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**Enterprising Faith:
Ethnography of Faith-Based Development in Contemporary
Thailand**

PhD. Thesis

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Podpis:

Abstract

Based on a long-term ethnographic fieldwork in northern Thailand this dissertation scrutinizes a significant part of the contemporary efforts of the international development - the faith-based development. Despite the fact that international donors and governments dedicate much of their resources and trust to the faith-based development organisations, this segment of the development industry remains largely absent from the academic literature. In this dissertation I focus on the relationships between social and economic changes in Thailand and global forces that affect lives of mountain ethnic minorities. State efforts to integrate highland people into the Thai lowland society include the development and maintenance of schools. This effort has been actively supported by Western development organizations employing activities and practices built upon fundamentalist Christianity. Since the mid 90s, the number of faith-based NGOs in northern Thailand, which were rather scarce before, began to rise. These institutions operate orphanages for highland minorities. In the process, thousands of ethnic minorities' children have left their homes and families to become "orphans" or "high risk situation children" that need to be taken care of by foreign aid workers bringing new ideas, information, hopes for a "better life" and not the least, Christian faith. Through the practices of my research partners, in this dissertation I examine the attributes, effects and dynamics of faith-based development. The dissertation explores the ways in which the practices of foreign organizations shape the lives of young highlanders in the Thai Buddhist society.

Key words: development, faith-based development, NGO, orphanage, neoliberalism, ethnography, cultural capital, symbolic capital, symbolic violence, governmentality, Thailand.

Abstrakt

Na základě dlouhodobého etnografického výzkumu v severním Thajsku tato dizertační práce zkoumá významnou část soudobých snah mezinárodního rozvoje - rozvoj založený na náboženské víře. Přestože vkládají dárci a vlády do rozvojových organizací založených na náboženské víře značné zdroje a důvěru, v akademické literatuře zůstává tento segment rozvojového průmyslu téměř neprouzkoumaný. V této disertační práci se zaměřuji na vztah mezi sociálními a ekonomickými změnami v Thajsku a globalizačními silami, jež ovlivňují životy horských etnických menšin. Snaha státu integrovat lidi z hor do nížinné společnosti zahrnuje rozvoj a správu škol. Tato snaha je aktivně podporována zahraničními rozvojovými organizacemi, jejichž aktivity a praktiky byly vystavěny na fundamentalistické formě křesťanství. Počet nevládních organizací, které byly v severním Thajsku dříve ojedinělým jevem, začal od poloviny 90. let významně narůstat. Tyto organizace provozují sirotčince pro horské minority. Tisíce dětí etnických minorit tak opustily své vlastní domovy a rodiny, aby se staly "sirotky" nebo "dětmi v ohrožení", o které se musí postarat zahraniční humanitární pracovníci, kteří s sebou, mimo jiného, přivázejí nové myšlenky, informace, nadějná očekávání na "lepší životy" a v neposlední řadě křesťanskou víru. V této dizertační práci se zabývám vlastnostmi, efekty a dynamikou křesťanského rozvoje prostřednictvím životů mých výzkumných partnerů. Tato dizertační práce zkoumá, jak se takto řízené praktiky setkávají s životy mladých horalů a jaký vliv mají následně na jejich životy v thajské buddhistické společnosti.

Klíčová slova: rozvoj, rozvoj založený na náboženské víře, NGO, dětský domov, neoliberalismus, etnografie, kulturní kapitál, symbolický kapitál, symbolické násilí, governmentalita, Thailand.

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1. Introduction

It was sometime in the year 2009 that I received a set of pictures over the email. My friend and closest Akha informant, Amue, sent me images capturing graduation ceremony of twelve Akha students who successfully concluded their studies at the Akha Bible Institute in Chiang Rai. Especially one of these pictures attracted my attention. As soon as I opened this image on the screen of my laptop, I could not stop staring at it. The picture captures a row of young Akha male and female Bible College graduates in a kneeling position, all dressed in white shirts, black skirts and trousers and black shoes. We can not see the faces of these students, only their backs. The picture also captures a small part of the area where the celebration took a place. The place is decorated with colorful balloons and blue and white plastic chairs that form an auditorium. We can see several young Akha men dressed in shirts and black trousers sitting in front rows. All the faces we can see, belong to white foreigners. Seven men, two women. All standing in similar positions.

What I found so interesting about the photography was the situation in which the Akha graduates are pictured. While they kneel down on the tiling of the Akha Outreach Foundation, there is a group of white, western men and women standing above these graduates. One to one, forming a line. Each of the westerners stands right next to one of the Akha. While the highlanders lower their heads to the ground these white foreigners hold their heads in their palms whispering something into their ears. What is it they whisper? One can only guess the exact words but I dare to anticipate. I have seen similar scene before. I saw it many times. Such a scene was an ordinary moment in the routine practice of Christian Homes in Chiang Rai. Thousands of mountain children living in dozens of similar development institutions were being treated in this way every Sunday during the service.

