due less to a real loss of importance as to a need to justify the usefulness of their contemporary work. For these Mong women using terms and connotations in their contemporary work which relates to their past

work is inadequate. All this does is reduce their sense of usefulness because their new work cannot be understood in these contexts. This dilemma is articulated by them: "When I work in the fields I get tired, but if I trade I feel unhappy in my mind, always worrying about money" (Mong woman resident of Chiang Mai).

"People think because we are not working in the fields under the sun we are not working hard, but in fact we work hard all day. If you work in the fields you take long breaks and chat and it's fun together, but here we work without stopping and we cook and we look after the children too Sometimes I quarrel hard with my husband and he says I am lazy and not working, but it is not true. I work hard all day and then sell at night" (Second Mong woman resident of Chiang Mai).

Although for many of the urban families trade is one of their livelihoods, they also have separate incomes from fields and cash crops and some from employment. The separation of home and work means women are more actively involved in childcare and housework as a specific activity, but this work, previously carried out by all family members in the fields or by the elderly at home, now becomes their responsibility. But, importantly, the increased amount of labour this means for a woman is not recognised. The traditional work of crop production has to be replaced by a specific new production and thus the textile becomes their work, even if they are producing

little and employing others as many of them do, to make the majority of products. Much of the difficulty in articulating how they view their work lies in the fact that their new work is based on an earned income. These Mong women are not sure how to talk about money because they are used to talking about work in terms of labour not income. As I have shown in village life the association of women and earned income is viewed with some disdain. Thus the angry husband, described earlier, accuses his wife that she "loves money more than him"; the woman speaking above describes the unhappy tiredness in her mind associated with money, rather than the natural tiredness in her body associated with physical labour. In this confusion as to the meaning of their new work, textile production takes on a new value as it becomes the symbol of their work. In many ways it is acting as a medium of change for them; it provides the symbol of work (and the real work) which they need as they adapt to urban life.

Changes in cultural practices

The re-evaluation of Mong traditions has also been promoted by differences between generations. The understanding of Mong cultural practices by the young, whose experiences outside Mong society are broad, is illustrative of this.

Noob ncoos

The *noob ncoos* cloth, as described earlier, is the funeral cloth which is presented to parents by daughters after the birth of their first child. The discussion between a boy of 25 and an old woman of 76 about *noob ncoos* illustrated that not only had the boy never heard of this tradition but the old lady had been forced to re-adapt her knowledge to fit with contemporary understandings. The conversation revolved around two issues, one was the giving of coins with *noob ncoos*, a custom that the village had recently banned as being unnecessary and expensive and also around the problem of the *noob ncoos* cloth square which though usually made of plain cloth was sometimes presented with embroidery in the middle section. The embroidery issue had arisen with the production of commercial cushion covers which generally have embroidered centres. In size they are identical to *noob ncoos* and the young Mong women and the Thai wives of Mong men on occasion gave a commercial cushion cover rather than bothering to make a new piece. The older woman suggested that the centre embroidery caused problems because in the next world the cloth, representing a field, would be full of weeds (embroidery). She went on to say that without *noob ncoos* you would not necessarily be destitute because you would have money but you would have to work as a servant and use the money to buy food. Laughing at all this her grandson commented that without ICI they would not be able to kill the weeds so why bother to work in the fields at all -

just take the money, buy your food and live in a town. Thus the representation through *noob ncoos* of fields in the afterlife, fields as representing the wealth of Mong and large numbers of *noob ncoos* reflecting a productive life with a large family left behind is unknown to the boy and undergoing reinterpretation by the old woman, who now suggests that lack of fields can be compensated, to some extent, by money.

The issue of the giving of coins in both Doi Pui and Pa Glang had become the centre of fierce debate among women and the issue itself is an indicator of change and control of change. The giving of a silver coin (traditionally these coins were acquired from Laos and were of French origin) by parents to the daughter or daughter-in-law, was regarded by most women as an integral part of the *noob ncoos* ceremony. Often, if sons were given coins they would pass them on to their wives, sometimes to their children. The coins were kept as mementos by the women and passed on to their own children, they were made into lockets and collected on strings. They were rarely used as cash, except in very extreme circumstances. However, the question of discontinuing coin giving was raised and a variety of reasons mooted. Some argued that it made the ceremony too expensive; others that the value of the piece of *noob ncoos* cloth did not merit a coin and it was also said that the parents of the bride had already given enough to their daughter's new family and did not want to give more. As a result the issue was raised on Mong radio

and both Pa Glang and Doi Pui opted to discontinue the coin giving. All the women were very distressed at this. One woman said: "it has no meaning now; now you just take without paying, there is no value to it and it seems strange to give the cloth without receiving a coin. There are no mementos any more".

Feeling the need to reciprocate the women now make clothes instead of giving the coins and thereby reinforce the old values by new means. Often they make complete outfits for both a daughter and son-in-law which will be of a higher value than the face value of eight silver coins, and this does not include the labour a woman invests in making cloth. The coins, which came from both parents is now replaced by clothes largely from a mother's labour. Other families give cash instead of the coin: "It's true we cannot give coins now and in some ways this is good. If you are poor it means you don't have to give anything, but for me there is no meaning. If you give a coin you break the (Mong) law, but some people don't seem to care about this. I didn't give a coin but I gave each daughter 300 baht". This is, in fact, the value of five silver coins. Some continue with coin giving, but these wealthier families use this ceremony as a demonstration of their power within the village. One older man said of the radio discussion: "That man is not important, who does he think he is, he has no influence. They (those who set the

rules) cannot rule the rich, they can only rule the poor
 we marry our children with rich families and they
 continue to give the coin".

ve | The giving or not giving of a coin and the ceremony of
 noob ncoos ^{have} ~~has~~ thus taken on new meanings. For some it
 has come to mean a defiance of Mong law by those with
 power to defy; for others its original emphasis as being
 the sole means to a wealthy afterlife has been lost, and
 for the young the ceremony conveys little: a commercial
 cushion cover will suffice in a ceremony they do not in
 any case care to perform. The different uses of *noob*
ncoos thus communicate changed cultural realities. These
 changes among the young are, of course, not uniform and
 depend on their cultural experiences. Tremendous
 conflicts can occur between the youth of traditional and
 non-traditional villages and these differences are
 especially apparent at the New Year festivities.

New Year festivities

The Mong New Year is an event which accommodates every
 Mong, be ^{s/he} ~~they~~ child or adult, man or woman. Drinking,
 eating, family parties, entertainments and competitions
 run for one to four days depending on the size and wealth
 of the village. It is also the yearly opportunity for
 mothers to dress their daughters and sons in fine outfits

and for the young to court each other during formalised games involving the playing of catch ball and in less formal social gatherings.

The preparation of New Year clothes has been occupying women throughout the year as they grow, harvest and prepare hemp into the textile and embellish it with batik, applique and silver. The preparations gather speed as New Year approaches and competition to produce original garments increases speculation and excitement. New exposures and understandings lead to very different experimentation. Increasingly women embellish the costume with more and more garish and glittering threads and ornaments. However, one Pa Glang woman produced a skirt of Lao Mong design based on one she had purchased from the camp and raised considerable comment for its sparsity of design, consisting as it did of lines of wide spaced batik, quite unlike the Thai Mong designs. The most striking differences are between the Mong from remote villages and those from more cosmopolitan villages exposed to contemporary Thai lifestyles. The differences which can be observed in costume are also a part of their world understandings.

At the New Year celebrations in Pa Glang and in a second resettled village, Kheek Noy, the contradictions in lifestyle between generations and between parochial and more cosmopolitan Mong had some surreal and some tragic consequences. The behaviour and different understandings

illustrate that Mong themselves are responsible for the commercialisation of their own culture as they attempt to interpret it within their own world view. Because of the size of Pa Glang and the fact that some young people have had new opportunities and are considered a good marriage prospect, young girls from more remote areas, particularly the border areas with Laos, will visit over the New Year period.

Parochial girls wear a generally plainer skirt than the girls of Pa Glang. The apron will often be a plain black panel and the skirt artfully double-dyed in batik but with less applique and glittery thread. Their hair will be piled up in a forward tilting bun (with added hair collected after brushing to make it thicker and richer looking) and embellished with silver pins and cotton decorations or wrapped in a tall checked turban. Leggings are tied around the calves and the girls are often barefoot. Like the modern girls they wear silver neck rings, shoulder purses with hanging silver coins and silver sewn onto their jackets and belts. Overall their appearance is of sturdy and strong women quite unlike the slimmer image sought by the cosmopolitan girls.

The Pa Glang girls can be seen dressed in highly coloured skirts, decorated heavily with embroidery and applique. They might sew glass circles onto their aprons along with all types of applique, fluorescent embroidery cottons and glittery thread. Their hair will not be piled on their



Photograph 9: A girl from Laos arrives in Pa Glang for the New Year festival. Her hairstyle, leggings and intricately finished clothes will inform most Mong of her parochial origins.

head in the heavy traditional bun but tied in a pony tail and topped with a sun cap, the latest in head wear. They do not wear leggings or go barefoot but will wear plimsolls, white ankle socks and stockings. The difference is immediately obvious, the parochial girls with their strong, sturdy appearance look like marriageable women whilst the cosmopolitan ponytailed girls look like schoolchildren.

The extremes of Mong modernism produce costumes which are barely recognisable as Mong but are clearly imitative of the style. In Kheek Noy a young girl whose parents are from the village but who has herself always lived in Chiang Mai and is unable to speak Mong wore a quite unique outfit. In general at New Year White Hmong wear pure white skirts and embroidered jackets. For daily use they wear blue cotton trousers. This young girl wore trousers made of glittery black and silver material, stockings and high heeled silver shoes. She wore a traditional style jacket but tied her hair into a French plait. Only the jacket distinguished her from a glamorous urban Thai woman dressed for the evening. Like many young Mong, aware of her cultural heritage but unable to understand it she takes the trappings of her culture as an identity tag producing an image which is understood among her generation as representing her marginality.



Photograph 10: A cosmopolitan White Hmong girl has adapted White Hmong clothes in a sophisticated outfit; her shoes (covered in Green Mong batik), sequined trousers and jacket and french plait indicate her status as an urban girl.

1 cap.?
1 cap.?

The differences in costume act as a straight label to identify differences in cultural attitude. In reality the differences go deeper because the role of the costume within Mong society is implicitly understood in the context of the Mong village. In the cosmopolitan context the trappings alone remain. The young Mong are themselves reinterpreting their own culture. This is shown in their behavioural valuations. The courting at New Year is generally centred on the ball throwing game. Young people meet and flirt within an established framework. It is a time of high spirits, great excitement and considerable gossip. Most people know their place and what is expected of them. If a relationship develops over the New Year period and the girl becomes pregnant then marriage is an unquestionable obligation for the boy concerned. The young in Pa Glang feel more sophisticated than their traditional neighbours in relation to this custom. The boys have been educated within the Thai system, either in the village or for several, further afield. Sixteen Mong from Pa Glang have BA degrees and there are many teachers, civil servants and other professionals. Their roots are in the same Mong culture but contemporary Mong experience now shows considerable difference in attitude and knowledge. Thus every New Year they quickly pass over the Pa Glang girls, whose experience has made them equally aware of new cultural valuations, and instead they engage the attention of the parochial girls. After a couple of days they depart in groups to remoter villages where they

can flirt more easily but whereas the girls are playing by traditional rules none of the boys will take responsibility for any pregnancy. These young Mong men have ambitions to marry modern Mong or Thai women and pursue their careers.

To balance the apparent cultural misuse a few Pa Glang girls have discovered their own way of reversing the tables. After engaging a boy in a relationship the girl will point out her targeted man, claim pregnancy (which is not the case) and demand traditional payment. Knowing the new ambitions of modern boys, ambitions shared by fathers for their sons, the chances are the boy's family will pay up. After payment the girls report miscarriages. Three such cases were reported in Pa Glang; the older women and many of the girls too suggest they are behaving little short of prostitutes but the young girls have already experienced a very different sort of Mong youth.

In the festivities the modern boys may dress for part of the day in Mong dress but they will often revert to jeans and T-shirts in the evening reducing the costume to part of the event rather than a real part of their lives. Even when dressed as Mong they will retain signs of their difference, reflective sunglasses, the latest in trainers; or go to the other extreme and parody the costume itself. One sophisticated boy wore exaggerated Mong dress unlike any of the other young men, including a spectacular hat and he sported this along with a pink umbrella thereby

receiving considerable, albeit amused, attention. The use of parts of the system without the whole inevitably lead to an unbalanced community. Thus Mong resettled in America but unable legally to have a polygynous household return to Thailand and marry second wives from the camps or from villages. The girls dream of life in America but their husbands never collect them, they just visit each year. In America the Mong wives have already sued their husbands in court for having more than one wife. In Kheek Noy an American Mong with aspirations for a second wife arrived in a suit, changed daily into his Mong dress whilst he courted but constantly carried his video-camera with him. When he left he was back in his suit, his second wife secured.

The clash between the Mong of different generations and cultural understandings is reflected in all cultural traditions. The extravagant New Year celebrations in Kheek Noy were accompanied by a Mong rock band during the day and in the evening Thai women performing a middle eastern belly dance. In Pa Glang the Thai women dancers wore skin tight leotards and were equally provocative. Organised by the young of the villages it meets their expectations of a celebration but the older Mong women watch with interest, amusement, disapproval and confusion. It is impossible to convey their interpretation, their reading of the text. What is being observed is a juxtaposition of "meaningful wholes in works of cultural import - export" (Clifford 1988). This



Photograph 11: A sophisticated Green Mong boy in Pa Glang parodies his own culture with extravagant hat and an effeminate pink umbrella - on his shoulder he carries his five silver neck rings.

juxtaposition occurs to greater or lesser degrees with American Mong, young modern Mong and educated Mong taking part in traditional ceremonies. It is not just the anthropologist who is taking part in the surreal experience, the Mong themselves are involved in the interpretation of their own ethnography. Comprehension, as Clifford informs us, takes place over time: "The surrealist moment in ethnography is that moment in which the possibility of comparison exists in un-mediated tension with sheer incongruity. This moment is repeatedly produced and smoothed over in the process of ethnographic comprehension" (1988:146). Eco (1972) calls this "semiotic guerilla warfare" whereby individuals may not be aware of the war being played out but a surreal war is declared on the world of surfaces (Hebdidge 1988). The Mong of Kheek Noy and Pa Glang are becoming used to their extravagant New Year celebrations and although every year the debate continues about the style and type of performance the youth in the different villages of Pa Glang now compete to produce the most startling performance of all.

Thus the Mong rock band playing popular Mong songs recorded by Mong refugees in the U.S.A. at first introduce a totally new type of musical performance. Their stage set looks like any set of a performing rock band. But signs that these boys are Mong are retained in their Mong trousers which they wear with denim jackets, reflective

sunglasses and white trainers. For new understandings to develop, the object has to be portrayed within a different sign system. In this way as Clarke (1976) describes: "object and meaning constitute a sign, and, within any one culture such signs are assembled repeatedly, into characteristic forms of discourse. However when the (actor) relocates the significant object in a different position within that discourse, using the same overall repertoire of signs, or when that object is placed within a different total ensemble, a new discourse is constituted, a different message conveyed" (Clarke 1976 quoted in Hebdidge 1988:104).

The changes I have described are the result of a combination of factors. Those marginal to the mainstream of Mong social life, which include the marginalised women and the young generation of Mong in daily contact with Thai society are contributing to the fragmentation of Mong society due to their economic circumstances and differences in their social experience and understanding. These changes are exhibited through their cultural behaviour which involves the use and perceived misuse of textiles. The dilemma facing all Mong is the fact that their culture, as it changes its frame of reference, no longer refers to common knowledge. The fragmentation of the Mong in Thailand as an ethnic group is producing marginal discourses within the broader consciousness of *Chao Khao* experience. Some of these discourses I have just described, and the resulting new fragmented

consciousness expresses itself in ways which contradict traditional forms and, although rooted in Mong experience, cannot be accommodated in traditional context. What I am now concerned with is how these new uses and values function in the process of assimilation. So far I have concentrated on the changed uses of the Mong textile as contributing to the fragmentation of Mong society. Fragmentation works from within Mong society but it is not the only process at work in relation to the textile. The uses to which the textile are put by those outside of Mong society are contributing to a pattern of assimilation. Fragmentation and the processes of assimilation together pose a major threat to the stability of Mong social life. In order to understand these dual processes the political situation of the Mong in Thailand must be explained.

CHAPTER NINEPOLITICAL CONTEXTS: MONG IMAGE IN THAILAND

Almost all scholars involved in any writing about Thailand and the *Chao Khao* are drawn at some stage to a discussion of their marginality and increasing poverty. The political situation of the Mong in Thailand and their political marginality is a causal factor making for change,) and specifically change in their material culture. It is, therefore, important to describe their political context. It is my argument that what I have called the commercialisation of the textile and the uses to which the textile is put comprise part of a process of fragmentation, incorporation and assimilation. As I have suggested this works from both within Mong society and from forces outside, acting upon Mong society. In relation to the textile this latter force is to do with the creation of image, and it is this image which I will now describe.

The debate in Thailand among the *Chao Khao* themselves, among Thais, academics, government officials, development personnel, missionaries and all informed groups, raises many issues of concern. How do the *Chao Khao* survive in a declining physical, social and political environment? To what extent are they responsible for the degradation of hill areas? Are they really the subversive threat that

they have long been held to be? How responsible are they for the continued production of opium? Are the reported increases in their populations accurate? and so on.

These stereotypic themes continue to be debated despite considerable evidence that the *Chao Khao* are not a major threat and the idea lies mainly in the minds of those who see themselves as threatened. Whatever the reality of the accusations, the highlander experience places them in very specific contexts in relation to all outsiders. The avowed aim of the government is to "develop" the *Chao Khao*. I will illustrate the effect of this "development" as experienced by the Mong in Pa Glang and Doi Pui.

The Mong, along with other highlander groups, have long been portrayed by government officials through the mass media and in some academic writings¹ as subversive in that they are held to support communist insurgents; destructive in that they are held responsible for land degradation, both through their farming activities and by what is seen as excessive population growth, thus putting pressure on land availability; and as people who engage in illegal activities in that they grow opium as a commercial crop. However, these issues do not stand isolated from Thailand as a whole and with continuous rural discontent in many

¹For example Bhruksasri (1989) describes government policy towards the *Chao Khao* in relation to these themes. Because the identification of these aspects of highlander life have become stereotypic even texts which refute the stereotype have to acknowledge its existence and thereby can also serve to re-emphasise the association (for example, Tapp 1989).

parts of Thailand² and increasing wealth disparities³ the presence of the *Chao Khao* has served to act as a form of pressure release. The discontent of the Thai peasantry is a far more serious threat than the small northern minority population. However, by continuously exposing and repeating the problems associated with the *Chao Khao* these people become the focus of attention, and by drawing on nationalistic sentiment the idea that removing the highlanders will solve Thailand's problems is accommodated. Thus in analysing the political situation of the Mong two questions arise; firstly are the problems associated with the *Chao Khao* really problems at all and secondly, if the problems do exist to what extent are the *Chao Khao* involved. In the past the *Chao Khao* have been involved in the above mentioned activities which are seen to pose a threat to the national security and environmental stability of Thailand. However, the degree to which they are involved and the scale of the problems

²Landless and in debt the poor of the North East suffer many of the same realities of the *Chao Khao* and their discontent often overflows into anti-government action and protest. Faced with peasant movements such as the PFT (Peasants Federation of Thailand) the government attempts to dismiss such organisations as subversive and with communist roots. Since the formation of the PFT in 1974 many of its leaders have been assassinated. It was formed to protect peasant interests, investigate all forms of peasant hardships and inform them about their rights under new legislation (Turton 1987).

³Poverty figures show nearly a third of the population living at subsistence level. Over the two decades to 1986 the top 20% of income earners increased their share of national income from 5% to 55%. The bottom 20% saw their share fall from 6.2% to 4.6% (FEER 18.7.91). The greatest number of poor are Thai and live in the North East which is home to 40% of the population.

caused are the subject of much debate.

Land degradation

Although the *Chao Khao* undoubtedly contribute to deforestation it is important to place the scale in perspective and to assess the role they play. As swidden cultivators they are held to be constantly moving to open up new areas of land and by doing so causing large scale deforestation. However, the *Chao Khao* are not the only players in this activity. It is widely known that commercial logging and road construction have played significant roles in deforestation, although accurate figures are understandably difficult to find. McKinnon (1989) suggests that government policy in establishing national parks and promoting commercial farming has aggravated the land squeeze already under pressure from population growth. The issue of national parks which fall under the control of the forestry bureau is contentious, and it is well argued by Ardith Eudley (1989) and other zoologists and anthropologists⁴ that minorities living within forests prevent encroachment by commercial loggers and poachers in protecting the land around their villages. In fact Kesmanee argues that: "because of the Hill Tribes the northern region has more forests left than

⁴Zoologists (Belinda Stuart Cox - personal communication) working in national parks found the presence of minority villages a help in preventing encroachment on the land. Some favoured their use as paid wardens with an interest in preserving their village environment.

other regions" (1987:28). Indeed the whole concept of community forestry which is now much favoured among development specialists attempts to tackle the problem by not ignoring the fact that people and forests have to co-exist. The promotion of community forestry is based on communities living within the forests not, as is Thai government policy, expelling communities from the forests.

Just who has cut the forest is explored by McKinnon (1989) who observes that the felling of the Northern forest was much later than in other areas of Thailand and coincided with the gradual settlement of up to four million Thai farmers. Even as late as 1982 the area of forest felled in the North East annually exceeded that of the North, this despite the fact that the best arable land in the North East had already been cleared. McKinnon (1989) also raises the interesting and contentious debate surrounding the actual effect deforestation has on land degradation and flooding, providing some evidence that the link between deforestation and flooding is exaggerated. This approach does not gain favour with government officials anxious to prove a link between highlanders and their "illegal" activities in the North and flooding elsewhere in the country. During my fieldwork a continuous stream of articles appeared in the papers making the link between the *Chao Khao* and deforestation. One such article is usefully reproduced in a book edited by McKinnon and

Vienne (1989)⁵. Suthee Argaslerksh, Permanent Secretary for the Prime Minister's office and in charge of a working group to stop the *Chao Khao* from destroying forests, spoke on deforestation: "Many hill tribe people are in the business of cutting trees in national forests and selling the wood...They are not innocent hilltribesmen who do the traditional slash and burn cultivation. They are more sophisticated and I would say more dangerous than you think,attempts to stop forest destruction by the hill tribe people have failed because there are too many hill tribe people... the estimate is between 700,000 and one million" (1989:363). Thus deforestation is broadly blamed on the *Chao Khao* with little evidence and incorrect population statistics. To emphasise the perceived danger the estimate of their population is doubled from the official estimate of around 530,299⁶. Another ill blamed on the *Chao Khao* is the effect of pesticides and chemicals on land quality and in polluting rivers. Sadly the very projects introduced to improve the livelihoods of minorities and Thais in the form of commercial farming are causing pollution. The blame is once again attributed to highlanders: as the same article continues, quoting a senior official: "They (the hill tribes) are also responsible for polluting water sources with residue from insecticides and other chemicals.." (1989:364).

