

Research Abstracts for the Special Meeting on

**“Methodology in the Borderland Studies: Case Studies of the
Burma/Myanmar- Thailand Borderland**

18 February 2013

13.00-16.00 hrs.

Discussant: Dr. Amporn Jirattikorn

Department of Social Science and Development,
Faculty of Social Sciences, Chiang Mai University

**1. The History of Social Suffering of Borderlanders: Temporary Shelters in
the Karen Land**

*Winai Boonlue, PhD student/candidate in Social Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, Chiang
Mai University*

The study explores the practices of everyday life especially walking through contested space/land. My methodology of walking with, talking to, and listening through the conversation of the making sense of space beyond our comfort zone, secured nation state boundary, derived an understanding and trust of the focus group. This field trip is eight days walking through space of Karen people from refugee camp to dark zone of Karen state. The brighter sight of human being is manifested and glorified through ritual and human convergence of life given meaning of practices.

2. Transnational Baptist Karen Network

*Boonsong Thansrithong, PhD student/candidate in Social Science, Faculty of Social Sciences,
Chiang Mai University*

Global Karen Baptist Fellowship - GKBF establish since 2008. There are Karen people from nine places or more have attending GKBF there are Karen Baptist Council of Burma (KBC), Thai Karen Baptist Council (TKBC), Singapore, Australia, Finland - represent of European, Andaman Island from India, United State of America, Malaysia and Kawhtolei Karen Baptist Council from Refugee camp. This narrative have expressed that Karen not only located in Burma and Thailand but in many countries around the world.

Christian Karen believed that “Karen people will develop by the grace of God” so since Ko Tha Byu convert to Baptist by *Adoniram Judson in 1828* than they establish Burma institute Theology (MIT) and extent this idea to Thailand (Karen Baptist Siloam Bible Seminary) as well as in refugee camp (Kawhtoolie Karen

Baptist Theology). Finally, they establish Hill Light Theological Seminary by this I categories Baptist Karen into five locations according to these institute and third country resettlement program.

This paper will show how Baptist Karen networking with in these five. To explain this context, I will employ Assemblage Theory that created by *Gills Deleuze* and *Capital* as *Pierre Bourdieu* concept (Economic, Social, cultural and symbolic). In capital detail, I will explore several organizations and missionaries that had play significant role in Transnational Baptist Karen Networked. Finally the termed: ethnic, refugee, migrant and diaspora will helpful in my research conceptualize to support how Assemblage theory in Transnational Baptist Karen Networking.

3. Missionarizing Border and Re-identification of Muslim Migrants in Mae Sot Border Communities

Samak Kosem, MA Student at Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Faculty of Social Sciences, Chiang Mai University

Religious and community spaces are related to the identities of Muslim migrants along the Thai-Burma border. It is a result of Islam missions and the establishment of a network for Islamic propagation. It is also manifested through the organization, the structure and function of religion. The movement shows the possibility of creating alternatives and opportunities for Muslim migrants in their everyday lives. This research shows that this study can lead to the empowerment of Muslim migrants in social and cultural spaces through an adaptation of a new space on the borderline. Finally, my work reflects that the active process of religious space construction at the border has developed integration between nationality, ethnicity, locality and universality. It has occurred in cooperation, conflict, negotiation and compromise over power relations with respect to time and place. This process also includes the migrants' participation in religious space which re-positions them on social relations in the new context. It is a context set within an adaptation to new cultures and a change of status in light of a lack of security in life, economic and social crisis.

4. Locating Silence: Affects and Ethos in Applied Drama and Theatre Practice in Thailand and Burma/Myanmar

Matt Yoxall, PhD candidate in Theatre Studies, National University of Singapore

This research investigates different types of embodied and conceptual silence, exploring their interrelationships with developing ethoses of applied theatre practice in Thailand and Burma/Myanmar.

Silence most immediately associates itself with the sensory world through sound. I therefore adopt 'listening' as a research strategy in shaping a multi sensorial approach to ethnography; a form of listening with and through the body that in turn centralises bodies as sites of specific knowledge. This approach to

listening also bares relationship to perceptions of the near and far, local and global, and the often quoted insider-outsider dichotomy applied theatre practitioners are seen to represent.

It is these dynamics that I identify and relate to the borderland of Thailand and Burma/Myanmar; specifically Karen refugee camps, where silence and stasis, movement and performance are pressed intimately together within the contexts of refugee resettlement, potential repatriation and applied theatre processes.