⁵For an extremely biased view of the *Chao Khao* this account of the nation's ills as caused by the "hill tribes" is very revealing.

⁶Tribal Research Institute, Chiang Mai, 1988.

Whether the *Chao Khao* are responsible or not, the fact remains that they cannot be responsible for all the pollution and all the deforestation and the evidence suggests they are in fact responsible for a relatively small part of it. The other problems of Thailand associated with the *Chao Khao* are to do with settlement and opium. These two issues and the problem of land degradation were keenly felt by the Mong of Pa Glang and Doi Pui.

Opium production

Opium is perhaps the most contentious of issues associated with the *Chao Khao*. The attempts to stop opium cultivation have met with apparent success. The production of opium from Thailand was officially estimated at 15 tons in 1986⁷, the first year of my field work. This is a considerable reduction in the amount produced in the early 1980's which was estimated at around 200 tons a year. One foreign expert of considerable experience is quoted in McKinnon (1989) as saying that in the early 1990's production could drop to five or six tons a year. He also points out that with 40,000 addicts each consuming about 1 kg. of opium a year, Thailand is in fact a net importer of opium. It is clear that large amounts of

⁷Government estimate reported in the press after slashing crops in 1987.

opium, estimated at around 2,000 tons⁸ (FEER 12.90), are transported annually through Thailand and on to other destinations from Laos, Burma and China.

The reduction of production in Thailand is only achieved through massive yearly slashing programmes which increase in scope each year as new, more remote areas are made more accessible by roads. The apparent reduction is also achieved by education programmes but most Mong stop production through force or out of fear. The cost of the eradication programme is one of alienation of the *Chao Khao* and the reinforced perception they hold of themselves as marginalised, oppressed peoples. The Mong have grown opium in Thailand from their early appearance in the country at around the mid to late 19th century. Opium is an excellent cash crop with a ready and unfailing market. It travels well and does not need to be transported to the market as traders come to the crop⁹. As an agricultural crop it positively complements other crops, such as maize grown in rotation. Opium was vital to the Mong economy as a currency and in the maintenance of traditions: in the

⁸The estimates of opium production vary. Recent unconfirmed reports suggest that there is now production in China. Routes also exist to export opium and heroin through China's southern provinces and many arrests of traffickers have been made.

⁹Villagers in Khaang Hor related accounts of the traders who used to visit when the village was still in the mountains. Competing to get to the village before other traders, whoever arrived first also carried a mule train of goods to exchange for opium as well as silver with which to buy it.

past the large amounts of silver¹⁰ paid to the parents of a bride has been purchased with opium. It is used widely in health care, being an effective pain killer; it also relieves dysentery and is used for stomach disorders. It has, therefore, come to play a role in Mong society that no other single crop can replace.

It has been suggested that opium is grown in response to a situation of resource scarcity (Cooper 1984; De Beauclair 1960; Westermeyer 1982). Westermeyer, working in Laos, reports that if other, more viable alternatives arise, then opium cultivation is discontinued. Obviously this depends on whether viability is related to relative profit. Clearly opium is a very profitable and labour efficient crop. As was described earlier several households in Doi Pui continue to produce despite apparently viable alternatives. Others, however, continue to produce because increasingly there is no alternative. Considering the relative amount of income that is derived from opium (which in the early 1980's comprised 50-75% of household income) the increasing poverty experienced by Mong forced to give up production as victims of eradication programmes, has considerably accelerated in the past five years.

¹⁰Up to 10 silver bars each worth 15,000 baht (1986 prices) can be paid.

Opium production in Doi Pui

Villagers in Doi Pui were gradually ceasing production. However some families were known for their active involvement and continued production. All the villagers were increasingly aware of the vast problems of worldwide addiction and of the fact that their links with opium were part of the avowed reasons for their poor treatment in Thailand. Many had themselves assimilated the perspective offered them by the government. Abandoning production was based partly on a moral decision and partly on having secured a viable alternative. It was also based on fear. Although they knew they could not be prosecuted for growing opium they could be arrested for possession of the opium paste. Some were prepared to take the risk viewing two years in prison (the standard term for possession of 1 kilo) as not too high a price to pay in their own judgement of their contemporary circumstances. Several of the poorer villagers, many of them addicts, had served this term. Raids on the village took place at intermittent intervals. There are often visits by police who exhibit menacing behaviour as they look around the village. Towards the end of December warnings are broadcast on the Mong radio service.¹¹ In January the slashing programme is in full swing. The more wealthy Mong families have very often inherited their wealth from

¹¹Radio services in Mong language are broadcast within Thailand and can also be received from Vietnam, Laos and China.

a past of opium trade and managed to convert their wealth into a viable alternative. These families no longer produce. Among those that still grow opium in Doi Pui the largest producer described what happened during the eradication:

"The army told us they would come on the 15th and cut the opium but they didn't, they flew over in aeroplanes and must have taken pictures, then two days later they came and destroyed it all. My husband cried a lot then; he had spent so much time there; they cut the lemon grass too, it grows together; I hope they kill that Mong man who led them to it" (Doi Pui resident, January 1987).

Villagers commented on the increasing ferocity of the programme and claimed that, despite the government's well publicised resistance to the use of chemical spraying (against U.S. insistence) their crops had in previous years been destroyed by a "white shower" released from an aeroplane. At first they thought it was salt which they use themselves to kill weeds but they said "the opium died three days later and salt doesn't kill opium."

From both Pa Glang and Doi Pui the Mong described spraying as a method of destruction¹². However, the Thai government opposes the spraying of crops as advocated by the U.S. and prefers to enter opium production areas.

¹²The Mong are very concerned with this issue not least because of the controversy surrounding a policy of spraying crops and using chemical weapons in Laos. For more details see Grant Evans, *The Yellow Rainmakers*, 1983, Verso Editions, London.

With the physical penetration of remote regions eradication has proved more successful.¹³ The campaign serves a dual purpose: it successfully eradicates opium but it also serves to enter all minority areas with a message of strength.

The 1987 post harvest raid on Doi Pui village was judged to be the biggest yet with over 20 arrested. When the police arrived women, acting at the same time with bravado and fear, dashed to their homes to check them before the police went in. Since many households possess small amounts of opium for their own use they are very apprehensive that this may be misinterpreted by overzealous police. On this particular raid the police removed the leaves of the hemp plant which women had stripped from the stems. Although bearing a resemblance to marijuana, hemp is of a different family and the Mong, although smoking the leaves, consider it to be less strong than tobacco and a poor man's smoke. In fact the removal of the hemp leaves caused the only light hearted moment of the afternoon with women laughing at the sight of armed police picking their way down the muddy road carrying large sacks of leaves.

¹³In Burma the spraying of chemicals between 1984-7 seemed to have little effect since the regions were so remote and people simply relocated for the next year's production.

After the slashing programmes another informant who does not grow opium expressed his anger at what he sees as victimisation: "It will happen soon, the reds (communists) will come and join the *Chao Khao* because the government cut opium. This is the root of the problem, it is very serious. The Lahu and Lisu are very fierce and angry and they will kidnap Thais and tourists; the government should be very careful" (Doi Pui resident, January 1987).

Shortly after this conversation the police closed off large areas of the northern hills near Maa Hong Song, allegedly out of fear for the safety of (largely foreign) trekking parties¹⁴.

The eradication programme

Tapp (1989) documents the rise of rumours in 1981-2 surrounding the possible destruction of opium crops and ending in the professed self destruction of their own fields by a handful of minorities as a publicity show. The reason for not employing the army to slash the opium is interpreted by Tapp: "So that the government could save face after it had become very apparent that the original plan was unworkable owing to the probability of violent resistance by villages which thus retained a very real

¹⁴Trekking groups of foreigners led by a Thai, Burmese or individuals from other minority groups will walk in the hills and visit villages over periods of 5/6 days. The numbers are large and according to the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) in 1986 amounted to 200,000 trekkers. In 1987 there were 41 registered trekking companies in Chiang Mai and 200 official guides.

autonomy" (1989:55). According to Tapp at that time the secretary general of the national security council "attacked the slash and burn policy of opium eradication and suggested the establishment of co-operatives to loan money, provide rice and market cash crops on behalf of hill people to be deprived of their poppy crops in the future, which would have to be grown on land made available by the forestry department" (1989:54).

In the light of the present policy of the forestry department who support forced resettlement schemes and of the security council authorising wide scale slashing these sentiments were clearly not put into practice. Indeed Tapp notes the reluctance of the forestry department to participate in such a scheme. Tapp suggests the plan in 1981-2 was carefully orchestrated to produce tension but not revolt among the *Chao Khao*. It now seems possible that they were testing the reaction for the following year when the serious slashing policy began. Jorgan Gammelgard, senior advisor for the United Nations Fund for Drug Abuse Control (UNFDAC) in 1987, seems to bear this out: "In the 1970's our policy, very much part of the government's, was to persuade the Hill Tribes by 1983 we were ready to start eradicating" (Bangkok Post 1.2.87).

The eradication takes on the atmosphere of a huge hunt. The talk in the villages where people feel isolated and threatened is largely one of oppression and destruction:

"Armed with knives and machetes the 100 strong task force started on Doi Khun Tak...." (Bangkok Post 29.12.86).

"Acting on a tip-off Superintendent Col. Somsak Bupasuan led some 400 policemen with helicopter support to seven plantations covering 280 rai" (Bangkok Post 16.12.86).

The burning of the crop is an annual event and as part of the publicity campaign tons are set alight by public figures. "Deputy Prime Minister Sonthi Boonyachi" it was reported in December 1986 "set light to nine tons" (Bangkok Post 15.12.86). The actual slashing is carried out by the Rangers, Border Patrol Police and soldiers of the Third Army Region. Funds are contributed by Norway, West Germany and the narcotics assistance unit of the U.S. embassy in Bangkok. In 1985-6 11,000 rai were destroyed¹⁵. The aim in the 1986-7 season was to destroy 16,639 rai targeted in advance and continuing the step-up in eradication (The Nation 11.1.87).

In Pa Glang the growing of opium has all but ceased though this is not solely due to a successful policy of eradication. The year prior to my fieldwork (1985) the few fields which had been cultivated had been sprayed. Unfortunately many food crops had also suffered. But outside of this experience people had already discontinued opium cultivation. After resettlement they found

¹⁵According to the ONCB (Office of Narcotics Control Board).

themselves far distant from hill areas and had to travel to cultivate hill crops; being on the border areas they were always afraid of trouble from the Border Patrol Police and from the few insurgents still in the hills. Working in the hill areas always carried some risk and often when I was in the village people would return with stories of meeting insurgents and being faced with demands for support, or meeting soldiers and being faced with demands for information. This dilemma was never out of their minds and occasional bombardment of the hills around the village, by the army trying to flush out insurgents, was just one of many reminders. The discontinuation of production was, therefore, more related to the constant pressure exerted on the Mong by the authorities since 1968. This is certainly an encouragement for the authorities to pursue a resettlement policy, discussion of which I will return to later. However, some Mong and Mien within the village instead of growing opium have become involved with other aspects of the opium trade.

Chao Khao reaction

The campaign is carefully controlled. Certain areas are not entered for fear of reprisals against the army but it is uncertain how long these areas can hold out against the other forces contributing to assimilation, including the encroaching road and communication network and increasing poverty. One young informant at school in Chiang Mai related how his remote village was involved in serious

fighting that lasted three days and resulted in several deaths on both sides. This was not reported in the papers but was said to have happened every year since the programme began. The Mong attempt to defend themselves by other means than arms. Two weeks before the army began its campaign three Hmong leaders distributed leaflets which charged the Third Army Region with trying to drive the Hmong people from the highlands to the lowlands (The Nation 11.1.87). The role of the eradication programme as part of the wider campaign to assimilate the *Chao Khao* does not go unnoticed by the Mong. The Mong are acutely aware of the situation and the injustices ^{that} they feel are perpetrated against them. My informants in Doi Pui were keenly aware that it takes involvement ^{at} ~~on~~ a senior level to let heroin through the net to the U.S. Their feelings towards these unknown people whom they called "Generals" is bitter. This is the view of one informant, a Mong man who has discontinued growing opium and referred to Mong as "they"; seeing himself in some way as distant from the immediate fight but very aware of the dilemma of association from which the Mong cannot escape: "Everyone knows that Mong destroy the forests and growing opium is against the law. There is no need to tell us that any more. But what can they (Mong) do. No one helps them to find money in other ways. Most Mong think the King's

Project¹⁶ is not to help the *Chao Khao*, it's just for show. They say - oh the king helps you - but its useless; the people have nothing; you can't eat those crops, they are for export only. They tell us to do this and do that and yet it's no good, they can't find us another living. If they could Mong would stop growing opium. It's not easy you know, who wants that trouble? Who wants to work like that? We are born into this custom, what can we do? It's like wearing dirty trousers and people say go and wash your trousers but they don't give us any soap, so they are still dirty. Those rich people who make the plans in their air-conditioned places don't understand, they think everything on paper, they don't think about the real situation....I heard the United Nations had spent seventy million dollars for development in Thailand. Yes there are lots of poor Thais too but they got the money because of us. They sold the *Chao Khao* name to ask for money from abroad but they help the Thais first, before us. If you gave that money to all the Mong in Thailand they could eat until they die" (Doi Pui resident, January 1987).

Having assimilated the negative view of his own people (they destroy forests, opium is bad, their trousers are dirty) he goes on to criticise the numerous development

¹⁶An agricultural development project set up by the King of Thailand in 1970 with much publicity over the years given to his personal approach in meeting with *Chao Khao*, an approach which according to Tapp (1989) has been, in general, well received by the Mong.

efforts. He is acutely aware of the problems of inappropriate projects. The internalising of negative views about the Mong has caused him to distance himself from the Mong as a group. In that he no longer grows opium and claims not to cut forest, he is no longer completely part of the other Mong. At the same time he identifies with other poor people, but indignantly defends the right of the Mong not to be used for other people's causes.

As Cooper has identified: "Opium is both wealth and poverty to the Hmong. It continues to form the principal cash source for the wealthy and at the same time drains the income of the poor who become addicts" (1984:200). Opium is no longer a principal cash source, but it does continue to drain the Mong, both the poor as addicts and now other Mong because, although unable to cultivate it, they are still associated with it.

Development projects

In attempting to deal with the "Chao Khao problem" the government has long stuck to a policy which has as its aim the prevention of land degradation, the end of poppy cultivation and the maintenance of national security. In order to achieve this the development of the *Chao Khao* has been seen as a means to the end. The development of these marginalised peoples as an end in itself is not often promoted as policy. With the establishment of the Tribal

Research Centre in Chiang Mai in 1967 the economic and social development of the highlanders did constitute one of the aims of the institute, but it is tellingly often dropped by many officials when priorities are listed (Bo Gua 1975:76). Whenever the *Chao Khao* are mentioned development is seen not as a right that could be expected by any impoverished minority in a nation that receives international aid to relieve poverty but as a means to some other end. It appears that this confusion of objectives in development terms has prevented appropriate development strategies being designed. The whole concept of crop substitution is conditional on the eradication of opium. Every year the eradication programme is ended with promises of new development initiatives: "Col. Prinya Singharak, commander of the 34th task force said the drive to cut down poppy plants.... was scheduled to end today. Altogether 560 rai were destroyed (in this region). According to the Colonel the next stage of the operation will be to help Hmong tribesmen involved in poppy cultivation by providing them seeds for crop substitution, medicine, salt and blankets. A road will also be built to the villages to help the Hill Tribe people transport crops to markets" (Bangkok Post 20.1.87).

Most of the projects concentrate on finding alternative agricultural crops viable in upland areas and making repeated use of the same area of land. Criticism of the projects refers to the unsuitability of crops, the methods of cultivation which ignore local knowledge and

15 | preferences and the lack of market surveys to establish the viability of the produce. It is not uncommon to find farmers left with rotting produce which they cannot sell locally and cannot transport to the market. Farmers who attempt to find new markets are penalised by being excluded from the project in future. Farmers also abandon crops when the prices are not protected from unforeseen falls in price. Once let down by a project why should a farmer invest time and energy in a new scheme, and there ^{is} are no lack of new schemes around. In 1983 there were 52 agencies and institutions both Thai and foreign implementing projects in the highlands. There are hundreds of studies and projects being conducted over the course of a year and in some villages series of projects have passed through. As I have already mentioned this was the experience of Pa Glang. A 1988 assessment of the total foreign funds committed at that time by agencies engaged in the highlands was a figure of 83 million U.S. Dollars (McKinnon 1989).

It could be argued that the multitude of agencies working with the highlanders are effectively propping up the status quo. The projects in their sincere efforts to help the highlanders attempt to provide hope for the future while behind this facade of development initiatives the *Chao Khao* are subjected to policies which will ultimately effect their assimilation. The role which the developers play is subject to considerable criticism. McKinnon (1989) points out that although the Karen comprise the

largest and poorest minority group they do not grow opium and are better integrated than other groups and thus do not receive most attention in foreign development aid, which instead goes to those groups who are seen by the Thai government to comprise more of a threat.

It is questionable whether in retrospect it might have been of more benefit to the highlanders had the agencies not participated in their so called "development" and thus helped to sustain such marginal economies, because it is extremely difficult to judge the wider benefits of development projects and whether the failures of some help identify problems and lead to the success of others. In addition it is difficult to assess at what stage a project can be said to have failed. Some projects do have wider benefits which fall outside the project agenda. It is certainly to the credit of the USAID funded Mae Chaem project that they have insisted on the issuance of land certificates as a pre-condition to project implementation. This is, according to Kampe (1986), "the first and only time that official permission has been given for people anywhere in Thailand to reside and farm within a national forest reserve."

The official view is of course that the highlanders are going to benefit in the long term: "even if the villagers suffer some initial hardships they will still be better off financially this year than they were ten years ago due to the health and welfare improvements provided through

various projects" (Bangkok Post 1.2.87). Health and welfare is a very useful tool in the assimilationist process. Health services are clearly appreciated by all the Mong with whom I worked, even though the services they receive leave a lot to be desired. I frequently came across cases where communication problems had prevented treatment, where *Chao Khao* had been given second rate treatment and many cases of people who, after initial bad experiences, did not want to return to hospitals and doctors. In addition many who should have been exempted from payment were not, either because they did not understand the procedure or had not proven themselves poor enough.¹⁷ Many people were too frightened of hospital bills to risk going to the doctor. Despite these problems there is no doubt that many Mong place great trust in the state medical system. Although some adhere strictly to Mong medical cures, most see the state system as a complement to their own knowledge and are happy to receive inoculation, pre and post natal care, contraception, treatment for serious illness and basic health. For many it was this aspect of lowland life that was the most important. The second most important was an education for their children with the ultimate aim of one member of their family securing a salaried job. For many of the

¹⁷This is a problem for women who may wish to receive medical advice for which their household is not prepared to pay. Often only emergency treatment is regarded as necessary and home remedies used for other conditions. However, in that women are actively encouraged to use contraception they have a need for specific medical advice.

Mong no longer in isolated communities the only way they could see to move forward was through the Thai system.¹⁸

However, projects can be fairly criticised if they expose the recipients to even more problems and this is arguably the case when lack of foresight produces a situation (such as increased land degradation or expectations that settlement and permanent land holdings are a target which can be achieved) which can be incorporated by officials as good reason for resettlement. A major failing of the projects has been the failure to identify an appropriate objective and instead concentrate on broader regional objectives. Opium eradication is not an objective for the Mong. Had the projects targeted a need as perceived by the Mong and other highlanders, such as improved health or education irrespective of whether the village produced opium or not, wider benefits may have been seen. In addition projects often fail to access women: "Because project identification usually follows a broader country or sectorial development strategy, the intended beneficiaries are often not defined in terms of gender.

¹⁸Educational programmes have been seen by the Mong as ways to forcefully make their children Thai. Tapp (1989:38) notes that chalked on a school blackboard in a Hmong village are the words: "We are Thai people; We must learn the Thai language". However, for the Mong of Doi Pui and Pa Glang, schooling, although seen by some as irrelevant, was for the majority seen increasingly as the only way for their children to survive in a future which seemed to offer little for a traditional Mong way of life.

Women within the beneficiary group may be invisible and, as women, may actually be hurt by the project intervention" (Dulansey and Austin, 1986).

Had project priorities been the same as Mong priorities then projects which resulted in fewer, healthier and educated children; more faith in parts of the system; a healthier labour force and motivated village women may have led to the eventual Thai targets of an integrated population with less alienation along the way. It is unfortunately the case that projects, by not involving women, often fail to meet their potential: "Since women are producers of basic necessities (food, clothing....) projects that do not include them or their productive functions or even create competition that drive women out of the market place, will not achieve their maximum potential or macro-economic impact. The projects may increase income but if the returns are not channelled to the producers of societies' basic needs, [i.e. women] the long run effect will be to widen the economic gap within the population" (Dulansey and Austin, 1986:83).

Instead of considering the development of the *Chao Khao* within their own context the government development priorities involving resettlement programmes have necessitated a violent break with the past and the destruction of long standing economies.

Resettlement programmes

Towards the end of the 1980's resettlement became the most serious immediate issue facing the highlanders. As a policy it threatens the complete disruption of all aspects of community life. The motive in government resettlement programmes has varied over the years. Prior to the resettlement of Pa Glang in 1968, there were a series of village relocations in the period 1960-61¹⁹. This was the time of the initial assistance and development programmes among the *Chao Khao* and was based on the success of lowland self help settlements among Thais. This first initiative was based on the realisation of potential minority problems and the need to provide welfare. A second phase of resettlement was mainly related to security enforcements without much consideration of welfare as a motivating factor. It was at this time that Pa Glang was settled.

The third, more recent phase is largely associated with the government's efforts to clear the highlands of the *Chao Khao* and thereby solve all the perceived problems they cause, including land degradation and flooding, subversive activities and opium production. At the same time the population can be better controlled, new migrants

¹⁹Chupanit Kesmanee describes this in more detail in an unpublished paper : "Hill Tribe relocation policy: Ways out in a labyrinth, a case study of Kamphaengphet Province", Tribal Research Institute, Chiang Mai, 1987.

more easily spotted and repatriated and the *Chao Khao* can be assimilated into Thai society. This third phase presents considerable dilemmas for the *Chao Khao* and has so far been shown to be very hard line. In 1986 a Thai researcher²⁰ investigated the moving of groups of villagers ordered to leave their homes because they were in the National Parks of Khlonglan and Maewong in Kamphangphet province and other families in Kamphangphet and Tak. The move involved 5,557 people. The reality of the resettlement was a disaster. In some cases no provision was made for the evicted families by any of the agencies involved. At first some families had to stay by the road and many were reduced to begging. When eventually moved to new sites the villagers of Kin Khem moved from Khlonglan National Park had to rely on assistance from voluntary Christian groups to buy land. Those who were moved to new land were uncertain of the future and did not plant rice and instead relied on food aid again from church groups. When the rice aid ended they hired themselves out as labourers. Most of the people resettled received inadequate land. One group was allocated 15 rai per household; however the rigid squares drawn on a map did not take account of the land quality and indiscriminately included rocks, gradients and gravel²¹. This account reveals considerable mismanagement. The experience of the villagers of Pa

²⁰Chupanit Kesmanee, see footnote 19.

²¹John McKinnon, personal communication.

Glang was not so dissimilar and although they received larger financial inputs, the effect of relocation and the changes the Mong have experienced are illustrative of the many dilemmas the Mong (and other groups) are currently encountering.

Pa Glang resettlement

The four villages in Pa Glang were resettled from the mountainous areas bordering Laos in 1967. At the time the Indochinese war was at its height, and Thailand was very sensitive to insurgency within its own borders. The Border Patrol Police (BPP), since their establishment in the 1950's, had been monitoring and controlling the *Chao Khao* in the area (Mottin 1980; Tanham 1974). In 1967 a dispute involving local officials and police who were attempting to gain bribes from the *Chao Khao* growing opium, escalated into what was labelled the "Red Meo War"²². In response to the attempted extortion the Mong burnt down a BPP school. The government forces were aggressive towards what they saw as a threat from peoples too marginal to be trusted and attacked villages with bombs and napalm. The Mong fled into the forest and there some met up with the Communist Party of Thailand (CPT). Other Mong were eventually persuaded to leave the hills and join a government resettlement programme. These Mong

²²See Jeffry Race (1972) for a detailed account of "The War in Northern Thailand".

were among the first settlers at Pa Glang. Over the years, those Mong who had joined up with the CPT also gradually left the hills and, accepting amnesty, joined family in the resettlement. Comparatively few Mong joined the CPT and those Mong who have, either at that time or in more recent years, associated with the CPT often did so through lack of alternatives. One woman in Pa Glang described how her village was commandeered by the CPT who took control of all food and redistributed all resources, leaving villagers in a desperate state. However, despite the fact that the relationship between the Mong and the CPT is fragmentary and often unwilling, the Mong continue to be associated with insurgency.

The official aim of the Pa Glang resettlement as stated by the then Deputy Prime Minister Prapass Charusathiara was to "draw the tribesmen into permanent settlement to raise livestock and respectable crops and engage in home industry. At the same time we will organise marketing services and do our best to promote the health and education of those moving into the specified areas" (Bangkok Post 23.11.67).

How these aims were to be achieved in Pa Glang was clearly not considered. The village was located on an area of exceptionally poor land, chosen because it was unoccupied by Thai farmers. The land was notoriously unproductive and traditional methods of farming could not be employed. Original land distribution was arbitrary and whoever

wanted land could take it. At that time people had no idea of the value of land in this area and assumed their traditional practice of land clearing could continue or that they would eventually return to their old fields in the hills. Thus some people cleared large areas while others settled for small plots.

In 1967 the village was effectively a refugee camp and people were not sure how long they would stay. Only about 5% of households, according to the public welfare officer stationed in the village, were convinced enough to begin working the land. Eventually land was allocated by lottery and families were given ten rai each but by this time a few households were working large areas of land and they were allowed to continue. To some extent this became part of the basis for wealth distribution in the village, though clearly the families who had worked the land already had the labour power to do so, or were able to afford to hire labour. They changed to new methods of agriculture planting paddy rice and fruit trees. They traded in land, buying fields further from the village but of better quality. They invested in fertilisers and pesticides to make their crops productive. However only those who had accumulated wealth on arrival in the village were able to do this. Others eventually gave up the struggle to grow crops and garden vegetables after repeated failures and, with no resources with which to invest in new land, some were compelled to leave. There was much confusion at the time of the original

resettlement and some Mong tried to move on to other locations either to find family or better land. This movement has continued up to the present with people leaving and returning maybe years later. New families move into the village from disputed border areas and old people from the refugee camps seek refuge with relatives rather than live their last days behind a camp fence.

The camp of Pa Glang was administered by Thai officials and food and other essentials were supplied. In 1973, five years after resettlement, it officially stopped being a camp but food aid was continued. As families moved on, new ones replaced them taking over the half completed agricultural projects of their predecessors. One family who had moved into the house of a relative at first collected the coffee beans from the trees around their house but stored them year after year unable to find a buyer and unable to use them themselves. Eventually they cut the trees down to give light for the chickens, most of which were dying from disease. When the husband became ill with an incapacitating disease they were forced to sell their land for 15,000 baht (half the real value, with the rest being promised) and move to stay with relatives. In their new village there was no new land to clear and after a few months the family split up once again in order to survive.

In 1986, almost 18 years after resettlement, official land certificates were given out. There was some objection by local Thais who considered the land theirs by right of their ancestors. They also pointed out that since they did not have land rights nor should the *Chao Khao*. The land certificates were allocated by each family claiming their land publicly and complaints being arbitrated. In general there was little dispute and the large differences were acknowledged legally. The official land owners are not allowed to sell their land for ten years after which time they will receive the actual certificates. However, the demand for land is such that the owners will sell it to others knowing that they still retain rights to it and can evict the families who are in effect their tenants. Effectively with the allocation of land rights inequalities in wealth are exaggerated and reinforced.

Poverty in the village is caused by a variety of reasons. In part it is lack of land and particularly lack of good land. When the villagers were resettled they were plunged into a new system in which they must survive by new untried means. People who for generations have grown hill rice, corn and opium, raised pigs, chickens, horses and used forest resources are now trying new crops of cotton, fruit and other cash crops using profits to supplement rice shortfalls. Their new, hot and dry environment is totally different from the climate of the hills. The lack of forest or much land makes it difficult to rear pigs and chickens and they must either buy firewood or collect it

from far away. Faced with difficulties in raising income and growing crops the production and trading of Mong textiles emerged as a survival strategy, partly initiated by development groups but also spontaneously seized upon by women looking for alternative incomes. It is in this context of political and economic instability that the Mong textile has become a commercial product of their culture.

To support the current policy of resettlement the authorities quote the success of earlier schemes. Pa Glang is often seen as a shining example of success as reported by the Hill Tribe's Affairs Centre which came under the Communist Suppression Operation Command (CSOC): "The hill tribes of four different ethnic groups are living happily together. The children of the different tribes attend the same school and the Thai language is being used as the common language in both official and inter-tribal business..... They have learnt that by adopting the new agricultural practices advocated by the government officials, they can successfully crop the land repeatedly without resorting to shifting cultivation there is ample evidence that tribal cultures remain largely intact even when the tribesmen are physically, socially and economically integrated into Thai society. The pursuance of an accelerated integration policy is deliberately confined to the social political and economic areas. Cultural and religious matters are left to the

choice of the tribesmen... therefore there is no basis for the fear of those that predict the disappearance of tribal cultures as the tribes are integrated" (Spectrum, 1972).

This naive analysis in 1972, just four years after resettlement and with the village still receiving food aid is a little premature in its judgement of integration, which in itself is of a very questionable nature, requiring the loss of linguistic, social, economic and political autonomy and yet somehow being allowed to retain culture and religion. But even after 20 years the official line is one of success. My own findings would suggest different realities. The *Chao Khao* of four ethnic groups live together because they have no choice. Many of the Mong in Pa Glang are living on the poverty line. Many families are compelled to live in field huts for much of the year closer to their rented fields; some have left the village to farm the land they left behind in the hills; others have been compelled to move in with relatives in other villages. Those who remain have to compete for resources and with huge wealth differences. The poverty stricken Htin are bitter about the amount of aid extended to the Mong in preference to themselves. Having arrived later and being a less threatening group (according to official criteria) they have received minimal assistance and live literally from hand to mouth, some of them being employed as labourers and begging from the Mong.

Success as measured by the numbers who speak Thai, hold government jobs, have received good schooling or conform to Thai dress could refer to some individuals who, as individuals, could be seen to benefit from the resettlement. However, almost all those who were able to establish reasonable livings had existing resources *before* being resettled, resources which they brought with them and which in the main were derived from previous trade in opium. Moreover a resettlement scheme cannot be judged a success if it must rely on the poor to leave and not be counted in the statistics.

The specific effects of resettlement and the pace of cultural change can be seen in the different lifestyle and expectations between generations in Pa Glang village. The following description of four generations of one extended family in Pa Glang shows how their experiences coupled with their opportunities and the disruptive effects of resettlement have led to very different expectations for each Mong individual. It is clear that those who married before resettlement were compelled into a village economy and lifestyle. Those who were younger and unmarried on resettlement met with considerable changes in attitude and potential and were among the first generation of Mong to be exposed to the politics of integration and assimilation.

A family in change

At the turn of the century the great grandparents of the youngest generation now in Pa Glang were living in the village called Khaang Hor on the border with Laos but within the territory of Thailand. They had seven children; five sons, a daughter and then another son. The eldest son helped his father with opium trading and took it on himself for a while. He, like the second son managed to accumulate some wealth. All the children married and stayed within two villages in the hills. All of them, with their own children and one surviving great grandparent were resettled in Pa Glang in 1968. The lives of each of the seven children illustrates the changes and pressures of resettlement on Mong life and specifically on women. Descended from the seven original children there are 46 children and grandchildren. Of these 22 are men and 24 are women. Of those of working age 13 women work in the home and fields as compared to 3 men. 13 men are working in some type of profession (here profession means income earning activity) as compared to 5 women.

However, looking at the generational differences - of those women who did take up some type of profession it was only those who moved whilst young to the resettlement who had the opportunity to receive training. The older members of the third generation missed out on schooling and training opportunities which the younger ones were able to receive. The women, marrying young, were soon

confined to childcare and agricultural activities. These women became the producers of batik and the skirt traders, capitalising on new opportunities as they were presented. Some of the younger women who received more opportunities used their skills to become involved in retailing textiles and acting as middle-women in the chain of production and sale. More men were able to capitalise on educational opportunities and could do so whether married or not. Apart from professional occupations some became silversmiths or traders and some entered cash cropping. It was not only resettlement which determined opportunity but the individual wealth of the Mong on resettlement. The two eldest brothers had some accumulated wealth and their lifestyle was comparatively better than ^{that of} their siblings. The differences can also be noted in the greatly reduced death rate of children between the second and third generations and the older and younger siblings. At the time of interview the two eldest brothers whose children were born before resettlement between them lost five infants. The five younger siblings most of whose children were born after resettlement had lost only one.

Clearly education has been of importance and enabled some Mong to pursue opportunities other than farming. The issue of education among the *Chao Khao* is highly political. Whilst some Mong benefit from opportunities, many find the type of schooling they receive inappropriate to their needs. In addition, teachers are often of a different ethnic group from the villages where they work.

This is a deliberate government policy probably intended to encourage children to speak Thai. However the effect is to impede learning because teacher and pupil are forced to work in the Thai language and cannot explain problems in any common language²³. In 1987 42% of the entire *Chao Khao* school age population attended school²⁴.

The difference between the generations and the opportunities presented to them has highlighted the issue of Mong fragmentation. For example among the youngest generation in one family, three of the elder daughters have been faced with the prospect of marriage. One was abducted²⁵ by her boyfriend, but returned home claiming she wanted to finish her schooling. After weeks of pressure from him and her parents she gave in aged 16 and had her first child when she was 17 in the spring of 1988. A second daughter learnt of her potential abduction

²³The type of inappropriate education which some Mong children receive has been the subject of considerable criticism among development personnel and other observers (Tapp 1989). Non-formal education which is intended to suit the lives of rural children and is more relevant to their expectations is now being pursued by the Ministry of Education.

²⁴According to a report by the "task force on hill tribes and minority groups office of special activities", Ministry of Education, assisted by the U.S. Agency for International Development.

²⁵Abduction, as described earlier, is an acceptable act preceding marriage, and arrangements are often made between the girl and boy in advance. However, it is occasionally misused, increasingly so as young Mong boys exploit their greater knowledge in comparison with village girls. In addition the use of cars has made the practice of abduction more dangerous as abducted girls can now quickly be taken long distances, from where they cannot return home. During my fieldwork this happened to four girls whom I knew.

from her brother. Not stopping to collect her things he took her to town on his motorbike and she caught a bus to Chiang Mai where she sought a home with an aunt and continued her schooling. A third daughter learnt of her potential engagement early in 1991. She was thirteen years old and did not want to marry the chosen man who was also physically handicapped. She went out to the fields and poisoned herself. Whilst she was compelled into using a traditional method of protest by suicide to demonstrate her objection to her arranged marriage and whilst one of her sisters conformed, the other sister, now in Chiang Mai, has by other means also avoided her marriage, has managed to capitalise on new opportunities, but in doing so has rejected Mong convention. Resettlement in Pa Glang has, therefore, not only split the original community according to their wealth but has also contributed to a division between generations. The Mong women of Pa Glang are capitalising on opportunities and in doing so are challenging Mong social structures.

Resettlement is an imminent possibility which all the *Chao Khao* must reckon with. The Mong of Doi Pui are faced with the same threats as other villages in the hills. The village lies within a national park and is therefore part of resettlement plans along with its neighbouring villages Chiang Khien and Maa Saa Mai. In 1985 villagers received notice, apparently from a non-official source, that they should sign for rights in new land. A project was proposed which was clearly over-ambitious. Each signatory

to the proposal would receive 20 rai of land and a western style house complete with western toilet and kitchen. Details varied; some claimed it was funded by the Japanese, others by Americans both in co-operation with Thais. Some said there were plans to grow lychees and longans, others said tomatoes and "sweet grass". About 20,000 people were due to be resettled on this land, all members of different minority groups. Rumours of this project were also to be found, in one form or another, among other groups²⁶. Some people visited the proposed site near Com Tom and reported the land was hot, dry and that of the seven lakes supposed to be under construction only one dried out "lake" existed. Later equally vague and unofficial information was circulated to the effect that this project had been scrapped. Of continuing concern, however, was the threat which accompanied the original notice that if villagers did not sign they would not get land. Some Mong did sign, others felt that by doing so they might be giving up their right to their existing land and so chose not to. For villagers in the hills the feelings of instability and helplessness that the possibility of resettlement brings challenges identity. The richer Mong in Doi Pui try and secure urban land which they can buy and know is theirs. But the majority have to wait and see. The effect however, is one of fragmentation within the villages.

²⁶According to other researchers (Leo Alting Von Geusau - personal communication) the Akha received similar information.

Resettlement and identity

Debate about the future of the *Chao Khao* in Thailand refers often to their potential assimilation as opposed to integration. Whereas integration would suggest that the Mong could retain something of their ethnicity, but be treated as Thai citizens without the oppression they currently face; assimilation suggests they will disappear as an ethnic group. Assimilation means the disappearance of collective memory. Integration may, of course precede assimilation, but I would suggest that neither integration nor assimilation (in the sense of one group willingly being subsumed under another identity) are real possibilities for the Mong. Both these processes should be seen as individual right of choice, but the experience of the *Chao Khao* who attempt to live as Thais indicate that their acceptance into Thai society is very difficult. Thus most Mong find it difficult to stop being identified as Mong even if they positively try to. According to Chaliand (1989:6) a minority must be represented by a group's "collective will to survive"; the effect of resettlement is the 'disintegration of collective will as individual survival, of necessity, predominates over the collective survival. But this does not necessarily mean assimilation; rather fragmentation. I would suggest that within the context of the assimilation debate we should speak of incorporation. Incorporation would suggest the maintenance of ethnic

identity but the partial emptying or disturbance of value systems and frames of cultural reference, and the attempted appropriation of subordinate discourses by a dominant ideology. The fact that these alternative (albeit sub~~ordinate~~) discourses continue to exist means that total assimilation is not possible. As Von Geusau has argued in relation to the Akha: "Lowland political organisation, acceptance of economic and political inequality, military abuse and differences of culture have always impeded integration and even systematic assimilation. If anything this resistance seems to be growing.. and has been reinforced and rationalised into discriminating valley mythologies...this has further complicated the chances of either integration or assimilation into the ... valley cultures" (1983:275). Retention of ethnic identity and positive integration are hardly possible when the identity of the *Chao Khao* in Thailand is so negative. McKinnon writes of the minority dilemma: "The idea took hold that since highlanders were cutting the forest, destroying the national watershed, endangering lowland property, were not citizens, constituted a security problem, grew narcotics, and engaged in illegal trading activities then the quickest way to solve the problem was to simply move them out of the hills" (1989:xxiv). All their alleged activities are negative activities and even the solution is seen in negative terms, to negate them as a problem merely by removing them and relocating them in space. In the face of this negativism it is difficult for an ethnic group to

identify itself positively, not only to others but to each other, in terms other than the oppressed minority. The fact that this negative image continues to dominate discussion about the *Chao Khao* is a reflection of their own powerlessness. The Mong have to struggle not to identify themselves as distinct from other groups but to present themselves in terms other than negative ones and it is in this context - the politics of integration and assimilation that the Mong image is of vital importance. The debate about opium, resettlement, subversion, land degradation, population growth and so on has become common knowledge among all Thai and observers of Thailand. However, it must be remembered that in the transmission of any information: "What is being seen in what appears to be a natural form is ... in part or large part, what is being made to be seen" (Williams 1982:60). Information cannot be viewed in isolation from its means of transmission. Viewed within a political context it becomes clear that this negative image, which is imposed on the Mong, actively contributes to their further marginalisation and impoverishment, because image is a political force in itself. The perpetuation and use of this image, an image which involves the use of the visual signs of Mong identity, is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER TENTHE MONG TEXTILE AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF IMAGE

are | In the earlier chapter on changes in textile use I argued that the commercialisation of the Mong textile and image and the increasing tendency towards ethnic fragmentation ^{are} ~~is~~ not coincidence but part of a process involving the partial assimilation or incorporation of the Mong as an ethnic group in Thailand. It is the issue of assimilation which I now wish to explore further and look at how the textile is used in this process. Much of the stimulus for commercial production has come from outside the Mong community and has introduced the consumer into this account¹. As we shall see the power of consumption, (an aspect of capitalist society often ignored in preference to the analysis of productive relationships) carries considerable political weight. We have just learned from the previous chapter how the Mong are received in Thailand, the realities of resettlement and the construction of their stereotypic image. This image which describes the Mong as growers of opium, as responsible for

¹The trend in social science is a move away from the production oriented study which was so heavily influenced by Marxist analysis and towards a greater emphasis on the consumer. It is increasingly recognised that Marxist analysis ignored important aspects of consumer influence. The ideological debate has shifted from the bias towards explaining the exploitation of capitalism to understanding the power of consumption and the possibility that the effect of improved material standards of living may exist as a force that may be more important than ideological incorporation.

land degradation and as subversive peoples is the image which has grown over the past forty years. It is the image which is assimilated by most Thais and foreign visitors to Thailand. Whilst some may not accept the whole image, the majority have little access to other information which may persuade them otherwise. Whilst this image is promoted, a secondary and sometimes conflicting image can be found which presents the *Chao Khao* as exotic groups with rich cultural traditions. A third image of the minorities is that of primitive, wild, dirty, uncivilised peoples. These views are by no means mutually exclusive. Indeed all these views can be held at the same time and as I will show, they can actively complement each other. I will now describe how these images are sustained, reproduced and interpreted, what effect this has on Mong autonomy and how the Mong textile is used to support the Mong image. I will first describe how the image is reproduced before looking at how it is interpreted.

The reproduction of the image

Clearly reproduction of an image involves a certain amount of interpretation. However, as the examples below illustrate, the image of the *Chao Khao* as described in the previous chapter is rarely challenged.

The press media

A thorough review of the representation of minorities in the Thai press (Kesmanee 1987) reveals the press bias in representing the *Chao Khao* and perpetuating the myths about population growth and other associated "evils". The article titles are in themselves revealing: "Driving the Hill Tribes out of Forest Reserves" (Thai Rath, 26.1.86); "Uncontrolled Hill Tribe Destruction of Forest" (Siam Rath, 21.1.86); "Hill Tribe Forest Destroyers pushed Out" (Thai Rath, 3.6.86); "Angered over Hill Tribe Destruction of the Forest; Suggests Sterilization and Extinction" (Siam Rath, 27.2.86); "Hill Tribes request relocation postponement" (Thai Rath, 22.10.86).

Thus the associations are reinforced and the idea of relocation and resettlement is introduced not as an issue for consideration but as a necessary result of the action of the *Chao Khao* in destroying the forest. In the English language press the headlines include the following: "117 Hmongs surrender in Nan province" (Bangkok Post, 5.5.87); "Soldiers to search for illegal Hmongs" (Bangkok Post, 21.3.87).

Boxed in next to this latter article and therefore incorporated under the same heading is a piece entitled "KL to hang Thai drug convict Tuesday". There is no factual connection with the *Chao Khao* but the implicit connection of drugs has led the page editor to juxtapose

the articles and visually connect these issues. The articles appear every day making explicit or implicit connections, reinforcing prejudice and calling on national sentiment should this "taken for granted" ideology be challenged:

"The Thai people last week were stunned and felt as if they had been slapped in the face when representatives of the US administration and legislature came out pointing an accusing finger at Thailand.....The Thai people can't help but feel bitter for being accused of mistreating a group of H'mong tribesmen who illegally entered the country from Laos" (Bangkok Post, 21.3.87).

The article does not question the right to treat Hmong as they wish but challenges the right of outsiders to interfere, once again taking for granted the status quo in internal relations. The newspaper press refers constantly to the three main themes: opium, land degradation and subversive activities. Whether it is the views of the minorities which are under discussion or the views of the state, the negative associations are reinforced.

Entertainment media

Magazines:

In a review of the treatment of the *Chao Khao* in Thai Penny Horribles¹¹ (cartoon magazines) Jean Baffie (1989) identifies some differences in the portrayal of the *Chao Khao* as opposed to Thais. Specific differences relate to

a lack of feelings attributed to highlanders and their difference in relation to morality and the law: "Thus the Mlabri husband who kills his wife appears to have the right to do so, and the old Mong will not be questioned for having bumped off the four Chinese Haw. Among the Akha a stereotype of sexual freedom seems to be the order of the day....setting the action amongst highlanders, who are depicted as 'innocent savages' of a pre-Buddhist era before censorship and the law... enables the authors to express fantasies which would otherwise be condemned by "modern" Thai society" (1989:402).