5. In-Between Lives: Negotiating Bordered Terrains of Development and Resource Management along the Salween River

Paiboon Hengsuwan, PhD student/candidate in Social Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, Chiang Mai University

I chose an ethnographic study as the methodology for this research, though the decision to do this was not easy to make, given that I am an outsider and the region is a volatile violent place; a war zone. My research is based on trans-local or multi-sited ethnography. I conducted my fieldwork within and beyond the Thai-Burmese border zone where tensions between various political, economic and cultural groups prevail. It is a very complex situation in which the local people do not easily trust outsiders, including myself. The fieldwork beyond the borderlands is the social movement against dams led by NGOs. As an anti-dam movement that a coalition named the “Save the Mekong Campaign” is working against the proposed dam projects along the river’s course, I observed their activities happening beyond the Salween borderlands. I was coordinating for the Center for River Training between 2008 and 2010 for a student fieldtrip. Fortunately for me, I have a good relationship with a local NGO, which works closely with the local people. I, along with local NGO activists, have often visited the villages in this area; therefore, it is very clear that I was seen a NGO activist in local people’s eyes, and so, more or less, had their trust to a certain degree.

My key informants included both men and women – both formal and informal leaders from each of the villages, those who have played a significant role in the campaign taking place at the Thai-Burmese border. I selected formal and informal leaders by which criteria of their participations in support the border people’s struggle within and beyond villages. I interviewed eight formal leaders who are village heads and assistants, and TAO’s members, and I interviewed six informal leaders who are elder people and women. I also interviewed seven villagers who are involved with specific cases. These people do not just represent the border dwellers, but also have much experience in dealing with outsiders. Gradually on occasion, I gained enormously from the information they shared with me; from their experiences and stories.

What challenges are you faced with when doing research within the Salween borderlands? First, I carried out my research over the period 2007 to 2010. I participated in activities, particularly ceremony, meeting, seminar, conference, and

training course. By doing this, the role of international NGOs, Thai NGOs, local government agencies, TNCs, EGAT and the ADB are focused upon. However, Burma is currently changing fast, and particularly since national elections were held in November 2010, the situation has become very dynamic. Since I carried out my research before these changes took place, I limit my discussion to the years before 2011. Due to being new developments in Burma since 2011, my research will not cover these new developments.

Second, there is the language barrier, for I do not understand Karen, Tai and Islam and; therefore, on this work had to rely on those villagers who can speak Thai. Moreover, given the limited time I had to carry out my research, I had to depend largely on information provided by spokesmen who very much took good care of me and were willing to share their opinions with me.

Third, the ethnographic study proved difficult to get around the political conflict and problem, so stated above, I confined my data collection activities to the Thai side of the border. However, this should not be seen as limiting the scope of this study, since some of my informants were immigrants from Burma, having fled the political conflicts there.

6. Space-Making of *Mae Sai* Border Town from Below and Beyond

Yuthpong Chantawarin, PhD student/candidate in Social Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, Chiang Mai University

The research explores the border space-making of *Mae Sai* that has been shaped by different groups of people who migrated to the border. It sheds light on people who make a social space as a result of agency-agency interrelations as much as agency-state border interactions, addressed from multiple vantage points, i.e. border-center, local-global, and/or highland-lowland.

There are two major research sites. The first place is *Mae Sai* gem market; and the second *Doi Wow* market (*Talad Doi Wow*). The former is at the border; the latter cross-border. The gem market is at *Tetsaban Soi 4*. *Doi Wow* market is a marketplace selling a lot of goods for tourists. It is near Mae Sai Custom Office. *Mae Sai* gem market is a community of *Chanthaburi* gem traders, who migrated from *Chanthaburi* Province. *Doi Wow* market is a cross-bordered community of Burmese petty traders, who rent shop-houses for commerce at *Mae Sai*.

The research is a qualitative and quantitative method study. Quantitative methods include collection of statistical data from mainly private organizations and government agencies. Qualitative method employs ethnography, which entails informal interviews and observation. Pool of participants utilizes purposive sampling, based on people who have experiences relevant to the phenomenon to be researched, and expansion of participants generating out of snowball sampling. Gate-keepers are of importance in facilitating access to the field-sites.

7. Interconnected Flows of Shan People and Commodities: Multi-sited Ethnography in Thailand and the Shan States, Burma

Busarin Lertchavalitsakul, PhD candidate at Amsterdam Institute for Social Science Research (AISSR), University of Amsterdam

This ongoing multi-sited ethnographic research concerns a main research question- - To what extent how are Shan people's migration and commodity flows interconnected? I, a female Thai researcher who understand basic Shan, am investigating these two flows crossing between the Shan State's interiors and Thailand by tracing the routes taken by migrants and traders that pass through one particular checkpoint linking Northwest Thailand and the Southern Shan States. At this checkpoint, Thailand allows informal and small-scale trading to take place. Meanwhile, because it is the shortest way to their destinations, it becomes a gateway where Shan migrants and traders can pass fairly easily between two countries due to loose customs checks and lax immigration control. Upon their transnational mobility, they do not deal only with the two state officials of Thailand and Burma, but also with different ethnic groups that share zones to benefit from border crossers.