Importantly although many of the Thais in these comics are portrayed as "bad" the badness of the highlanders is in association with the popular image. They are producing opium and felling the forest, thereby reinforcing stereotypic images. Baffie describes how the identification of different minorities is difficult but is usually deduced from an item of distinctive clothing. What is important in this is the reduction of differences between groups, the muddling of group identity and the creation of sameness. As I will describe this lack of difference serves to limit the available information about the *Chao Khao* and at the same time has a normalising effect because it appears that these "exotic" peoples can be categorised and contained within a stereotype. At the same time the highlanders are exoticised and contained.

Theatre:

The force of the dominant image in relation to the *Chao Khao* is such that their assumed negative roles can be alluded to without any specific references being made. A recent play staged in the north of Thailand is illustrative of this. The playwright's interest in the *Chao Khao* is of importance. Some years previously he was involved in promoting their textiles, but has "moved on" from this interest to environmental issues. He says: "My play is a 'romance in the mountain'. It is about the forest. It is set in a village where disaster hits because of the forest destruction. There is a hero who is a person who uses and preserves the forest. 5,000 people came to the play, the princess mother and Chavalit too. It was on TV and Chavalit ordered it played simultaneously on two channels so everyone would see it." In fact the playwright, Khun Nakorn, diplomatically does not distinguish between the Thais and the *Chao Khao* who cut forest, and the play does not make explicit who is doing the damage but for many the association with the *Chao Khao* is reinforced through the circumstances of the performance. The playwright insisted on staging the play in north Thailand rather than Bangkok. Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai are both closely associated with the *Chao Khao*. He says that many of the 'important' people who attended reluctantly made the journey north unsure why he insisted on staging it out of Bangkok. The most logical explanation would have probably followed the logic

north/forest = *Chao Khao*/destruction. The attendance at the play from senior government officials who are weekly making statements in the press which accuse the *Chao Khao* of forest destruction supports the implicit association with the *Chao Khao*.

Television:

A television series based on a book which received a national prize and was written by a deputy district officer portrays the life of Mien people through a highly romanticised script. It is a type of *Chao Khao* soap opera and was very popular among the young Mong and Mien of Pa Glang. The teenage girls would tune in for each episode, tearfully following the adventures of the young people portrayed. The series showed young Mien people constantly agonising over romantic relationships and flirting with each other during a daily routine of token work. In each show the labour often consisted of no more than girls holding hands, wandering down leafy paths, casually picking up a few pieces of firewood and carrying them in back-baskets. The baskets and costume identified them as Mien but in all else they were taking on the roles of young urban Thais. They had no apparent obligations to anyone. A more controversial theme was the kidnapping of a young girl by (bad) Thais for selling into prostitution. In this television portrayal the Mien are incorporated into a known framework of everyday life (albeit an invented soap opera style of life) but at the

same time are always shown in idyllic hill top villages with smoke rising from fires as the sun sets and in full costume, no matter what the time of day or work involved. Whilst their actions are contained in an understandable framework their culture is reduced to meaningless exotica. In this way their life has been incorporated within a context defined by the Thai script writer and accessible to the viewers. The effect is to limit knowledge about the *Chao Khao* by reducing the difference between them and exoticising the image.

Visual images - the textile

The use of visual images is intricately tied up with verbal images and vice versa. The sight of a Mong person dressed in costume can 'mean' opium. Sometimes the costume stands on its own with no other signs to represent the exotic, as for example, when a Mong skirt is pinned above a shop door to draw in viewers and consumers. The reading of the article has a potentially limitless range of meanings so what is important is the process of meaning-construction rather than an assumed meaning or fixed style. This process of meaning-creation is dependent on the continued promotion of an image which will not remain constant but adapt as new information becomes available. This process can be seen through the trends of the fashion industry.

The fashion system:

The transformation of Mong textiles into fashion pieces for the modern Thai and western consumer reached a peak in the early 1980's but the fashion has since been in decline. The hemp skirts which formed the basis for the most popular items are increasingly difficult to procure as local stocks have been depleted but this is not the only reason that the fashion has waned in the late 1980's. The end of a fashion is often attributed to over-familiarity or to over-popularisation. Whilst these issues are important in themselves there are other possible reasons for the decline in a fashion. During the eighties the dominant perception of the minorities has changed. In the late seventies and early eighties the emphasis was on "helping" the minorities who were poor, backward people. This help was expressed in the same terms as today - welfare and development projects coupled with opium eradication and resettlement. However a less caring attitude towards the minorities has evolved as attention has been switched to a growing environmental movement and the action focused on aggressive resettlement programmes. The increasingly aggressive campaign to remove the *Chao Khao* from the mountains and eradicate opium production has been a feature of the late 1980's. At the same time sympathy for the fashions of the *Chao Khao* has waned. In the early days of the fashion, association with the *Chao Khao* was more acceptable among



Photograph 12: Green Mong skirts are adapted for commercial sale. The top is constructed from an old Mong skirt and attached to a second, modified Mong skirt. The model is wearing a hat belonging to another ethnic group, the Lisu, and a necklace produced by a factory in Chiang Mai.

the upper classes. It was daring, novel and charitable, because the *Chao Khao* needed help. Nowadays association requires a more political statement.

In the seventies when the fashion was first evolving the *Chao Khao* were seen as a problem but arguably the problems were seen as being combated and the *Chao Khao* "helped to civilisation". The rise of their textiles as Thai fashion coincided with the virtual defeat of the Communist Party of Thailand (associated with the Mong) in the north east. At the same time the US supported the launch of the big opium eradication campaign within Thailand and opium production began to fall. The "problem" of the *Chao Khao* was being met.

The decline of the fashion in the late 1980's has coincided with the rapidly growing awareness of the severity of the environmental problems facing Thailand and the poor progress made in combating this problem. As was discussed earlier the minorities are held responsible for many of the environmental problems in Thailand. Is it therefore a coincidence that the popularity of the textiles of the *Chao Khao* among the upper classes has waned or is it, in part, a deliberate distancing? The promoters of this fashion say it has waned because it has been over-popularised and the quality has fallen. But these two aspects, if they are true, are an effect of the increasing poverty of the *Chao Khao*. They are not without

associations. As Bourdieu writes: "Those who legislate on the correct aesthetic are those who control the cultural capital of society" (1979:417).

A well known Thai art critic who himself used to promote and support the products of the *Chao Khao* has now reversed his attitude: "To me the Mong art is outrageous, even ugly, maybe because they are working with new colour schemes. They used to use natural cotton and hemp but now use material from the market and it's so garish. There is a very small interest compared to ten years ago. Then if one went to a party maybe 70% of ladies wore hill tribe adapted clothes, now only one or two and foreigners, of course, they are latecomers. Now Thai fabric from rural areas is very popular... when people were proud, Hill Tribe material was rare and precious and took a long time to make; you could put a bit on a collar, a jacket, it was fun. People didn't care about the quality - just wear it once or twice and dispose of it". A fashion critic in the *Bangkok Post* also bemoans the perceived fall in quality: "Have you noticed the new types of Hill Tribe textiles sold in shops and by vendors? Bright colours and fewer^d embroidered details signify them and their inferior quality" (*Bangkok Post*, 24.12.86).

In fact the high-class scene still draws on the same "quality" of fabric for its designs. The use of synthetic fabrics and factory printed designs has never been part of upper class fashion. It has been promoted among the

cheaper shops and for tourist consumption. However, it represents the fact that the product has been normalised. The sign, no longer uniquely exotic for the upper classes, has been discarded. As Simmel (1971) noted in relation to value, it is that which evades our attempts at ownership which is accorded a high value. Once ownership becomes easier the value falls. A promoter of minority textiles, Marisa Suanduenchai, says: "When a product like this reaches the zenith of its popularity a blind spot is bound to occur. To satisfy rising demand and in an attempt to reduce production costs the people of the hills lower the quality to produce more at a faster rate" (Bangkok Post, 24.12.86). However, "the people of the hills" are not producing the machine printed batik or the sparsely stitched materials². Those minorities who are making commercial goods are no longer in the hills. They are semi-urbanised Mong living in the poor areas of Chiang Mai or in villages such as Pa Glang. It is in fact the very promotion of the fashion by designers such as Marisa which has first of all exoticised it and then by reducing difference and contributing to a stereotypic image, incorporated what the textile represents within the

²Some of the ready printed commercial goods are produced in factories and retailed to the minorities from two main shops in Chiang Mai. These shops are owned by Chinese-Thai traders who have a long history of trading with the *Chao Khao*; in the past travelling in the hills to the villages to buy and sell. One shop also owns a guest house where *Chao Khao* like to stay because they do not feel intimidated and the cost is low. These two shops are most commonly used by Hill Tribes buying material and other goods.

dominant view to which she, as fashion designer, subscribes. The effect ultimately is the creation of sameness. Thus the *Chao Khao* become unfashionable, they have lost their exoticism and they appear to have been reduced to identifiable stereotypes and discarded.

During the process of combating the perceived problems of Thailand through the "development" of the *Chao Khao* a process of incorporation has been taking place. This process of incorporation is neatly described by Hebdige (1988) in relation to subcultures. The process involves the transformation of an initial set of items such as clothes, dances or music. This transformation unfolds through an internal set of polarities whereby the group is able to identify itself as distinct from other groups but at the same time defines itself against a parallel series of transformations which, in this case, is the transformation of Mong culture into high fashion. The culture moves through a cycle of resistance and transformation and diffusion. It is slowly rendered "explicable and meaningless.... stripped of its unwholesome connotations the style becomes fit for public consumption" (1988:130). The Mong high fashion is interpreted as an extension of an existing code rather than a new code. But the existing code has been so mutilated that it cannot be interpreted in its new form. Thus the exotic is contained and rendered if not meaningless at least unintelligible. The incorporation takes place within all levels of fashion. The contestants

for the "Miss Thailand" competition in 1987 were "dressed" by the Esmond Guerre Lavigne boutique in Bangkok. Miss Saranrat Roomruangwong was one of the contestants vying for the title of "Miss Wonderland Pageant '87" with others from 53 countries. "As for the national costume Ajarn Tassani has chosen for Saranrat the Hill Tribe outfit with pleated skirt...." (Bangkok Post, 25.3.87). Her costume consists of a Mong skirt and black sequined blouse. Thus the Mong skirt is so incorporated and defined within the boundaries of the ruling ideology that it has become a "national costume" representing Thailand in an international competition. It would be difficult to imagine a more incorporated state than being adopted as a national costume of Thailand. The use of the Mong costume in this way is widespread. At an annual parade in Chiang Mai to celebrate a yearly festival performers included musical bands complete with drum majorettes. One band dressed all its women in the Mong skirt. The leader, twirling her long stick, wore a very short Mong skirt, probably intended for a child. The effect was provocative, the association was *Chao Khao*.

The cultural show:

Most Thais with access to a television would be able to identify the dress of the *Chao Khao* from the many images viewed and the resulting associations they have formed. Foreigners visiting the country as tourists or on business are also exposed to this image in the more organised form

of cultural shows. If the tourist spends an evening in Chiang Mai ^{s/he has} ~~they have~~ the choice of several "cultural shows" for their entertainment. At these performances the visitor is presented first with Thai song and dance and then the song and dance of the *Chao Khao*.

its There are three main centres each with ~~their~~ ^{its} own regular performers. At two of the more popular venues the performance creates a distinction between the inside (civilised) Thai dances and the outside (wild) *Chao Khao* dances, with the entire audience moving to outdoor amphitheatres to watch the *Chao Khao* perform. The performances vary; some employ ethnic minorities, others dress up Thais in the clothes of the *Chao Khao*. In some cases the minority performer will wear the dress of their own ethnic group, in other cases the costumes of several ethnic groups are rolled into one outfit. Similarly some of the dances and songs are ethnically specific whilst others are invented for the occasion. The Mong women } for example } employed at the cultural centre perform an embarrassed dance which has been invented for them and with which they are unfamiliar. In contrast they sing their known songs with vigour. At the Diamond Hotel show the presentation is fairly sophisticated but the performers are awkward and embarrassed. As with all the shows, at the end of the performance the dancers 'wai' in Thai style and the audience is invited to dance with them

the *Ram Wong*, a Thai dance. Thus the cultural traditions of the different ethnic groups become confused and blurred and are finally contained within the Thai context.

Picture postcards and tourist views:

For the tourist, be they Thai or foreign, the various images of minorities which they find are often in opposition to the knowledge they hold about them. However, the process of incorporation of the image can be seen to take place. Very often touristic encounters occur in surreal situations, a result of the meeting of separate cultures. However, surrealism also has a normalising function. As the juxtapositions of surreal situations are repeated they become increasingly accepted and eventually are incorporated within the overall image. In surreal situations, especially when the observer is unfamiliar with the realities, costume plays a major role since it encapsulates the image in an immediate way.

Eventually images become self-referential. The picture postcard gives many examples of the incorporation process in action. For example on one picture postcard an Akha woman is shown in full and elaborate costume, eating an ice cream. The caption reads: "Even as ice cream and trappings of the 20th century invades her remote mountains, the Akha remain proud of their traditional styles". To the observer of the card the ice cream is an understood symbol which suggests the reality of the Akha

despite the fact that her elaborate costume actually refers to another reality. The ice cream therefore serves to bring Akha culture within the understandable context of the observer making it appear more real and in the process controlling the image and all it refers too. The world of the observer merges with the world of the Akha and in a way we are shown ourselves looking at the Akha. Whilst implying a continuum of reality between us and the people in the picture, the picture is actually sealed off from the actual context in which it was taken.

There are hundreds of similar juxtapositions on cards, stationery and consumer items. A carrier bag produced for Tantraphan, a large department store in Chiang Mai carries the image of smiling minorities and Thais, elephants and temples; all are incorporated within the same context, and the image is reproduced within the normality of a department store. A similar incorporation effect is achieved in another card which shows two Mong in full dress making a "wai" before a Thai Buddhist statue. The Mong are at once incorporated within a context understandable to any Thai observer. In a case such as this many consumers may realise that the representation of the Mong as Buddhists is false. Many other images are also realised to be false. The suggestion from some tourist literature that the *Chao Khao* are wild, primitive peoples is quickly rebuffed by the budget traveller who goes on a trekking holiday. However, in this case we can see how the image makers reinforce the stereotype. Having

created the various themes that characterise the *Chao Khao* as primitive, dirty, exotic, dangerous, opium producers, subversives and so on they then take part in the de-mythologising of certain parts of the image and in doing so receive credibility. Thus at the Tribal Research Institute in Chiang Mai a museum details the life of the *Chao Khao*. It exhibits life-size models in costume and has wall charts, once again predominated by accounts of opium cultivation. However, the Institute also has a library where the inquisitive can find out more and read some de-mythologising accounts of minority life. The Institute, as a state institution, thus takes part in de-constructing some of the myth and reinforcing other aspects of it. A large number of budget travellers seek out additional information through books or the Institute. They can assimilate some information which seems to contradict some of the dominant myths and which they themselves reject after visiting villages. They therefore reject some images but nevertheless accept many parts of the myth:

(All quotes from interviews with budget tourists). "I like the Meo best because they are more primitive"; "From the little I've seen the Hill Tribes show the greatest regard to their own culture instead of pampering to the west and trying to imitate Thai style"; "The Meo seem the least affected by other influences, oblivious to or perhaps rejecting other influences"; "They are a cultural opposite to the modern cities - a balance. They might help preserve forests from development".

The ideology by being rejected in part receives more credibility and the major themes are assimilated: "If they cause problems it's because of the opium and the fact they move around. It's difficult for them to keep their identity and living style"; "Primitive, simple, traditional and tranquil"; "No one knows exactly but it seems they cause soil degradation, upset the watershed, sell opium and harbour insurgents in the hills". And the reality, whatever it is, becomes part of a myth about which nothing is certain.

Through the juxtaposition of symbols the Mong textile is known to represent the Mong. The knowledge of what textile is Mong and what belongs to other *Chao Khao* is confused as described above. As a result a combination of certain images leads to conclusions based on limited knowledge. In Chiang Mai market I often saw Thai tourists point to any *Chao Khao* and say "meo". Meo, the Thai word for Mong, has become the generic term for the *Chao Khao*. This comment was made on the visual basis of their clothing, be they Akha, Lisu or Lahu. Thus the textile signifies "Meo", but it has also come to signify other associated *Chao Khao* traits.

Associated Images**The Mong textile and opium:**

With the appropriation of the meaning of the symbols of other cultures an emptying of the system occurs although the symbols of the other culture may remain. This has happened with the Mong textile in the Thai context and it also occurs with other aspects of Mong culture. Thus the appropriation of the image of Mong and opium has necessitated the discarding of what opium really means to the Mong as an integrated part of their culture and the replacement of this with the commercial opium image.

Williamson describes the effects of this process as follows: "Once a reality, like history, has been made into a symbol about which nobody knows for certain, its elements have become not significant of themselves, but signs; which like counters in a game may be exchanged with signs from any other system, including the product's own mythology" (1987:169).

The maintenance of uncertainty is important because it allows for manipulation and flexibility in interpretation. Thus the history of opium is transferred as a symbol and the tradition which is the Mong use of opium has in itself become a sign to be reinterpreted. The Mong lose their true history but gain a new transferred one and the two, opium and Mong, become confused. Opium as a drug with its associations of smoky

dens, mystique, low life, drug highs, being daring, wild and even primitive; all these associations are transferred to the Mong. In this way "Signification can mean that things and people are used to create mythic structures which are really nothing to do with them" (Williamson 1987:169). In time the image is assimilated by the Mong themselves who re-invent their own history.

1) To the external readers of Mong culture, visual experience of the Mong in Thailand exists largely as the dominant image. Observers live in the unreality because the reality is obscured by the perpetuation of this image. However, it seems real because this false reality is a shared one, it is commonly experienced by those around. Indeed : "It is... in fact... the desire to share in a social reality, which deprives us of a true knowledge of social realities" (Williamson 1987). The image of the Mong is important because it acts as the referent system, the point at which the dominant images and the Mong symbolic structure combine to form a system where, in fact, nothing is what it seems to be. The reference replaces the knowledge, content and ideas. As the constructed image is re-used it takes on a credibility which in turn reinforces the ideology which created it. The created image is seen to exist under the power of the ideology which then appears even more powerful. How then is this association between the Mong and opium projected? Doi Pui provides a clear example of the association in progress.

Within the context of the promotion of tourism the image of Mong and opium is a dominant feature. From the moment of arrival in the village of Doi Pui the opium poppy as symbol and fact is present. The exhibiting of the poppy husk with its characteristic scars where the sap has been drawn is forbidden, but the selling of the opium image in numerous other ways is not. Indeed the availability of the picture postcard of poppies is so widespread in Thailand that it takes on an almost national symbolism. The village stores juxtapose the opium symbol with the other items for sale, mainly Mong textiles. On some stalls the (forbidden) poppy husk lies on the counter next to rolls of batik and Mong skirts. The opium experience in Doi Pui is marketed as a major attraction of the village.

At the top end of the village is a "museum", now in a dilapidated condition. A trip to the "museum" costs 5 baht. It is sited in what is generally known as a flower garden; this area has a pool with splashing water and a variety of flowers including poppies. Their casual presence lends authenticity to the association between Mong and opium. The museum building is made of rough planks with a thatched roof. Inside there are several old tables scattered in one large room. On one table lies rotten basket ware, on a second skulls and feet of chickens, another carries mortars and pestles, an old rolling pin and a Mong back-basket. In one corner is a



Photograph 13: The juxtaposition of items for sale in Doi Pui: it is in front of these dolls (portraying the "hill tribes"), Mong skirts and hemp rolls, that opium pipes and poppy husks are displayed. Hanging in the background are bedspreads from the refugee camps and on a separate table are Thai Buddhist statues.

cabinet, partially smashed and containing Thai artifacts from an ancient site. There is a broken spinning wheel, a plough, a broken Mong pipe, knives, a horse saddle, a wire mesh trap and a spirit-altar which is labelled "Artifact used in ritualistic and magic art ceremonies (meo)". A piece of moth-eaten Karen woven cloth hangs by a map which purports to show the distribution of the *Chao Khao*.

Among all this apparently nonsensical display of artifacts the only written information relates to opium cultivation and land degradation. On prominent wall charts written in Thai and some English, the *Chao Khao* have been classified according to their cultivation of the opium poppy. The "Meo, Yao, Akha and Lisu" are thus characterised as opium producers whose "primary" land use and forest cultivation leads to "quick soil erosion and exhaustion". In contrast the "non-opium poppy growing tribes" are listed as the Karen, Lua, Htin and Khmu. Their "secondary forest, cyclical bush fallow system" is said to result in a more stable system.

Other charts detail the amount of opium land cultivated, the yield in kilos per hectare and an addiction rate of 6.84%. The use of the opium crop is listed as : Labour - 3%; Home consumption - 11%; Indebtedness - 12%; Bartering - 12%; Sale - 62% The figures are credited to five agencies: the Public Welfare Department (PWD); the

Committee for the Suppression of Illicit Trade (CSIT); the Office of the Narcotic Control Board (ONCB); the Ministry of Agriculture (MOA); the Tribal Research Centre (TRC).

By the door as one leaves hangs a Mong skirt with a Karen belt tied around the top. The only information written in the Mong script reads: "It is criticised that the Meo people are heavily engaged in opium production, probably more than any other tribe in Thailand." Thai and foreign tourists look bewildered as they enter this room which appears to have been carefully wrecked by time, leaving an apparent haphazard collection of artifacts and images.

The only written information pertains to opium cultivation, information which is apparently authorised by an impressive list of agencies. The only information in Mong reminds them that they stand accused of the crime of opium production. A second "museum" is being constructed and above the door hangs a sign which says : "Look Poppy!"

Having visited the village, the opium garden and the museum, some of the hapless tourists are then taken on a tour of the opium dens. These consist of a choice between three houses where in dark rooms addicts feed their habit. Inside, the Mong addict poses for photographs as he smokes his pipe. The tour guide collects the photo fee. Then each tourist (in this case a Japanese group) is presented with a marijuana cigarette which is dutifully lit with amusement and after a couple of puffs thrown on the ground. After this the tourist is led back down

through the village, past the shops with their mass of wares (including opium pipes) (but by this time just the costume of the Mong spells Opium), past the cardboard cutouts of Mong in dress through which you can put your face for a picture, past the shops letting out costumes for dressing up and to the square (and their transport back to Chiang Mai) where the widows and destitute try and sell mock silver chains and yet more opium pipes.

This happens day after day to hundreds of tourists. The meetings with addicts appear incidental but are an important part of the "experience". On one occasion I ^{am} ~~was~~ talking to a young addicted woman who ^{'s} ~~was~~ just finishing her morning smoke when an American woman ^{step} ~~enters~~ and on seeing the opium pipe searches out her camera and begs the addict to light up again for a picture. Dutifully she starts another pipe and receives 10 baht for the picture. The American consumes the image with the words "Oh great, very interesting" and leaves. The addict explains she began smoking to ease the illness she felt with her second pregnancy and then could not stop, although she would like to. She makes 50-60 baht a day from "photocalls" and spends almost all of it on opium. The roof is full of holes, an umbrella has been hung above the fire to keep it lit during the rain. The failure of the American to treat what she saw as a sad and serious dilemma lies in the fact that what she was seeing was not people but symbols. The importance of opium as a symbol of the Mong and other Chao Khao is that it perpetuates the myth and continues to do

use:
past or
present
not
like

so despite the facts of opium production. This is because opium has become a symbol which serves to mystify knowledge about the Mong. The "meo", the textile and opium are all treated as associated symbols which serve to perpetuate myths and limit knowledge.

The interpretation of the image

Thus we can see that whereas the Mong reading of their textile and of their own society has largely evolved as a result of common experience and understandings the reading of the Mong by various observers takes different forms according to the position of these observers. The above described representation of the Mong image is widely consumed and each individual interprets what ^{s/he} ~~they~~ sees according to what else ^{she/s/he} ~~they~~ knows. Some people are involved in more active interpretation of the image and textile, presenting it in specific ways to a specific audience for their consumption. I will now describe three of these professional views. The first interpretation is the view of a professor teaching art at Chiang Mai university, ^t The second the view of a Thai fashion designer holding a fashion show in Bangkok and the third the view offered by a western magazine reviewing ethnic arts.

with a
sentence

? is

Professional Views**The art professor:**

Our discussion started with a debate about what is art and what is craft in the Thai context but then moved on to where minority art fitted within this perception: "Thai art is often viewed as craft. It cannot be compared to western art - paintings, sculpture, graphics. It is difficult to find fine art in Thailand; first you have to swim through all the handicrafts. The highlight of Thai art is not to be found in the bronzes on their own but in their whole context. Typically Buddhist art is the basis of Thai art and the upper classes look at Thai crafts in a western sense. Religious art cannot be viewed alongside a coconut dipper - the dipper, to them, can't be viewed as a type of art. The sculpture department here says if it is not bronze or marble then it is not art. They are Bangkok trained people. Their idea of art refers only to the Bangkok trained eye, in other words the establishment concept of what is art and what is craft. Chulalongkorn for example is into western contemporary art; most of the others concentrate on Buddhist art. I believe Thai art is more craft-like and modern art can be classified as art. We must understand the environment of the artist... We want to produce contemporary art that is based in the Thai not the western context I would say Thai art can be called folk art. However minority art is primitive art. The whole approach. The use of colours, the texture and

lines respond to immediate use. Thai art is a more developed form of art. Mong art has no meaning; it is purely visual pleasure. There is no ritual or hidden meanings. It is very easy to jump into Hill Tribe art. It is a very basic response. Primitive art is more direct; folk art more hidden and playful. I believe the Chinese Mong are more sophisticated than the Thai Mong Hill tribe art was very popular ten years ago, then five years ago it just went "pop" and fell away. It's very low class now, as you can see in the night bazaar" (August 1987).

The fashion designer:

The promotion of Mong art within the Thai fashion scene has an interesting history. In the early 1980's it was especially popular with the Thai upper classes and was promoted by members of the Thai royalty. The textiles of the *Chao Khao*, particularly those of the Mong, were adapted to modern Thai concepts of fashion and numerous fashion shows were held. In the late 1980's the popularity of this type of dress had waned. Of growing interest were Lao and Northern Thai textiles with subtle textures and designs in silk. Some minority textiles, especially Karen and woven Lahu textile were also gaining popularity. The Mong textile was still in use but less widespread and applied with increasing restraint to new fashions. The following is an account of a fashion show held in 1980 to promote Thai interpretations of *Chao Khao*

design. It is written up in English in a scrapbook belonging to one of the designers: "Ransa Suanduanchai arranged her first show at Rama Tower hotel in Bangkok in 1980 On the spot light she and her special guest Khun Virot Bootara, the art director of the international school, Bangkok, came out with the original costume Marisa herself, represented as a Yao girl and Mr Virot was a Hmong who was drumming along the stage. As our hearts were beating, excited how we could feel all this powerfulness of his.... After the first scene, voice from the jungle - now started the new life. Music represents the near modern world and that was the point for us - city people - the fascinating design from the simply original...mixed with the plain dress. Just an idea, she said, the audience would create their own way for the fashion, I showed the way. All the hill tribe textile had been created by tribal women - I must say if the tribal women would dress up they should create their own thing in a natural way".

In this account in order for the *Chao Khao* to be credible in Thai society it has to be abstracted from its origins and worn by people whose status will give credit to the textile as art, hence the connection not only with an art director but also the international school which gives it international credibility. The exotic atmosphere of darkness and drumming further abstracts the dress from reality of everyday *Chao Khao* life. The references to the "simple and original" are both features of the *Chao Khao*

as some people would like to see them, placing them next to nature as forest people and uncivilised. The drumming is seen as powerful and related to the jungle rather than to the city with its sophisticated music. Once again the *Chao Khao* are associated with the primitive.

A later show by the same designer in 1987 exhibited the costume as whole pieces, almost as they were originally made although changes had been made to the length of skirts. The major differences were, of course, the context: Thai models with high heeled shoes, not Mong women with leggings and bare feet. The show was written up in the fashion section of the Bangkok Post: "There were representatives from each hill tribe community... who all presented a broad range of hand woven and embroidered fabrics. Each ensemble was accompanied by the tribal dance" (Bangkok Post 21.1.87). The Mong textiles become fabrics and the costume an ensemble. Once again to be credible it must be elevated from its status as handicraft to fashion design. But quite how to interpret this effort at textile interpretation continues to confuse as is shown by the reviewer who states: "There were touches of ethnicity with some original intent of style maintained but modified versions were shown with a dash of modern fashion". She is not quite sure what it is.

The attempt to place crafts within contexts understandable to the consumer often reflects the consumer's view of the society of origin. Through the use of language we can see

how crafts have to be 'elevated' to higher art forms. The next perspective is that as published in a western news magazine and it also raises issues of art and craft valuations.

The world consumer view:

The rising popularity of ethnic arts in the west has made them readily available to most consumers. Retailed in vast amounts from catalogues, department stores and small shops the range in price makes them available to consumers as small knick knacks or "works of art". They are promoted in different ways and a common theme, be they hanging baskets or Turkish kilims is to refer to the "soul" of the product: "Simplicity and spirituality are two of the watchwords of ethnic and folk art devotees....what collectors want to tap into it seems is creative work that is full of soul - and conspicuously free of first world hang-ups..... In a lot of western art you feel everything has been reduced to the intellect. It's very conceptual and it's very arid. Tribal art celebrates the mystery and excitement of the world; it celebrates the soul. ... Collector and dealer Patrizia Antonicelli says 'I've always been attracted by Art works that are made for the joy of it..My clients are people who appreciate these pieces not so much because they are valuable but because they are beautiful. They are well

travelled and they are adventurous. They dare to buy a type of art that isn't particularly well known, simply because they like it.'

And for the rest of us - the non-specialists who rarely venture out of Europe but would gladly deck our walls with some exotic folk ephemera - there's comfort in the thought that we can now just shimmy down to the local department store and pick up a wood carving or a kilim without breaking the bank, or the boundaries of good British taste" (Sunday Times Magazine 28.9.91).

Each of the above views referring to ethnic art ostensibly has a very different starting point: the academic, the fashion designer, the art collector. However what they all do is perpetuate an image of the primitive exotic. This is apparently communicated to them from the visual image of the craft and their limited knowledge of its circumstances of production. Why these people are looking for the soul of a product, why they wish to maintain and consume the primitive has been argued to be related to each individual's quest for self³ and their need to re-define themselves⁴. To achieve this people look to other cultures and choose aspects of those cultures in

³This is suggested by those writing on leisure and the tourist. One of the earliest discussions is by Veblen (1957), 'The Theory of the Leisure Class' (first published in 1899). Later works include 'The Tourist' by Dean MacCannel (1976).

⁴In their search for the authentic, consumers of third world products are involved in defining boundaries and the "other" and thereby also defining themselves.

which they see their central values held and reflected. The obsession with history, the return to nature, the past or future as representing some perfect ideal towards which we are always striving or striving to regain are motivating forces in the search for the "soul", perceived as lost to modern society. The same applies to the search for individualism and authenticity, aspects of life which are seen to have been lost under the modern system⁵ and which are (erroneously) thought to exist in the other. The experience of the other is also consumed and seen as an item that as Handler (1990) identifies, adds weight to the consumers personal history.

This search for authenticity and the "real experience" ~~are~~ ^{are} concepts widely used in the sociological analysis of modern western society, the commodification of culture and consumerism (Barthes 1988; Hebdige 1988; Williamson 1987). The quest for authenticity was identified as a desire to find alternatives to a dominant culture that was conceived to be increasingly artificial and oppressive⁶ (Miller 1987). It is particularly relevant to an

⁵Capitalism is sometimes held to have denied individualism in order to provide a common market for the goods and services it has created. In the same way those in charge of fashion limit individualism not just to create demand for goods but also to retain control over the range of fashions available.

⁶In western analysis it coalesced around the modernist movement in the arts and society, although this search for authenticity began well before modernism and is a theme that recurs in historical and cross-cultural art analysis

exploration of fourth world arts⁷ because they are so often linked with the other, the primitive and the authentic. Linked to the quest for authenticity is the search for realism, but ideas of the authentic become confused with notions of culture and tradition. Handler suggests this confusion arises because "all human experience is both real and symbolically mediated. To say that "original" experience is more real - and especially to imply that its superior reality is a function of some sort of non-symbolic immediacy - makes no sense if we accept the current anthropological understanding that symbolic mediation is essential to human experience" (1990:354). Reality therefore can only be communicated through symbolic mediation and through the use of symbols reality seems to disappear and be replaced by simulations. This leads Baudrillard to suggest that the density of the commodity symbolism is such that reality has been "imploded" (Baudrillard 1983:248). Thus the fate of "other" cultures in the search for the authentic is one of erosion. This is because in order to "consume" the authentic it has to be incorporated into a known discourse or into a discourse created to contain it. As Eco (1987) has argued: "In the hyper-reality of modern society, the

⁷The term third world arts has been expanded to fourth world arts by Grayburn (1976) to refer specifically to: "aboriginal or native peoples whose lands fall within the national boundaries and techno-bureaucratic administrations of the first second and third worlds. As such they are peoples without countries of their own, peoples who are usually in the minority and without the power to direct the course of their collective lives" (1976:1).

system works through the erosion of reality and fantasy". Thus the search for authenticity will always be elusive.

Of greater importance to this thesis than the reasons why people wish to identify and associate with the primitive and find, in the other, 'simplicity, spirituality and soul' is the fact that whilst maintaining this view of the primitive the consumer of the Mong textile contributes to the image of the Mong as an exotic⁸ feature of Thailand. In seeing in the other strange and primitive features, the consumer renders the other exotic. By contributing to the exoticisation of the Mong the consumer comes to comprise part of a ruling ideology⁹ which consigns peoples, such as the Mong, to a subordinate position.

The Maintenance of the image

Having described the reproduction and interpretation of the image I now ask how can such an image be maintained in the face of contradictory evidence and what is the effect on the Mong in Thailand?

⁸By the exotic I mean the attractively strange or unusual which is of necessity detached from a known reality because to be exotic it has to be strange and unknown.

⁹As proposed in 1980 (Abercrombie, Hill and Turner), the dominant ideology thesis asked how social systems survived class conflict and value differentiations and how social stability was possible. Although ruling ideologies are still seen as valid methods of interpretation the problem is now identified as that whilst we define society as a unity few individuals experience society as a unity (Turner 1990).

First of all it is important to recognise that, whilst a dominant image of the Mong can be identified, there is no one source intent on creating this image or an identifiable group of people whose ultimate aim is to assimilate minority peoples. Thus the process of assimilation, as McKinnon identifies, "is not a systematically elaborated policy and the structural assimilation is not a secret agenda, drawn up in some geopolitical think-tank hidden away in a bureaucratic bunker" (1989:349). Indeed the lack of a focal power determines the weakness of possible opposition. And it is this, the diffuse nature of the controlling ideology, which limits the power of the minorities. However, although there is no one identifiable source of the dominant image, the power system itself can be analysed and the prevailing ideology can be seen to represent a certain group of people. The images of the Mong which are created and then defined and controlled are as we have seen upheld by many sources¹⁰. The media, the family, state institutions, different government departments, the arts, fashion, religion; all of these agencies systematically incorporate and reproduce the dominant themes in relation to the *Chao Khao*. Those few who object are in such a minority that their voices can hardly be

¹⁰The role of different parts of the social formation in perpetuating submission to the ruling ideology has been identified by Althusser (1971). He suggests these groups do not work together naturally but in what he calls "teeth gritting harmony" so that the ruling ideology is reproduced "precisely in its contradictions".

heard. The objectors are usually already defined outside the territory of Thailand as foreign commentators and human rights advocates and in combating them the issues of nationalism and national integrity can be bought into play. Thus whilst I do not suggest that a ruling ideology exists as a defined dominant whole, an ideological force cannot be dismissed and can be seen as a significant influence in defining who the Mong are in Thailand. Because the Mong do not have the means to contribute to this definition they cannot forcefully challenge it.

The power exercised by this group will determine the dominant discourses about reality and these become the dominant ideologies. This hegemony according to Hebdige (1988) is a situation in which "a provisional alliance of certain social groups can exert total social authority over other subordinate groups ... not by enforced dominance but by winning and shaping consent...". They have to maintain it by framing all competing definitions within their range. Thus in regard to the Mong the dominant power allows them to exist, and by dispensing this permission gives the impression that they have the power to control them. In this way "Subordinate groups are contained within an ideological space....which appears to be permanent and natural" (Hebdige 1988). In "Mythologies" (1988) Barthes shows how hidden sets of rules and conventions exist through which meanings, which are created by those in power, become universal and come to characterise a whole society. I have already

identified part of this process in relation to the Mong: the Mong have been characterised as both harmful and harmless. Harmful traditions involve opium, swiddening and subversive activities and attributed group character traits such as being stubborn, uncompromising or inward looking peoples. In contrast their costume, dance and religion are seen as harmless. On the resettlement of villages in Pa Glang, the officials encouraged the retention of these "harmless" traditions but sought to eradicate the harmful ones. Clearly what is seen as harmful or harmless depends on the position of the observer and the gross generalisations about the character and habits¹¹ of the *Chao Khao*, although proven false, continue to be perpetuated. The Mong are characterised as opium addicts and always ready to fight; the Karen characterised as a peaceful people. This image continues despite the facts that the Karen in a poverty stricken state increasingly turn to opium and are in Burma a major group involved in armed resistance against the Burmese government. Meanwhile the Mong in Thailand are arguably one of the groups who are adapting better than others and integrating more of their members into Thai society¹².

¹¹Many researchers note the rejection of these stereotypes by the *Chao Khao*. Leo Alting Von Geusau writes of urban based 'developers' who have propagated a mythology of their own which: "...assumes that the Akha are more conservative than other ethnic groups, and less willing to accept agricultural improvements because of their religion. This is far from true" (1983:256).

¹²Although there is no actual 'integration' survey and comparatively few Mong could be called integrated, there is good evidence of Mong who have done well in business and many who have become civil servants.

The two stereotypes of the culturally intact, simple and primitive peoples and the destructive and dangerous minorities are held simultaneously and the views actively complement each other. This definition of the image of minorities is not essentialist since this suggested image is not an invariable ideological core which can only be read in one way. These are common readings of the Mong image but they are not the only possible readings¹³. The creation of these apparently permanent and natural definitions is how mythology, according to Barthes (1988) performs its function of 'naturalisation and normalisation'. But the hegemony which results from this process is not permanent; it has to be constantly proven because the consensus can be challenged and overpowered. It is this possibility for fractured consensus which highlights the weakness in the early dominant ideology thesis and its relationship to popular culture as postulated by Adorno and Horkheimer (1979). More recent interpretations deny total incorporation allowing for the possibility for negotiation between dominant and subordinate values: "Bourgeois culture is not simply

¹³The process of identifying an ideological force has raised much debate. Abercrombie (1990) identifies four features in his example in popular culture. These are that: 1. A particular (hegemonic) view of the world is encapsulated, even if it has to accommodate other views. 2. This view of the world is widely available. 3. The dominant ideology conceals, misrepresents and secures an order of domination. 4. This concealment is in the interests of the ruling group. Although Abercrombie is here referring to popular culture as the force through which ideology is transmitted the four features can stand as identifying the transmission, by whatever means, of a dominant ideology.

dominant. One cannot speak of domination here but rather the struggle for hegemony - that is moral, cultural and political leadership" (Abercrombie 1990:201). In this way it becomes clear that the identification of a ruling ideology does not mean other ideologies do not exist and cannot, indeed co-exist. But their co-existence usually means one dominates the other which becomes not dominated out of existence but a site of struggle (Abercrombie 1990). In this way dominant and subordinate groups can be seen to co-exist with the latter taking a pragmatic stance rather than adopting the ideals of the ruling groups.

The ruling group loosely identified, thus seek to confine the Mong within the representation of the ruling group, although as I have suggested they may not be able to totally dominate and other discourses compete for attention. So we must now ask how do alternative discourses interact? The dominant groups in order to control marginal groups have to attempt to control the nature of discourse and thereby incorporate subordinate groups. As Foucault (1970) suggests, a group may gain power by controlling the rules of discourse and exercise power by limiting the participation of others in that discourse.

By what mechanisms, therefore, do the controlling group exert this ability to describe and contain the other? Hebdige's (1988) analysis of western subcultures can

usefully be drawn upon here¹⁴; for subculture we can read minority culture. He illustrates how the incorporation of the other takes two forms. First by the conversion of the signs of the other (dress, music etc) into mass produced objects which he calls the commodity form; and secondly through the labelling and re-definition of deviant behaviour by dominant groups - the police, the media, the judiciary - which he calls the ideological form: "As soon as the original innovations which signify subculture are translated into commodities and made generally available, they become frozen. Once removed from their private contexts by the small entrepreneurs and big fashion interests who produce them on a mass scale, they become codified, made comprehensible, rendered at once public property and profitable merchandise. In this way the two forms of incorporation (the semantic/ideological and the real/commercial) can be said to converge on the commodity form" (Hebdige, 1988). Thus he identifies the ideological and commercial manipulation of culture and the ultimate commodification of the image. My examination of the way in which the *Chao Khao* are represented by the groups involved in maintaining the ruling ideology bears this out. Some groups continuously reiterate the stereotypes, slowly redefining and extending or withdrawing the

¹⁴Hebdige's analysis of western subcultures is useful in analysing Mong culture. The comparison is applicable because in both cases the subordinate group exists in ideological opposition to a dominant culture. The mechanisms used to incorporate the subordinate group can generally be applied to ruling ideologies, although the specific form of incorporation differs.

boundaries of definition. This especially involves the media in the form of the written press and television. The association of images such as opium and the Mong as described above and reproduced within the fashion system serve to control the nature of discourse. The most powerful forces in reproducing this image are those whose role is to communicate information to a wide audience. This includes the media in the form of press and entertainment and the visual image as communicated through fashion.

In controlling the discourse the dominant groups can limit the amount of information available. Thus the image presented exoticises and at the same time reduces the difference of the *Chao Khao*, ultimately reducing them to identifiable stereotypes and incorporating them within the dominant view. Because the exotic becomes a stereotype which appears to be fixed it can be incorporated as a whole into world views. This stereotypic definition does not contain complicating differences. The exotic image of the minority groups of Thailand are all very similar. Irrespective of ethnic differences, in the most crude representations they are all grouped together as primitive, simple peoples, close to nature with colourful clothes, rhythmic dances and paganistic rituals. This lack of difference, as already described, serves to limit the available information about the *Chao Khao* and at the same time has a normalising effect because it appears that the exotic can be categorised. Whilst the intent behind

exoticisation is to maintain the unusual, the effect is to incorporate the exotic within the categories defined by the ruling groups. Thus through trivial representation the *Chao Khao* are reduced to meaningless exotica. This process of categorising the other within a defined ideological space is, according to Hebdige, a way of dealing with what is often perceived as a threat: "Two basic strategies have been evolved for dealing with this threat [of the other]. First [it can] be trivialised, naturalised and domesticated. Here the difference is simply denied (otherness reduced to sameness).

Alternatively, the other can be transformed into meaningless exotica.. in this case the difference is consigned to a place beyond analysis" (1988:97). Thus the apparent contradiction in Thailand whereby the *Chao Khao* are actively promoted as culturally rich groups but at the same time assimilation is encouraged, proves to be not a contradiction but complementary activities, because the exotic promotion is reductive and encourages partial assimilation.

Ultimately the strength of the dominant image serves to reinforce itself. The portrayal of the Mong as a resistant group, not wanting to integrate and persisting in opium cultivation is one face of the image. However, the second face is of the Mong who, despite all these strong elements to their society, nevertheless are acquiescing to pressure and are reducing opium cultivation, "integrating" into Thai life and being

↓
punctuation

resettled. Thus despite their separateness, they are nevertheless not autonomous and subject to outside influence. In this way as Barthes says, "myth can always, as a last resort, signify the resistance which is brought to bear against it" (1988). By doing so it reinforces aspects of the dominant groups and their power. As I have shown, some of the Mong have themselves adopted the dominant images and criticise themselves for their continued production of opium because of the view which they have assimilated that it is harmful to other nations. This view is held despite the fact that the Mong, as a whole group, are losing a crop which may in fact be the only realistic income sustaining the Mong in Thailand. However, those Mong who do incorporate this view, only do so when they have discontinued production and have secured alternative incomes. This incorporation of a dominant view represents a pragmatic choice and reflects the fragmentation of Mong society as a cohesive group.

Thus the dominant groups can be seen to organise information in such a way as to reduce the threat of the other. What is the effect, therefore, on the Mong of this attempt to organise the meanings of their culture when they hold very different understandings?.

To varying degrees, as I have described, the Mong can be said to have some control over the uses of their material culture. They can produce or decline to produce

commercial items, sell or retain old skirts, wear Mong or Thai dress, defy new Mong rules concerning *noob ncoos* or abide with the rules. Whilst the circulation of the textile is within the Mong context then in its old or commercial form its interpretation lies within the Mong community. However, with the introduction of the consumer (and it must here be re-emphasised that the power of the consumer, as demonstrated, is considerable) the textile encounters new ideological forces. The linking of symbols such as "meo", textile and opium and the repetitive reproduction of the stereotype as described above enables readers (consumers) of the image to let one sign stand for another. In this way the Mong textile can stand for the stereotyped image of the *Chao Khao*. Importantly this reading does not involve the negating of the Mong reading of their textile and material culture, because the Mong are both producers and consumers. However, they are not the only consumers and of the commercial textile they are among many other consumers. What has emerged is the very different contexts in which the Mong and Thai readings must be made. The multiple possible readings of any text are indicative of the fact that not all messages are homogeneous. The problem arises in the fact that for a society to exist it has to "represent itself as a unity at the ideological level of the imaginary" (Turner 1990:245). The question as to who experiences society as a unity and whether it is seen as a unity raises complicated issues which challenge social identities. Whilst I argue that within the context of the Thai reading

a specific image of the Mong is projected I am aware that I am referring to the dominant image among a choice of other images¹⁵. My reading of these images functions as an hypothesis about how the consumers of the image respond.

Whilst this Thai image of the Mong is projected by various means, the Mong production and use of their textile suggests alternative readings, and alternative knowledge about the Mong. However, this knowledge is not easily accessible to those outside Mong society. In order for the Mong to make use of what they know about their culture and take control over their own representation they have to communicate effectively. This means access to channels of communication which as Raymond Williams argues are part of the political economy of knowledge: "Means of communication are themselves means of production constituting indispensable elements both of the productive forces and of the social relations of production" (1982:50). Control over that communication has enormous significance because if the Mong could control their image in Thailand and overseas they would have considerably more control over their political life. However, as is increasingly clear even if the Mong did have more access

¹⁵The unity of the image is particularly relevant to post-modern analysis of western society where the fragmentation and diversification of modern cultures by the forces of consumerism and global markets have led to the perceived breakdown of dominant ideologies. It is perhaps less relevant to the culture of the Mong where such forces are just beginning to be felt.

to channels of communication their message is not homogeneous and alternative discourses of value are also to be found within Mong cultural knowledge.

One of the questions I asked earlier was what is the effect on the Mong in Thailand of the reproduction and maintenance of the dominant image. The more that one discourse dominates the more its representation organises meaning and the more weight it carries. Some Mong assimilate the knowledge of the dominant discourse, accepting the picture of themselves as it is shown to them. Under the pressures described earlier, Mong society is changing its frame of reference. This means that marginal discourses within Mong society, which as I have shown contradict traditional forms, cannot be accommodated because the common knowledge of the Mong (which in itself contains a dominant knowledge) no longer refers to a common frame of reference. The result is the weakening of the Mong discourse and, whilst some aspects of ethnic identity are maintained, the Mong value system is disturbed and partially emptied. The effect is partial incorporation and the increasing process of assimilation.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has investigated the relationship between the Mong textile and the Mong as a social and ethnic group in Thailand. In analysing the social life of the Mong textile I have made suggestions of use value and interpreted how the textile is being used. I do not suggest any definitive "meaning", rather ^{I ask in what way} ~~asking how~~ do Mong textiles ^{have meaning} ~~mean~~ and in what way is change accommodated. The extent to which a common meaning is attainable is, as I have illustrated, a subject of much debate. Undoubtedly meaning can be construed within the traditional and changing context of textiles. But the question which has been clearly illustrated is how far can we say my meaning is anyone else's meaning? ^{How} is it construed? ^A and what sort of "meaning" are we referring to? ^(?) Hobart writes: "If meaning is partly contextual how can the infinite range of possible contexts delimit a coherent object of study" (1986:131). He suggests we need "the kind of detailed knowledge of how people use their cultural representations which to date has rarely been considered necessary" (1986:132). But how much knowledge do we in fact need? The defeatist answer seems to be an endless depth of knowledge and ultimately an impossible acquisition. The difficulties are thus fully recognisable, yet clearly, as I have shown, communication does take place. I have therefore tried to show how

recognition of the limitations can be incorporated into the explanation of sign systems, and thus make a basis for the inter-cultural explanation of the Mong textile. Barley argues that "symbolic process is part of the universal equipment of mankind and so may be studied comparatively. Were this not so, it is hard to see how cross cultural comprehension would even be possible" (1983:98). However it is important to explore relationships between signs and the motivation behind sign systems, not attempting to answer such questions as "what does it mean?" or "why do people do this?". The answers to these questions are currently beyond our ability of cross cultural analysis. The "rules" which have been used by anthropologists to interpret cultures have to be recognised not as rules but as flexible structures. Culture should be read not as text but as discourse, and therefore, as Parkin (1982) suggests, unpredictable but not totally free of constraints.

One of the past shortcomings in anthropological study has been the reluctance to consider the author position in any analysis. The author clearly must acknowledge the influences over the text. Power is thus central to interpretation. "Power which comes from unequal access to semantic creativity" (Parkin 1982:xiv). This power exists within, as well as between, cultures. It is both the power within Mong society and the power outside that shapes perceptions of Mong textiles. There is also the power between peoples and societies i.e. the

interpretation which "presupposes as many possible variations of understanding as there are people who can talk to each other" (Parkin 1982:xiv). This understanding is a matter of degree if mutual intelligibility is possible in the first place and the matter of degree becomes the field for academic debate. The perceived changes in the uses of Mong textiles can therefore be conceived as the result of a power struggle. A struggle for power over personal autonomy, economic sufficiency, personal expression and identity. The struggle exists within and beyond Mong society; between the Mong and those who attempt to interpret the Mong; between the Mong and those consumers who buy their commercial goods and between the consumers and their own struggle to define themselves in relation to others. In this sense the struggle is about semantic creativity.

Interpreting meaning presupposes a "universal understanding" and as Parkin argues: "The view that meaning results from the relationship between signs limits our recognition of the human capacity to initiate interpretation" (1982:xii). Recognising that interpretation is only limited by the number of people interpreting, we also have to assume some communality of understanding for communication to take place at all. As this study has shown, communality of understanding can be based on one or two signs out of numerous possible signs and the understanding is, therefore, only partial. This meaning, however deducible, is never static; it is

constantly subject to fluctuation and change and thus the importance in interpretation lies in focusing on discourse. In this analysis of the Mong textile, discourse between different interpretations has been shown to reflect fragmentation and breaks. Thus although communication of the same meaning in different contexts is limited, the focus of analysis on discourse between contexts has illustrated the importance of power relations and the interaction between different ideologies and interpretations.

The interpretation of Mong textiles

In this account of the social life of the Mong textile alternative discourses of value have been described which demonstrate the difference in cultural and social experience and understanding. The differences first explored were those between Mong men and women and between Mong women. My argument suggested that material culture is used within a society to reproduce and legitimate social relations. However, before this could be demonstrated the social relationships of Mong society were explored. It became clear that the social units commonly used to describe Mong relations are inadequate, not encompassing all of women's relationships or fulfilling all of their needs. Alternative views of Mong social relationships demonstrated that Mong women existed as both

insiders and outsiders in relation to the male lineage, a perspective which was shown to be validated by the use of the Mong textile in the village context.

Whilst Mong women at different times in their social lives have been both insiders and outsiders in relation to the lineage dramatic changes in Mong social, economic and political life in Thailand have prompted a change in the balance of social relations. Those women who are outsiders (i.e. in the position of widow, separated or divorced woman) or who are poor, have taken advantage of new opportunities to consolidate their outside position and create more stability for themselves. Whilst some Mong women in reaction to conflict revert back to the status quo in social relations, others promote radical changes in their lives, choosing to establish independent households, separate from their lineages of marriage. This has been in part achieved through the income they earn by trading in textiles. The changes in social relations have also been reflected in changed textile use, where the validating role of the textile in reinforcing social relationships is also undergoing change and the textile is shown to be accommodating new roles as Mong produce under new social relations and in new urban contexts. Urban Mong are shown to be using textiles as a means of explaining new urban lifestyles, whilst still retaining links with the village. The new uses also reflect generational differences and the extreme

difference in experience between cosmopolitan and more parochial Mong. Changes in textile use reflect radical changes in Mong social order and understanding.

Whilst these changes in value contribute to and reflect a fragmentation of Mong society from within, other uses of the textile outside of Mong society are affecting change in the form of incorporation and partial assimilation.

The social life of the textile is not limited to Mong use and in its commercial form I follow the textile into the wider arena of use in the Thai political context. It is here that we see how the uses of the textile in reinforcing stereotypic images of the Mong are contributing to the assimilation of the Mong as an ethnic group in Thailand and it is also here that the power of the consumer is demonstrated. The associations drawn between visual images and verbal stereotyping leads the Mong textile to stand for all *Chao Khao* and for the alleged associated problems including opium production. This dominant image involves the stereotyping of all *Chao Khao* without complicating differences. The lack of difference (or the inability to distinguish difference) limits and controls the amount of available information and enables the representation of the Mong to be controlled, categorised and normalised. In the process the *Chao Khao* are contained and the threat of the "other" is reduced. However, whilst the dominant image is perpetuated it does not mean other valuations cease to exist and the battle between alternative discourses of

value depends on the power over communication. Ultimately the battle is between the Mong attempting to say who they are (both within and outside of their society) and observers of the Mong who appropriate their symbols with alternative representations. The textile is thus seen to be used to legitimate and reproduce social relations both within Mong society and also outside of their communities in relation to the Thai society with which they interact.

Alternative discourses of value and the battle for control

It is therefore my thesis that the commercialisation of Mong material culture and image form a central part of the assimilation dilemma. There is considerable political effect in the commercialisation of culture, one result of which is the partial incorporation of the "other" within the definition of a dominant ideology. As I have demonstrated, the ideology which is carried in the textile in its production and use in the traditional context, is in conflict with the ideology of the textile in its commercial context. Despite the different readings there is some degree of coherence which enables basic links to be made. Importantly the fact that different readings appear to co-exist questions the ability of an ideology to totally dominate: as Abercrombie writes: "a text cannot be ideological if it contains contradictory or contrary codings...a set of texts is not likely to constitute an ideological formation if the texts are incoherent with

each other" (1990:204). A text may, at the same time, hold a dominant or preferred meaning and express an ideology which is dominant in society, even if the two are not connected. Thus as Abercrombie identifies: "a text may be organised by dominant themes which bear little relationship to a socially dominant ideology" (1990:205). Whilst this *may* happen it is also clear that the more one particular discourse dominates, the more it organises meanings and the greater ideological weight it carries. Thus we return to the Mong textile as a battleground for establishing dominance. It is a battle between the Mong saying who they are in the face of an alternative image, the makers of which appropriate the symbols of Mong material culture for a rival interpretation. A subordinate discourse is, nonetheless, still present and provides a potentially discordant note. Because there are many possible readings of a wide range of associated texts (not just the Mong textile but other associated images) there are possibilities for change in the dominance of the readings. However, it is unlikely that ideologically opposed readings, such as the textile in the commercial and the village setting will overlap because the links between them are very weak and, as I have shown, the readings clash.

The "modern Mong", those who are drawn into conflicting contexts and those who are at the forefront of reinterpreting their culture under very oppressive circumstances, attempt to make something of what is made

of them and therefore rise above their subordinate position. The image, as they are shown it, makes them acutely aware of being Mong, but in attempting to make something of themselves the Mong are confronted with a dilemma. Their culture, as it changes its frame of reference, no longer refers to a common knowledge. The fragmentation of the Mong in Thailand as an ethnic group produces marginal discourses within the broader consciousness of minority experience. The new, fragmented consciousness expresses itself in ways which contradict traditional forms and although rooted in Mong experience cannot be accommodated in traditional context.

In the end the Mong parody their own culture. The women who sell their image as opium addicts become even more extreme caricatures of addicts. The street traders who dress up in Mong costume only for the night bazaar but in daytime wear Thai *phasins*¹, dress with extravagance usually reserved for festivals. The young Bangkok educated boys who wear extravagant costumes for New Year do so almost mocking their own customs. All of these people are reacting to their own image as it has been shown to them. In many ways they become larger than life. The Mong of Doi Pui rarely dress down. They turn up at Chiang Mai petrol stations in their small trucks and black Mong trousers; they pile into the back of trucks and drive noisily through town almost shouting their presence

¹a Thai wrap around skirt.

as Mong. The Mong of Pa Glang, who stage extravagant and expensive New Year festivals but on a daily basis try to conform to a Thai image, are on the one hand attempting assimilation which they cannot achieve and on the other hand maintaining difference. But what is this difference? The maintenance of this difference only as parody becomes exoticism.

The importance of the Mong textile within this flexible process of ideology construction and maintenance lies partly in the fact that it is one aspect of culture which from appearance seems to be certain. It is a tangible cultural expression which can be seen, physically held and, if wanted, obtained. However, this is the false face of material objects as Miller identifies: "the very physicality of the object which makes it appear so immediate, sensual and assimilable belies its actual nature material culture is one of the most resistant forms of cultural expression in terms of our attempts to comprehend it" (1987:3). As a physical entity it is wrongly thought that it is one part of culture that can be caught without change and so it is exhibited in museums and traded as a piece of exotica which is held to capture the "soul" of the people who made it. As a sign of complete Mong culture it is also thought that it can be incorporated whole into a dominant ideology, whilst other aspects of Mong culture and society change. As a symbol it comes to stand, through association, for all things which are part of the Mong image and thus it plays its

role in the creation of the Mong image. The dilemma lies in the fact that although it can exist as a whole and appear unchanged it is, as I have shown, inevitably part of the Mong cultural experience, (an experience which itself is increasingly varied) and as such it exists in separate ideological settings. The weakness of the Mong textile as a cultural symbol is that, like other pieces of material culture, it can retain physical form and shape in new ideological settings but it is vulnerable to exoticisation, misinterpretation and the fate, within abstracted contexts, of being rendered unintelligible.

Bibliography

- Abercrombie, N., Hill, S. and Turner, B.S.(eds), 1990, **Dominant Ideologies**, Unwin Hyman, London.
- Adorno, T. 1989, **Aesthetic Theory**, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London.
- Adorno, T. and Horkheimer, M. 1979, **Dialectic of Enlightenment**, Verso Editions, London.
- Ahern, E. 1974, 'Affines and the Ritual of Kinship', in Wolf, A.P. (ed), **Religion and Ritual in Chinese Society**, Stanford University Press, Stanford.
- Althusser, L. 1971, 'Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses' in **Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays**, New Left Books, London.
- Appadurai, A. 1988, **The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective**, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Ardner, S. 1975, 'Belief and the Problem of Women', in Ardner, S (ed) **Perceiving Women**, Malaby Press, London.
- Baffie, J. 1989, 'Highlanders as Portrayed in Thai penny Horribles', in McKinnon, J. and Vienne, B. (eds), **Hill Tribes Today**, White Lotus-Orstam, Bangkok.
- Baizerman, S. 1992, 'The Jewish Kippa Sruga and the Social Construction of Gender in Israel', in Barnes, R. and Eicher, J.B. (eds), **Dress and Gender, Making and Meaning in Cultural Contexts**, Berg Publishers, Oxford.
- Barley, N. 1983, 'The Warp and Woof of Culture', **Rain (Royal Anthropological Institute News)** December, 1983:21.
- Barnes, R. 1989, **The Ikat Textiles of Lamalera, A Study of an Eastern Indonesian Weaving Tradition**, E. J. Brill, Leiden.
- Barnes, R. and Eicher, J.B. (eds) 1992, **Dress and Gender, Making and Meaning in Cultural Contexts**, Berg Publishers, Oxford.
- Barney, G. L. 1961, **The Meo of Xieng Khoung Province**, University of California, Los Angeles.
- Barthes, R. 1988, **Mythologies**, Paladin, London.
- Baudrillard, J. 1983, **Simulations**, Semiotext, New York.
- Bean, S. S. 1991, 'Ghandi and Khadi, the Fabric of Indian Independence', in Weiner, A. B. and Schneider, J. **Cloth and Human Experience**, Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, D.C.

- Berger, J. 1972, **Ways of Seeing**, BBC Publications, London.
- Berger, P. & Luckman, T. 1967, **The Social Construction of Reality**, Penguin, London.
- Bernatzik, H.A. 1970, **Akha and Miao: Problems of Applied Ethnography in Further India**, Trans. HRAF, New Haven.
- Bertrais, Y. 1978, **The Traditional Marriage among the White Hmong of Thailand and Laos**, Hmong Centre, Chiang Mai.
- 1964, **Dictionnaire Hmong (Meo Blanc) - Francaise**, Mission Catholique (OMI), Vientiane, Laos. Reprinted 1978, Assumption Press, Bangkok.
- Bhruksasri, W. 1989, 'Government Policy: Highland Ethnic Minorities', in McKinnon, J. and Vienne, B. (eds), **Hill Tribes Today**, White Lotus-Orstam, Bangkok.
- Bhruksasri, W. and McKinnon, J. (eds), 1983, **Highlanders of Thailand**, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur.
- Binney, G.A. 1971, 'The Social and Economic Organisation of Two White Meo Communities in Northern Thailand'. (Unpublished doctoral thesis, Advanced Projects Research Agency, Department of Defence, Washington, D.C.)
- Bo Gua, 1975, 'Opium Bombs and Trees: The Future of the Hmong Tribesmen in Northern Thailand,' **Journal of Contemporary Asia** 5(1), 70-81.
- Boas, F. 1962, **Anthropology and Modern Life**, Norton, New York.
- Boserup, E. 1965, **The Conditions of Agricultural Growth**, Allen and Unwin, London.
- 1970, **Woman's Role in Economic Development**, Allen and Unwin, London.
- Bouhdiba, A. 1976, 'The Impact of Tourism on Traditional Values and Beliefs in Tunisia'. Paper presented to Joint UNESCO-World Bank Seminar, Washington, D.C.
- Bourdieu, P. 1986, **Distinction**, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London.
- Boxer, M. 1982, 'For and about Women: the Theory and Practice of Women's Studies in the United States', in Keohane, N., Rosaldo, M., and Gelpi, B. (eds), **Feminist Theory: A Critique of Ideology**, 237-71, Harvester Press, Brighton.
- Bradley, P. 1983, 'Identity: The Persistence of Minority Groups' in Bhruksasri, W. and McKinnon, J. (eds), **Highlanders of Thailand**, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur.

- Brass, T. 1986, 'The Elementary Structures of Kinship, Unfree Relations and the Production of Commodities', **Social Analysis** 20, 56-59.
- Bühler, A. 1974, Hanfverarbeitung und Batik bei den Meau in Nordthailand, *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*.
- Burke, P. 1978, **Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe**, Temple Smith, London.
- Callaway, H. 1992, 'Dressing for Dinner in the Bush: Rituals of Self-Definition and British Imperial Authority', in Barnes, R. and Eicher, J.B. (eds), **Dress and Gender, Making and Meaning in Cultural Contexts**, Berg Publishers, Oxford.
- Cambell, M. 1978, **From the Hands of the Hills**, Transasa, Hong Kong.
- Carpenter, J. 1976, **Eskimo Realities**, Holt Rinehart and Winston, New York.
- Chaliand, G. 1989, **Minority Peoples in the Age of Nation States**, Pluto Press, London.
- Charlton, A. 1976, 'Modern Ceramics in the Teotihuacan Valley', in Graburn, N.H. (ed) **Ethnic and Tourist Arts**, University of California Press, Berkeley.
- Chindarsi, N. 1976, **The Religion of the Hmong Njua**, The Siam Society, Bangkok.
- 1983, 'Hmong Shamanism' in Bhruksasri, W. and McKinnon, J. (eds), **Highlanders of Thailand**, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur.
- Clammer, J. 1978, **The New Economic Anthropology**, Macmillan, London.
- Clarke, S.R. 1911, **Among the Tribes of S.W. China**, China Inland Mission, London.
- Clifford, J. 1988, **The Predicament of Culture**, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass.
- Clifford, J. and Marcus, G.E. (ed) 1986, **Writing Culture**, University of California Press, Berkeley.
- Cohen, E. 1983a, 'The Dynamics of Commercialised Arts, The Meo and Yao of North Thailand', **Journal of the National Research Council of Thailand**, 15, (1), Jan-June.
- 1983b, 'Hill Tribe Tourism', in Bhruksasri, W. and Mckinnon, J. (eds), **Highlanders of Thailand**, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur.

- 1984, 'The Sociology of Tourism: Approaches, Issues and Findings', in the **Annual Review of Sociology** 10,373-92
- 1987, 'A Cosmic Symbol in Hmong (Meo) Textile Design', (Unpublished Paper, Department of Sociology and Social Anthropology, Hebrew University of Jerusalem).
- Cohen, E., Lissak, L. and Almagor, U. 1985, **Comparative Social Dynamics**, Westview Press, London.
- Cohen, P. 1981, 'The Politics of Economic Development in Northern Thailand, 1967-1979', (Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of London).
- Cohn, B.S. 1991, 'Cloth, Clothes and Colonialism: India in the Nineteenth Century', in Weiner, A.B. and Schneider, J., **Cloth and Human Experience**, Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, D.C.
- Conquergood, D. 1986, 'Fabricating Intercultural Exchange: The Textile Art of Hmong Refugee Women', Presented at the Convention of Speech Communication Association, Chicago.
- Cooper, R.G. 1978, 'Unity and Division in Hmong Social Categories in Thailand', In Chen, P. and Evers, H. (eds), **Studies in ASEAN Sociology and Social Change**, Chopmen Enterprise, Singapore.
- 1979, 'The Tribal Minorities of Northern Thailand: Problems and Prospects', in **Southeast Asian Affairs**, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, Singapore.
- 1980, **Patterns of Work Organisation in a Situation of Agricultural Transition**, Institute of S.E. Asian Studies, Singapore.
- 1983, 'Sexual Inequality among the Hmong', in Bhruksasri, W. and Mckinnon, J. (eds), **Highlanders of Thailand**, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur.
- 1984, **Resource Scarcity and the Hmong Response**, Singapore University Press, Singapore.
- Court, L.A. 1991, 'The Changing Fortunes of Three Archaic Japanese Textiles', in Weiner, A.B. and Schneider, J. **Cloth and Human Experience**, Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, D.C.

Dark, P.J.C. 1978, 'What is Art for Anthropologists', in Greenhalgh, M. and Megaw, V. **Art in Society**, Gerald Duckworth, London.

Darish, P. 1991, 'Dressing for the Next Life: Raffia Textile Production and Use among the Kuba of Zaire', in Weiner, A.B. and Schneider, J., **Cloth and Human Experience**, Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, D.C.

Deal, D.M. 1971, National Minority Policy in Southwest China 1911-1965, (Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Washington).

----- 1973, 'Sources of Gola Artistry', in Warren L. D'Azevedo (ed): **The Traditional Artist in African Societies**, Indiana University Press, Bloomington.

De Beauclair, I. 1956, 'Ethnic Groups of South China', in Tsu-Kyang and Eberhard, W. (eds), **Asian Folklore and Social Life Monographs**, Taipei.

----- 1960, 'A Miao Tribe of South-West Kweichow and its Cultural Configuration', **Bulletin of the Institute of Ethnology**, Academia Sinica, Nankang 10.

Dessaint, W.Y. 1975, 'People of the Clouds: The Miao of Southeast Asia', in Dessaint and Migliazza (eds), **Anthropology and Linguistics: a Reader and Workbook**, Iowa.

Donnelly, N. 1987, The Timing of Ethnic Change: Hmong Textiles and Gender Roles in the United States, (Unpublished Paper, Washington University).

Douglas, M. 1966, **Purity and Danger**, RKP, London.

Dulansey, M. and Austin J.E. 1986 'Small Scale Enterprise and Women', in Overholt, C., Anderson, M., Cloud, K. Austin, E. (eds), **Gender Roles in Development Projects** Kumarian Press, Connecticut.

Dunningen, T. 1985, 'Antecedents of Hmong Resettlement in the United States', in **Hmong Art: Tradition and Change**, John Michael Kohler Arts Centre, Wisconsin.

Eco, U. 1987, **Travels in Hyper-Reality**, Picador, London.

Engels, F. 1972 (1984) **The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State in the Light of the Researches of Lewis H. Morgan**. Introduction and notes by E. B. Leacock, Pathfinder Press, New York.

- Eudley, A.A. 1989, '14 April 1986: Eviction Orders to the Hmong of Huai Yew Yee Village, Huai Kha Khaeng Wildlife Sanctuary', Thailand, in McKinnon, J. and Vienne, B. (eds), **Hill Tribes Today**, White Lotus-Orstam, Bangkok.
- Farris, J.C. 1978, 'The Productive Basis of Aesthetic Traditions: Some African Examples', in Greenhalgh, M. and Megaw, V. (eds), **Art in Society**, Gerald Duckworth, London.
- Feeley-Harnik, G. 1991, 'Cloth and the Creation of Ancestors in Madagascar', in Weiner, A.B. and Schneider, J., **Cloth and Human Experience**, Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington, D.C.
- Fei Hsiao Tung, 1981, **Towards a Peoples' Anthropology**, New World Press, Beijing.
- 1983, **Chinese Village Close Up**, New World Press, Beijing.
- Forster, J. 1964, 'The Sociological Consequences of Tourism', **International Journal of Comparative Sociology**, 5, 217-227.
- Foucault, J. 1970, **The Order of Things: an Archaeology of the Human Sciences**, Tavistock Publications, London.
- Freedman, M. 1958, **Lineage Organisation in S.E. China**, The Athlone Press, London.
- 1966, **Chinese Lineage and Society: Fukien and Kwangtung**, Athlone Press, London.
- 1970, **Family and Kinship in Chinese Society**, Stanford University Press, Stanford.
- Friedmann, H. 1986, 'Patriarchal Commodity Production', **Social Analysis**, 20, 47-55.
- Gallin, B., 1960, 'Matrilateral and Affinal Relationships of a Taiwanese Village', **American Anthropologist** 62(4), 632-642.
- Gar Yia Lee - See Lee G.Y.
- Geddes, W.R., 1976, **Migrants of the Mountains: The Cultural Ecology of the Blue Miao (Hmong Njua) of Thailand**, Clarendon Press, Oxford.

- Geertz, C. 1983, **Local Knowledge**, Basic Books Inc., New York.
- Gittinger, M. 1991, **Splendid Symbols, Textiles and Tradition in Indonesia**, Oxford University Press, Singapore. [originally published 1975. Washington: Textile Museum]
- Gombrich, C.H. 1983, **Art and Illusion**, Phaidon Press, London.
- Goody, J. 1990, **The Oriental, the Ancient and the Primitive: Systems of Marriage and the Family in the Pre-industrial Societies of Eurasia**, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Graburn, N.H.H., 1969, 'Art and Acculturative Processes', **International Social Science Journal**, 21(3), 457-468.
- 1976, **Ethnic and Tourist Arts**, University of California Press, Berkeley.
- Graham, D.C., 1923, 'The Ch'uan Miao of Southern Szechuan' in **Journal of the West China Border Research Society**, 1, 56.
- 1926, 'The Ch'uan Miao of West China', Critical Note in the **Journal of Religion**, 302-307.
- 1930, 'More Notes about the Ch'uan Miao' in **Journal of the West China Border Research Society**, 3, 112-113.
- 1937, 'Ceremonies of the Ch'uan Miao', **Journal of the West China Border Research Society**, 9, 71-119.
- 1938, 'Legends of the Ch'uan Miao', in **Journal of the West China Border Research Society**, 10, 9-52.
- 1954, **Songs and Stories of the Ch'uan Miao**, Miscellaneous Collections No. 123, Smithsonian Institute, Washington D.C.
- 1961, **Folk Religion in Southwest China**, Smithsonian Institute, Washington, D.C.
- Greenhalgh, M and Megaw, V. (eds) 1978, **Art in Society**, Gerald Duckworth, London.
- Gunn, G.C. 1983, 'Resistance Coalitions in Laos', **Asian Survey**, 23(3) 316-341.
- 1990, **Rebellion in Laos: Peasants and Politics in a Colonial Backwater**, Westview Press, Oxford.

- Hamilton, J.W. 1965, *Ban Hong Social Structure and Economy of a Pwo Karen Village in Northern Thailand*, (Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor).
- Handler, R. 1990, 'Consuming Culture (Genuine and Spurious) as Style', *Cultural Anthropology*, Review Article, 5, 346-357.
- Hanks, L.M. 1964, *Anthropological Survey of Hill Tribes in Northern Thailand: A Report on Tribal Peoples in Chiangrai Province*, Siam Society, Data paper No. 1.
- Harper, C.M. 1988, *Minorities Development Project: The Wuling Mountains of Hunan and Hubei Provinces*, (Unpublished report, United Nations World Food Programme, China).
- 1989, *Women in Development, Sociological Data and Project Formulation, Quijing Prefecture, Yunnan Province*, (Unpublished Report, United Nations Joint Consultative Group on Policy, China).
- Harriss, O. 1981, 'Households as Natural Units', in Young, K. et al (eds), *Of Marriage and the Market*, CSE Books, London.
- Hauser, A. 1982, *The Sociology of Art*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London.
- Hebdige, D. 1988, *Subculture, The Meaning of Style*, Methuen, London.
- Hearn, R.M. 1974, *Thai Government Programs in Refugee Relocation and Resettlement in Northern Thailand*, Auburn, New York.
- Heimback, E.E. 1969, *White-Meo English Dictionary*, Cornell Southeast Asian Data Paper 75, Ithaca, N.Y.
- Hinton, E.M. 1974, 'The Dress of the Pwo Karen of North Thailand', *Journal of The Siam Society*, 62, 27-37.
- Hobart, M. 1986, 'Thinker, Thespian, Soldier, Slave? Assumptions About Human Nature in the Study of Balinese Society', in Hobart, M. and Taylor, R.H. (eds), *Context, Meaning and Power in S.E. Asia*, Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y.
- Hobsbawn, E. and Ranger, T. 1983, *The Invention of Tradition*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Hoskins, J. 1991, 'Why do Ladies Sing the Blues? Indigo Dying, Cloth Production, and Gender Symbolism in Kodi', in Weiner, A.B. and Schneider, J. *Cloth and Human Experience*, Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington D.C.

- Hospers, J. (ed) 1969, **Introductory Readings in Aesthetics**, The Free Press, New York.
- Hutheesing, O., 1987, **Elephant Female and Dog Male: A Lisu Metaphor amidst Changing Opium Production**, (unpublished Manuscript).
- Jessop, T.E. 1969, 'The Objectivity of Aesthetic Value', in Hospers, J. (ed), **Introductory Readings in Aesthetics**, The Free Press, New York.
- John Michael Kohler Arts Center, 1985, **Hmong Art: Tradition and Change**, John Michael Kohler Arts Centre, Wisconsin.
- Kammerer, C.A. 1986, **Gateway to the Akha World: Kinship, Ritual and Continuity among Highlanders of Thailand**. (Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Chicago).
- 1989, 'Territorial Imperatives: Akha Ethnic Identity and Thailand's National Integration', in McKinnon, J. and Vienne, B. (eds), **Hill Tribes Today**, White Lotus-Orstam, Bangkok.
- Kampe, K. 1986, **Land Use Certificates in the Mae Chaem Watershed Development Project**, Unpublished Mimeo.
- Kesmanee, C. 1987, **Hill Tribe Relocation Policy: Ways out of the Labyrinth, a Case Study of Kamphaengphet Province**, Tribal Research Institute, Chiang Mai, Thailand.
- 1989, 'The Poisoning Effect of a Lovers Triangle: Highlanders, Opium and Extension Crops, a Policy Overdue for Review', in McKinnon, J and Vienne, B. (eds), **Hill Tribes Today**, White Lotus-Orstam, Bangkok.
- Keyes, C.F. 1979, **Ethnic Adaptation and Identity**, Institute for the Study of Human Issues, Philadelphia.
- Kopytoff, I. 1988, 'The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditisation as Process', in Appadurai, A. 1988, **The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective**, Cambridge University Press, New York.
- Kuhn, I. 1956, **Ascent to the Tribes: Pioneering in North Thailand**, OMF, London.
- Kunstadter, P. 1978, **Farmers in the Forest**, East West Centre, Hawaii.
- 1983, 'Highland Populations in North Thailand' in Bhruksasri, W. and McKinnon, J. (eds), **Highlanders of Thailand**, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur.

- Kunstadter, P., Kesmanee, C. and Pothiart, P. 1987, **Hmong and Karen Health and Family Planning: Cultural and Other Factors Affecting Use of Modern Health and Planning Services by Hilltribes in Northern Thailand**, Ministry of Public Health, Bangkok.
- Leach, E.R. 1977 (1954), **Political Systems of Highland Burma**, The Athlone Press, University of London, London.
- Leacock, E. and Safa, H.I. 1986, **Women's Work: Development and the Division of Labour by Gender**, Bergin and Garvey, South Hadley, Massachusetts.
- Lebar, F.M., Hickey, G.C., Musgrove, J.K. 1964, **South China Miao, Ethnic Groups of Mainland South East Asia**, HRAF, New Haven, Connecticut.
- Lee, Gar Yia 1981, **The Effects of Development Measures on the Socio-Economy of the White Hmong**. (Unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Sydney).
- 1987, 'Ethnicity and the State: Historical Overview of the Hmong in Lao Politics'. (Paper presented to **International Conference on Thai Studies**, ANU, Australia.
- Lemoine, J. 1972, **Un Village Hmong Vert du Haut Laos: Milieu Technique et Organisation Sociale**, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Paris.
- 1982, **Yao Ceremonial Paintings**, White Lotus Company, Bangkok.
- 1983, 'Yao Religion and Society' in McKinnon, J. and Bhrukrasri, W. (eds), **Highlanders of Thailand**, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur.
- Leslie, J. 1992, 'The Significance of Dress for the Orthodox Hindu Woman', in Barnes, R. and Eicher, J.B. (eds) **Dress and Gender, Making and Meaning in Cultural Contexts**, Berg Publishers, Oxford.
- Lewis, P. and Lewis, E. 1984, **Peoples of The Golden Triangle**, Thames and Hudson, London.
- Lin Yueh-Hwa 1940, 'The Miao-Man Peoples of Kweichow', **Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies**, 5, 3-4.
- 1944, 'Social Life of the Aboriginal Groups in and around Yunnan', **Journal of the West China Border Research Society**, Series A, 15, 47-57.
- 1947, **The Golden Wing: a Sociological Study of Chinese Familism**, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, London.

- Long, N. and Richardson, P. 1978, 'Informal Sector, Petty Commodity Production and the Social Relations of Small Scale Enterprise', in J. Clammer, **The New Economic Anthropology**, Macmillan, London.
- Lyman, T.A. 1968, 'Green Miao Spirit Ceremonies', **Ethnologica**, Neue Folge, Band 4, Brill, Cologne.
- 1969, 'A note on the Name Green Miao', in **Asia Aakhane**, Southeast Asia Survey, 1(4), 50-59, Bangkok.
- Mackintosh, M. 1981, 'Gender and Economics: The Sexual Division of Labour and the Subordination of Women', in Kate Young et al. (eds), **Of Marriage and The Market**, CSE Books, London.
- Macleod, M. 1978, 'Aspects of Asante Images', in Greenhalgh, M. and Megaw, V. (eds), **Art in Society**, Gerald Duckworth, London.
- Maguet, J. 1979, 'Art by Metamorphosis', **African Arts**, 12, 4.
- Mallinson, J. 1984, Blue Hmong Women's Skirts as Markers of Women's Roles, (Unpublished Paper).
- Mandorff, J. 1967, 'A Report on the Establishment of a Tribal Research Centre in Chiang Mai', in P. Kunstadter (ed), **Southeast Asian Tribes, Minorities and Nations**, Princeton University Press, Princeton.
- Mark, Lindy Li. 1967, 'Patrilateral Cross Cousin Marriage among the Magpie Miao: Preferential or Prescriptive', **American Anthropologist**, 69, 55-62.
- Marx, K. 1974, **Capital: A Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production**, Lawrence and Wishart, London.
- McCannel, D. 1976, **The Tourist: a New Theory of the Leisure Class**, Macmillan, London.
- McCoy, A.W. 1972, **The Politics of Heroin in S.E. Asia**, Harper and Row, New York.
- McCreery, J.L. 1976, 'Women's Property Rights and Dowry in China and South Asia', **Ethnology** 15, 163-174.
- McKean, P.F. 1976, 'Tourism, Culture Change and Culture Conservation in Bali', in Bank, D.J. **Changing Identities in Modern S.E. Asia**, Montas, The Hague.
- McKinnon, J. 1983, 'A Highlander's Geography of the Highlanders: Mythology, Process and Fact', **Mountain Research and Development**, 3 (4), 313-317.

- 1987, 'Resettlement and the Three Ugly Stepsisters, Security, Opium and Land Degradation: a Question of Survival for the Highlanders of Thailand', (Unpublished paper presented to the International Conference on Thai Studies, July 1987, ANU, Canberra).
- McKinnon, J. and Vienne, B. (eds), 1989, **Hill Tribes Today**, White Lotus-Orstam, Bangkok.
- McKormack, C.P. and Strathern, M. 1980, **Nature, Culture, Gender**, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Mead, S.M. 1976, 'The Production of Nature, Art and Craft Objects in Contemporary New Zealand Society', in Graburn, N.H. 1976, **Ethnic and Tourist Arts**, University of California Press, California.
- Meillassoux, C. (ed), 1981, **Maidens, Meals and Money: Capitalism and the Domestic Community**, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Messenger, J.C. 1958, 'Reflections on Aesthetic Talent', **Basic College Quarterly**, 4, 20-24.
- Mickey, M. 1947, **The Cowrie Shell Miao of Kweichow**, Cambridge, Massachusetts.
- Miller, D. 1983, 'Things aint what they used to be', **Rain (Royal Anthropological Institute News)** December, 1983, 59.
- Miller, D. 1987, **Material Culture and Mass Consumption**, Basil Blackwell, Oxford.
- Moeran, B. 1984, **Lost Innocence: Folk Craft Potters of Onta, Japan**, University of California Press, Berkeley.
- Moore, H.L. 1988, **Feminism and Anthropology**, Polity Press, Cambridge.
- Mottin, J. 1980, **History of the Hmong**, Odeon Books, Bangkok.
- Munn, N. 1973, **Walabiri Iconography: Graphic Representation and Cultural Symbolism in a Central Australian Society**, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, N.Y.
- Munger, R.G. 1983, 'Sleep Disturbances and Sudden Death of Hmong Refugees; A Report on Fieldwork Conducted in the Ban Vinai Refugee Camp', Proceedings of the Second Hmong Research Conference, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.
- Nationality Press, 1985, **Clothing and Ornaments of China's Miao People**, Beijing.

- Nunez, T.A. 1963, 'Tourism, Tradition and Acculturation: Weekendismo in a Mexican Village', **Ethnology** 2, 347-353.
- Ockendon Venture, 1987, Marketing Report, Nan, Nan Province, Thailand.
- Ortner, S.B. 1974, 'Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?' in Rosaldo, M.Z. and Lamphere, L., **Women, Culture and Society**, Stanford University Press, Stanford.
- Pancake, C.M. 1992, 'Gender Boundaries in the Production of Guatemalan Textiles', in Barnes, R. and Eicher, J.B. (eds), **Dress and Gender, Making and Meaning in Cultural Contexts**, Berg Publishers, Oxford.
- Papanek, H. 1979 'Family Status Production: The Work and Non-Work of Women', **Signs** 4 (4), 775-81.
- Parish, W.L. and Whyte, M.K. 1978, **Village and Family in Contemporary China**, Chicago University Press, Chicago.
- Parkin, D. 1982, Introduction in **Semantic Anthropology**, Academic Press, London.
- Peck-Kent, K. 1976, 'Pueblo and Navajo Weaving Traditions and the Western World', in Graburn, N. H., **Ethnic and Tourist Arts**, University of California.
- Picton, J. and Mack, J. 1979, **African Textiles**, The Trustees of the British Museum, British Museum Publications, London.
- Purseglove, I.W. 1974, **Tropical Crops**, Longman, London.
- Race, J. 1972, **The War in Northern Thailand**, a Research Report, Harvard University, Cambridge, Mass.
- Radley, H. 1986, Economic Marginalisation and the Ethnic Consciousness of the Green Mong (Moob Ntsuab) of Northwestern Thailand, (Unpublished doctoral thesis, Oxford University).
- Reddy, W.M. 1988, 'The Structure of Cultural Crisis: Thinking about Cloth in France Before and After the Revolution, in Appadurai, A. **The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective**, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Rosaldo, M.Z. and Lamphere, L. 1974, **Women, Culture and Society**, Stanford University Press, Stanford.
- Rossi, G. 1988, 'Enduring Dress of the Miao', **Ornament**, 11 (3), 27-31.
- Ruey, Yih-Fu 1958, 'Terminological Structure of the Miao Kinship System', **Academica Sinica** 29, 15-26, Taipei.

- 1960, 'The Magpie Miao of Southern Szechuan' in **Social Structure in South East Asia**, Murdock, G.P. (ed), Tavistock Publications, London.
- 1962, 'The Miao; Their Origin and Southward Migration', Second Biennial Conference of the International Association of Historians of Asia, Taiwan.
- Sahlins, M.D. 1974, **Stone Age Economics**, Tavistock Publications, London.
- Savina, F.M. 1930, **Histoire des Miao**, Society des Missions Etrangères de Paris, Second Edition, Hong Kong.
- Schneider, J. 1991, 'Rumpelstiltskin's Bargain: Folklore and the Merchant Capitalist Intensification of Linen Manufacture in Early Modern Europe', in Weiner, A.B. and Schneider, J., **Cloth and Human Experience**, Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington D.C.
- Scholz, F. 1974, 'Miao (Thailand, Tak-Provinz) Batiken eines Kindertragtuches', in Wolf, G. (ed) **Encyclopaedia Cinematographica**, Institut für den Wissenschaftlichen Film, Göttingen.
- Schuster, C. 1937, 'A Comparison of Aboriginal Textile Designs from S.W. China with Peasant Designs from Eastern Europe', **Man**, 37, 132-154.
- Sciama, L. 1992, 'Lacemaking in Venetian Culture', in Barnes, R. and Eicher, J.B. (eds), **Dress and Gender, Making and Meaning in Cultural Contexts**, Berg Publishers, Oxford.
- Scruton, R. 1982, **Art and Imagination: A Study in the Philosophy of Mind**, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London.
- Shapiro, J. 1981, 'Anthropology and the Study of Gender', in Langland, E and Grove W. (eds), **A Feminist Perspective in the Academy**, University of Chicago, Chicago.
- Silberman, A. 1968, 'A Definition of the Sociology of Art', **International Social Science Journal**, 20, (4), 567-588.
- Simmel, G. 1971, **Selected Writings**, Chicago University Press, Chicago.
- 1982 (c1978), **The Philosophy of Money**, Translated by Tom Buttmore and David Frisby, Routledge and Kegan Paul, Boston, Massachusetts.
- Smalley, W.A. 1976, 'Review of T.A. Lyman's Dictionary of the Mong Njua', **Linguistics**, 174, 107-112.

- 1983, 'Stages of Hmong Cultural Adaptation',
Paper presented to Hmong Conference, Minnesota.
- South East Asian Refugees Studies Newsletter, S.E. Asian
Refugee Studies Project, Center for Urban and
Regional Affairs, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.
- Spooner, B. 1988, 'Weavers and Dealers: The Authenticity of
an Oriental Carpet', in Appadurai, A. 1988, **The
Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural
Perspective**, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Stack, C. 1974, **All our Kin: Strategies for Survival in a
Black Community**, Harper and Row, New York.
- Stacy, J. 1983, **Patriarchy and Socialist Revolution in
China**, University of California Press, Berkeley.
- Strathern, M. 1987, 'An Awkward Relationship: The Case of
Feminism and Anthropology', **Signs** 12 (2) 276-290.
- Suthi, C. 1987, 'Hemp and Marijuana in the Highlands',
Unpublished Paper, Tribal Research Institute, Chiang
Mai, Thailand.
- Taillard, C. 1977, 'Pouvoirs et Espaces en Laos: La Partie
de Vientiane', in **Etat Pouvoir et Espace dans le
Tierre Monde**, Presses Universitaires de France, Paris.
- Tanham, G.K. 1974, **Trial in Thailand**, Crane, Russak,
New York.
- Tapp, N. 1986, **The Hmong in Thailand: Opium People of the
Golden Triangle**, Anti-Slavery Society, London.
- 1989, **Sovereignty and Rebellion, The White
Hmong of Northern Thailand**, Oxford University Press,
Singapore.
- 1990, 'Milieu and Context: The Disappearance
of the White Hmong', paper presented at the Fourth
International Conference on Thai Studies, Unnan, China.
- Tonkin, E.P. 1982, 'Language versus the World, Notes on
Meaning for Anthropologists', in Parkin, D. (ed)
Semantic Anthropology, Academic Press, London.
- Tribal Research Institute Population Survey, 1988,
reproduced in McKinnon, J. and Vienne, B. (eds), 1989,
Hill Tribes Today, White Lotus-Orstam, Bangkok.
- Turner, L. and Ash, J. 1975, **The Golden Hordes**, Constable,
London.

- Turner, B.S. 1990, 'Peroration on Ideology', in Abercrombie, N., Hill, S., Turner, B.S., **Dominant Ideologies**, Unwin Hyman, London.
- Turton, A. 1987, **Production, Power and Participation in Rural Thailand; Experiences of Poor Farmer's Groups**, United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, Paris.
- Van Roy, E. 1971, **Economic Systems in Northern Thailand**, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, N.Y.
- Vang Tou-Fu 1979, The Hmong of Laos in **An Introduction to Indochinese History, Culture, Language and Life; For persons involved with the Indo-Chinese Refugee Education and Resettlement Project in the State of Michigan**, CSEAS, Ann Arbor.
- Vasquez, A.S. 1973, **Art and Society: Essays in Marxist Aesthetics**, Merlin Press, London.
- Veblen, T. 1957, **The Theory of the Leisure Class**, Allen and Unwin, London (Originally published 1899).
- Vogel, L. 1983, **Marxism and the Oppression of Women; Towards a Unitary Theory**, Pluto Press, London.
- Von Geusau, L.A. 1983, 'Dialectics of Akhazang: The Interiorization of a Perennial Minority Group', in Bhruksasri, W. and McKinnon, J. (eds), **Highlanders of Thailand**, Oxford University Press, Kuala Lumpur.
- Wagner, R. 1986, **Symbols That Stand for Themselves**, University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Walker, A.R. 1979, Highlanders and Government in North Thailand, *Folk*, 21-22, 419-449.
- 1981, **Farmers in the Hills, Upland Peoples of North Thailand**, Asian Folklore and Social Life Monographs, Taipei.
- Waterbury, R. 1991, 'Embroidery for Tourists: A Contemporary Putting-Out system in Oaxaca, Mexico', in Weiner, A.B. and Schneider, J., **Cloth and Human Experience**, Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington D.C.
- Watson, R.S. 1981, 'Class Difference and Affinal Relations' in S. China, *MAN*, 16, 593-615.
- Weiner, A.B. 1976, **Women of Value, Men of Renown; New Perspectives in Trobriand Exchange**, University of Texas Press, Austin.

- 1982, 'Sexuality Among the Anthropologists, Reproduction Among the Informants', **Social Analysis**, 12, 52-65.
- 1985, 'Inalienable Wealth', **American Ethnologist**, 12, 210-227.
- 1986, 'Forgotten Wealth, Cloth and Women's Wealth in the Pacific', in Leacock, E. and Safa, H.I., 1986, **Women's Work: Development and the Division of Labour by Gender**, Bergin and Garvey, South Hadley, Massachusetts.
- 1991, 'Why Cloth? Wealth, Gender and Power in Oceania', in Weiner, A.B. and Schneider, J., **Cloth and Human Experience**, Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington D.C.
- Weiner, A.B. and Schneider, J. 1991, **Cloth and Human Experience**, Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, Smithsonian Institution Press, Washington D.C. [First published 1989]
- Westermeyer, J. 1982, **Poppies, Pipes and People: Opium and its Use in Laos**, University of California Press, Berkeley.
- White, V. 1982, 'Hmong Textiles', **The Flying Needle**, 11 (2), 15-21.
- Williams, R. 1982, **Problems in Materialism and Culture**, Verso, London.
- Williamson, J. 1987, **Decoding Advertisements; Ideology and Meaning in Advertising**, Marion Boyars, London.
- Wolf, A.P. and Huang, C. 1980, **Marriage and Adoption in China 1845-1945**, Stanford University Press, Stanford.
- Wolf, A.P. 1970, 'Chinese Kinship and Mourning Dress', in Freedman, M. 1970, **Family and Kinship in Chinese Society**, Stanford University Press, Stanford.
- Ed. 1974, **Religion and Ritual in Chinese Society**, Stanford University Press, Stanford.
- Wolf, M. 1972, **Women and the Family in Rural Taiwan**, Stanford University Press, Stanford.
- 1975 **Women in Chinese Society**, Stanford University Press, Stanford.
- Wongspraserit, S. July 1986, 'Opium, Highlanders and Policy: A Case Study of Administrative Intervention in Chiang Mai', Draft Paper, Tribal Research Institute, Chiang Mai.

Xiong, L. Xiong, J. and Xiong, N.L., 1983, **English - Mong - English Dictionary: Phoo Txhais Lug Aakiv - Moob - Aakiv**, P.O. Box 15801, Milwaukee, USA.

Yang, Dao, 1975, **Les Hmong du Laos Face au Development**, Edition Siosavath, Vientiane.

Zeven, A.C. and Zhukovsky, P.M. 1975, **Dictionary of Cultivated Plants**, Centre for Agricultural Publishing, Wahington, D.C.

Papers

Far Eastern Economic Review, Hong Kong.
Bangkok Post, Bangkok, Thailand.
Thai Rath, Bangkok, Thailand.
Spectrum, Bangkok, Thailand.

Reports and Handbooks

Master Plan, Tourism Development in Chiang Mai, TAT,
Chiang Mai.

The CCSDPT Handbook, Refugee Services in Thailand, 1986.

Appendix I

Appendix 1					
Retailer - finances					
Two month finances					
April & March 1987					
	Unit Price	Number/Items	Total/Baht	Profit/Item	Profit/Batch
Buyer -					
Thai Tribal Crafts					
Cushion, unmade	75	387	29025	15	5705
14" Embroidery Squares	80	6	480	9	54
Book Mark	11.50	184	2116	1.50	242
Applique Square	25	107	2675	5	535
6" Embroidery Squares	45	25	1125	11	275
6" Applique Square	35	112	3920	9	1008
8" Figurative Square	70	2	140	15	30
Figurative Cushion	95	4	380	15	60
Figurative Square	80	53	4240	15	795
Applique Square	35	14	490	9	126
Embroidered cushion	75	10	950	15	150
			45541		8980
Buyer - Queens Project					
Embroidery 6"	26	306	7956	4	1224
5"	24	134	3216	2	268
4"	16	230	3680	2	460
8"	40	8	320	7	56
Embroidery Strip	40	9	360	5	45
			15532		2053
Buyer - BPP Shop					
Mien Trousers	500	8	4000	185	1480
Embroidery 6"	26	20	520	4	80
Embroidered strips	40	12	480	2	24
Mien Cushion	80	5	400	18	90
Batik 2 yards	280	1	280	41	41
Table Runner	220	1	220	40	40
			5900		1755
Buyer - Private Shops					
Mien Trousers	500	5	2500	185	925
Mien Cushion	80	5	400	18	90
Mien Square	70	4	280	16	64
Batik Square	70	7	490	15	60
Embroidery 5"	16	80	1280	2	160
Applique Square 8"	45	9	405	11	99
Applique Square 6"	35	23	805	9	207
			6160		1605

	Unit Price	Number/Items	Total/Baht	Profit/Item	Profit/Batch
Buyer - Private Shops					
Mien Trousers	500	9	4500	185	1665
Batik/Aplique roll	550	1	550	130	130
Embroidery strip	40	3	120	10	30
			5170		1825
Buyer - Thai Tribal crafts					
Batik	95	3	285	20	60
Batik Runner	140	8	1120	20	160
Batik Runner	100	4	400	15	60
Applique Square	70	2	140	18	36
Figurative	180	1	180	30	30
Figurative	200	3	600	35	105
Figurative	450	6	2700	70	420
Figurative	350	1	350	55	55
Batik 3yds	435	13	5655	70	910
Batik 2yds	290	18	5220	41	738
Batik Square	75	14	1050	10	140
Batik/Aplique roll	550	3	1650	90	270
APRIL Applique sqare	35	112	3920	9	1008
			23270		3992
Buyer - Chinawat					
Twenty Percent					
			101572		20210
			16000		3200
March/April profit					
					23410

Appendix 2Measurements

£1 = 40 Baht (1986)

£1 = 45 Baht (1987)

1 rai = 0.395 acres

1 Hectare = 6.25 rai

1 joi of opium = 1.6 kilos

Appendix 3Cumulative Chao Khao Departures to countries of resettlementAugust 1987

Argentina	222
Australia	412
Belgium	5
Canada	880
China	239
France	7971
West Germany	21
Japan	16
Switzerland	13
U.S.A.	67384
Total	<u>77163</u>

Source: UNHCR, Bangkok, Thailand**Appendix 4**Chao Khao Refugees in UNHCR Camps in Thailand1987

	<u>August</u>	<u>September</u>	
Baan Nam Yao	1728	1743	(Officially Closed in 1989)
Baan Vinai	38932	39041	
Baan Chiang Kham	10584	8672	(Officially Closed in 1989)
Total	<u>51244</u>	<u>49456</u>	

Source: UNHCR, Bangkok, Thailand.

Numbers in the camps are constantly fluctuating. The numbers of refugees in Chiang Kham were consistently being reduced through resettlement or transfer to Baan Vinai.

In addition to the above numbers are *Chao Khao* refugees being held in other camps. There are also numbers of unregistered refugees living in "unofficial" camps on the Thai Laos borders administered by the Thai authorities. The existence of these camps was acknowledged in 1987.

Appendix 5

Funding Committed to Opium Crop Replacement Schemes

ONCB list, August 1986

<u>Agency</u>	<u>Thai Budget</u> (US \$)	<u>Financial</u> <u>Support</u> (US \$)
Thai German (1981-1994)	1,182,665.5	6,121,058
Thai Norwegian (1985-1989)	1,612,162.5	5,600,000
USA-NAU* (1981-1986)	1,012,188	4,004,702
Doi Pai Per UN Agencies** (1986-1991)	1,082,195.5	1,852,000
Sam Mun Canada & Sweden (1987-1991)	not available	2,000,000
Doi Vieng Pa (1987-1991)	not available	2,000,000
<u>Total</u>	<u>4,889,211.5</u>	<u>21,577,760</u>

* US Narcotics Assistance Unit

** UNDP, UNFDAC, UNFAO, UNICEF

Source Mckinnon, 1989

Appendix 6

Third World Craft Trading Organisations

Listed here are the trading partners of one organisation which is involved in Third World craft trading and is based in Chiang Mai. The diversity in locations illustrates the wide audience for Crafts from Chiang Mai.

Self Help Crafts, Canada.

Mats Kjellmer Alternative Handel, Sweden.

Trading Partners, new South Wales, Australia.

Caritas, Switzerland.

Private Trader - Muller, Switzerland.

Press Alternative, Japan.

DW Shop, West Germany.

CAA Trading, South Australia.

World Vision International Clubs, Victoria, Australia.

Trade Aid, New Zealand.

Alternative Handel, Norway.

Self Help Crafts, U.S.A.

SERV, Maryland, U.S.A.

Appendix 7

History of the Refugee Camps

Baan Nam Yao

The camp was opened in 1976 when 6,000 refugees were transferred from a temporary site in Pua district. It accommodated refugees, mostly White Hmong and Green Mong from the Laotian provinces of Sang Khong and Sayaboury. The camp's population climbed to 15,000 in early 1983 following large group transfers from closing camps. By mid 1983 plans for the closing of Baan Nam Yao were being made. By 1984 all but 2,100 of the refugees had been moved to Baan Vinai with a few going to Chaing Kham. The camp was left open to house 1,350 Htin and 750 Hmong who claimed to be Thai citizens who had moved into Laos in the 1960's in search of better farming land and to escape troubles. They re-entered Thailand with the influx of Laotian refugees between 1975 and 1979. A group of Htin (500) were allowed to settle in a village near the border, Baan Sob Kok in 1984. The remaining refugees had their nationality claims slowly assessed but only 20 were allowed citizenship in 1986. Some of the Mong from the camp have found their way into Pa Glang where they stay with relatives. These are usually elderly Mong. Facilities at the camp are few, with most agencies concentrated in the larger camps. Thus the women are very keen to earn an income from making textiles.

Baan Vinai

Baan Vinai was opened in 1975 with a population of 12,000. It is one of the oldest refugee camps in Thailand. The population increased substantially after an influx of refugees and the transfer of 11,000 Mong from Nongkhai in 1979. It remained stable at approximately

30,000 people in 1981 and 1982 but increased in 1983 and 1984 with the transfer of refugees from Baan Nam Yao. The camp was closed to new arrivals in 1983 with all *Chao Khao* going to Chiang Kham and Lao going to Baan Napho. Ban Vinai is the most populous refugee camp in East and S.E.Asia. It houses ten ethnic groups, over 40,000 White Hmong and Green Mong and small groups of Htin, Yao, Lowland Lao, Leu, Laotheng, Khamu, Thaidam, Musor, and Haw. Fourteen voluntary agencies provide medical care, education and skills training.

Source: CCSDPT Handbook

Appendix 8

Agencies involved in skills training in the refugee camps

(Skills Training includes craft production)

TOV	The Ockenden Venture
CAMA	The Christian and Missionary Alliance Church
COERR	Catholic Office for Emergency Relief and Refugees
ICA	International Christian Aid
JSRC	Japan Sotushu Relief Committee,
TCRS	Thai-Chinese Refugee Services
IRC	International Rescue Committee

The Ockenden Venture

The Ockenden Venture is active in promoting commercial crafts from Baan Nam Yao and from villages in Nan Province. It is a British based charity working with refugees in Pakistan, Sudan, the United Kingdom and Thailand. It is involved in preparing refugees for resettlement through education, skills training and cultural activities. The resources of a former craft production project in the refugee camp of Nam Yao were used to establish a self help community development programme for groups in Nan Province. It also assists displaced Thai persons from the Thai border area as well as those from Baan Nam Yao.

Source: CCSDPT Handbook

Appendix 9

The Sources of Hemp and Marijuana

Cannabis Sativa is the scientific name for the family of plants to which hemp belongs. The Thai name for hemp is *Kanshong* and the Thai name for marijuana is *Kansha*. They are related to Cannabis Ruderallis which has been found in wild form in Central Asia. It is thought Hemp was planted in central Asia more than four thousand years ago and arrived in China about two thousand five hundred years ago (Purseglove 1974, Zeven and Zhukovsky 1975).

The plant can be divided into two forms: Hemp, commonly grown from Central Europe through to China and Marijuana, grown in the area of Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and Burma from where it spread to the Middle East. Hemp is commonly grown for its oil seed and marijuana for its narcotic properties. The Mong, now in Thailand, probably acquired hemp from the Chinese, but they no longer use it for oil, although elderly residents have recounted this use in the past. More recently a few Mong have cultivated Marijuana to sell to tourists. This activity leads to broad stereotyping and the sort of action described in the text where all the hemp leaves were removed from Doi Pui village during a drugs raid. Other accounts of troops destroying hemp fields are common.

According to Suthi (1987), the Mong distinguish between Hemp and Marijuana as follows:

Hemp has: a short trunk with few branches and large leaves. It has thick bark, bright green leaves and large amounts of latex; it flowers after four months and has large green seeds; it does not smell and causes a headache if smoked. In contrast, marijuana has a short trunk, many branches, thin bark, small narrow dark green leaves and very little latex; it flowers three months after planting producing small seeds; it has a strong smell and if smoked "makes the smoker dream".

Appendix 10

The myth of the origin of batik

Source: Patricia Symonds - personal communication

The following myth is one account of the origin of batik as told to a fieldworker living with White Hmong. Of interest is the relationship at the end of the story between hemp, the family and the lineage.

There lived a man and his wife and young daughter. One day the wife said to the husband that they needed a cow to sacrifice. Unfortunately the man arose late and when he arrived at the place where cows were for sale he found

there were none left. He went back home, placed a rope around his wife's neck and beat her. She turned into a cow. She was kept in a garden where other livestock were kept until the time to sacrifice her. Meanwhile the man had married a second wife. She also had a daughter. The first daughter had to do all of the work for the family and in addition she had to sew. She managed to do everything and sew beautifully. One day the second wife followed her to the area where the cow was kept and she discovered the cow would become the mother and sew for the girl. She did not like this as the girl was getting a reputation for being clever and hard working and her daughter was not. The second wife made believe she was sick. She told the husband that he would have to sacrifice the cow so that she would recover. She had told the spirit doctor her problem and when the husband consulted him he told him to sacrifice the cow. The husband was distressed as he did not want to sacrifice his first wife and decided he would go to the big rock and ask advice from it. His second wife hid behind the rock and when she heard him ask for advice she told him to kill the cow.

The cow had heard of the plan from the spirits. She told her daughter to bring water from the stream and pour it over the ground so that it would be slippery and she would fall down and kill herself. She was afraid that her husband would use an axe and this would be painful. She told her daughter not to eat any of the meat that they would cook and just to take the head, feet and tail and place them in the house where the smoke of the fire would dry and preserve them. She would then always be there for her daughter if she needed her.

When the time came for the next New Year festival the second wife decided that she would only take her own daughter as there was a very eligible young man she wanted her to marry. She left the first daughter at home cleaning and separating the mouse turds from the rice kernels. The girl was very sad and sat in the house crying. The cow's head spoke up and told her to go to the animal's pen and there she would find a new outfit of clothing including a beautiful newly embroidered skirt. She could go to the festival by jumping in the air but she had to return before sunset. The girl was very happy. The handsome and eligible man was very attracted to her and everyone thought her beautiful although they did not recognize her in her new outfit. The first day she jumped back home before sunset and even though the man searched for her far and wide he could not find her. All he saw in the house was the dirty little girl separating the mouse turds from the rice.

On the second day the young woman went to the New Year's festival again, and again the handsome and eligible man followed her around. When it was just about sunset she went to leave the party and go home. The man was

expecting this and he stepped on her foot. When he arrived at the stable he noticed her footprint was there and he recognised her. He had found her. He asked her to marry him. The step mother was very angry; she wanted the prince to marry her own daughter. She tried to think up ways in which she could arrange it. She cooked very good food for her daughter and the prince and very bad food for her step child. The prince switched his food and gave it to the step daughter and he ate hers himself. The mother offered her daughter's bed to the prince but he changed it around so that he slept in the bed with the step daughter. The mother stole into the room of her step daughter and placed wax on her eyes. Unfortunately the person in the bed was her own daughter so she put wax on her eyes by mistake.

In the early morning the prince and the step daughter arose very early and ran off. As the sun rose the mother sat outside the house talking to herself. "Oh my daughter is far away now with the prince". The daughter popped out of the house and said "I am here nia". The mother was furious; she sent her daughter after the pair to find and kill them. She gave her daughter a new set of clothing to exchange with the step daughter. "After she has a child change clothes with her. Tell her how much you miss her and how you want to exchange clothing. When she puts on the new skirt she will die." The daughter followed them for several years. One day she found them. The husband and the young son were out fishing. The daughter did as her mother told her and exchanged clothing. The step sister dropped dead and was buried. When the husband and son came home they said "Hello sister". "I am not your sister, I am your wife" she answered. The boy said "Where is my real mother?". My mother was very beautiful and had long hair, yours is short". After the husband went out again the sister asked the young boy what his mother did to make his father happy. The boy told her that his mother used to spread her hair out and make a pillow of it so that his father could rest his head when he was tired. "How can I have long hair like your mother?" she enquired. The boy told her to boil a huge pot of water and wet her hair and comb it near the boiling pot. She followed his instructions and when she bent over the pot to comb her hair he pushed her in and covered the pot with the lid.

Meanwhile a tree had grown where the sister had buried her step sister. One day an old couple in the village cut down the tree for firewood. The first wife rose up out of the smoke. The young boy was overjoyed to see his mother. She went back to the house and without knowing took the top of the pot in which the boy had pushed the sister. The spirit of the sister came out of the pot in the form of a black bird. The family of three tried to run away from the village but the black bird followed them and made a big storm rage over them so that they could not travel far. They were tired and despairing. "In this life

we have not had good luck. We have had a lot of suffering and pain". They decided that they had had enough. The son was turned into a lovely little humming bird, the mother became the honey comb and the father the hemp. When the son was hungry he could go to the mother for nourishment. When the humming bird goes to a honeycomb even the bees move away. The father then was the hemp which was used to weave the cloth. The mother contributed the wax to make the patterns of batik on the cloth. The couple and their child could no longer be separated, they were joined together for ever.

Appendix 11

Captions to all photographs

Photograph 1: Green Mong (Moob Ntsuab) woman from Pa Glang settlement in full dress at Mong New Year celebrations.

Photograph 2: It takes three (a mother her married daughter and her sister-in-law) to sort the warp threads and set up this loom.

Photograph 3: The hemp strips are wound in a figure of eight around a stick. This work is done whilst minding children, walking to the fields and in any spare moment.

Photograph 4: Rolling the hemp thread to flatten the fibres requires strength. The stone is lifted onto the wooden roller and must be repeatedly moved into position to flatten each length of fibre. After weaving the cloth this process can be repeated.

Photograph 5: The tools of batik production. Each woman possesses a selection of batik tools; this woman has a specially designed tool rest made by her husband from an old piece of metal, and attached to her bucket of hot ashes.

Photograph 6: This finished roll of fine woven hemp has coloured wax applied to prepare it for dyeing. The pattern is as yet incomplete.

Photograph 7: These women in Baan Vinai refugee camp are widows who gather together to produce textile products. They meet in the "widows' room", a building donated by an aid agency.

Photograph 8: A peddler from Doi Pui displays her wares on the nighttime streets of Chiang Mai. Whilst selling she also looks after her children.

Photograph 9: A girl from Laos arrives in Pa Glang for the New Year festival. Her hairstyle, leggings and intricately finished clothes will inform most Mong of her parochial origins.

Photograph 10: A cosmopolitan White Hmong girl has adapted white Hmong clothes in a sophisticated outfit. Her shoes (covered in Green Mong batik), sequenced trousers and jacket and french plait indicate her status as an urban girl.

Photograph 11: A sophisticated Green Mong boy in Pa Glang parodies his own culture with extravagant hat and an effeminate pink umbrella.

Photograph 12: Green Mong skirts are adapted for commercial sale. The top is constructed from an old Mong skirt and attached to a second, modified Mong skirt. The model is wearing a hat belonging to another ethnic group, the Lisu, and a necklace produced by a factory in Chiang Mai.

Photograph 13: The juxtaposition of items for sale in Doi Pui: it is in front of these dolls (portraying the "hill tribes"), Mong skirts and hemp rolls, that opium pipes and poppy husks are often displayed. Hanging in the background are bedspreads from the refugee camps and on a separate table are Thai Buddhist statues.