Each Sunday, either missionaries or their local staff would hold the heads of children, one by one, to whisper God's Words into their ears. Words of salvation, eternal life, righteousness, redemption, deliverance, protection, prosperity, healing and wholeness of spirit, soul and body were being inculcated into the children's brains by a number of ways. God's Words and wishes defined the existence and functioning of Christian Homes. Nonetheless, it was this very moment at the end of every Sunday service when this godly discourse materialized and was directly observable. Children as young as six would stand at attention, arms along their bodies, heads lowered down to the floor, eyes shut. While the staff member or a missionary speaks the words fast, energetically, holding the child's head, whispering directly into an ear, the child would often burst into tears. At this moment, missionary's voice grows stronger: "God loves you! He sent his only son, Jesus Christ, to die for you, for your sin. Jesus! Jesus has sacrificed for you. He has sacrificed for you. Because he loves you! Jesus loves you. He suffered for you to be free. Jesus is your God. Do you love Jesus?!" The crying child opens eyes and screams: "I love Jesus! Jesus is my savior!" while pointing arms towards the sky.

While I watched the picture sitting in a comfortable chair of my European apartment, I perceived the image through my previous experience. Big white people holding Akha students' heads in their palms that seemed, compared to the small Asian bodies, unnaturally huge. What I saw at the moment were not the people but rather the interplay of their power. Bending down young Akha men and women above whom, as giants, stood white missionaries speaking to these little highlanders from a position of power that seemed to be nearly unlimited. Yet, at the same moment, these young Akha graduates experienced feelings of dignity and the notion of belonging into an elite club of the international Christian community. I bet the Akha on the picture are delighted. Education, Akha believe, provides

them with an upward social mobility. Education is also what a large number of Christian aid organisations in northern Thailand offers to the mountain ethnic minorities. Shortly, what I saw on the picture was a white god. A concept I coined about a year earlier and to which I will get back later.

Akha represent one of the mountain ethnic minorities of mainland Southeast Asia. These highland ethnic minorities in the north of Thailand are being officially termed 'chao khao' in Thai, which translates as 'hill people' or, according to official documents, is used to mean 'hill tribes'. The term 'hill tribes' is an example of a fabricated discourse that reflects the changing relations between the modern Thai state and peripheral populations (Delang 2003). For Keyes (1994) this ethnic classification was a type of technology of power employed by the state. As Vienne puts it: "To be Karen, to be Hmong, to be Akha ... is more or less to be credited with a predictable pattern of behavior embedded in a stereotyped cultural pattern promoted as an idealized rationalization which stands in contrast to the dominant society" (1989: 36). Under the label 'chao khao' the Thai government recognizes the following ethnic groups: Karen, Hmong, Yao, Lahu, Lisu, Akha, H'tin, Khamu, and Lua. The Tribal Research Institute's¹ figures from 1990 indicate the total number of ethnic highlanders to be found in 20 provinces is put at around 562,139, or 1% of the total population of Thailand. Although I met many members of other groups during my fieldwork, my research focused particularly on one of these ethnic minorities; according to many, the most impoverished, the least developed and the one with the lowest social status in Thai society, the Akha. The story I am about to tell throughout the thesis investigates the relationship between the Akha, Thai state and society and the attempts of the Christian-based organisations to develop these mountain dwellers.

¹ The Tribal Research Institute was founded in 1965 and dissolved by the Thai government Bureaucratic Reform Act in 2002.

On the very beginning, I would like to remark that this thesis is not following in the debate of the anthropology of religious conversion, neither the anthropology of religion. The focus of this study is exclusively oriented around the discourse that occupies the anthropological understanding of the international development and humanitarianism. I made much effort throughout the whole process of my research, up to the very final form of the text, to provide contribution to the anthropology of development in three principal aspects.

The thesis focuses on a segment of the development sector that has acquired an immense significance in the world of global humanitarianism during the last two decades. Yet, it still remains largely absent from the academic knowledge. As should be obvious by now, my interest has been focused especially towards the form of development aid based on a faith. Since the overwhelming majority of projects to increase the quality of Akha lives, via various forms of development efforts, have been in the hands of Christian groups and individuals, and since the most significant impact of their initiatives is closely related to children, it is no coincidence that Christian Children's Homes happened to be the object of my researcher interest.

The second contribution of the thesis relates to the ethnographic method I used. Too often, anthropological studies of development lack the real people who either construct and operate the aid or become its target. The intensive ethnographic method of participant observation fieldwork offered me a chance to scrutinize the social dynamics behind my informants' day-to-day practices. The length of the research, that I started in the year 2001, allowed me to follow several of my informants in the course of over ten years, during which I spent altogether over 32 months in the field. Relationships with these informants gradually deepened and intensified. Not solely because of my research, I believe, I was welcomed to

study Christian-based development through practice of social actors in an ethnographic detail. I was granted the opportunity to closely observe practices of the developers as well as of those meant to be developed and other parties involved in the process. As Peshkin points out: "The most meaningful impact of schooling is best measured when students have left school and settled into those activities (work, marriage, postschool friendships, child rearing, etc.) which will characterize their life as adults..." (1988: 13).

The third contribution of the thesis is concerned with social theory. To scrutinize my ethnographic encounters I make a use of theoretical concepts of two major scholars - Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault. While their scholarship might not be unequivocally compatible, it was the very difference that attracted my interest to combine some of their scholarship. I will get back to the theoretical framing of the thesis separately, in the following subchapter.

By means of the thesis, I seek to gain a deeper anthropological understanding of the faith-based development but also to reach outside of the elitist world of academia and contribute to the knowledge and experience of international development sector, be it politicians, donors, consultants or the aid workers per se. Since anthropology, with its research methods and analytical sensitivity of cultural relativism, provides an instrument for critical analyses of the ways in which large scale social, political and economic forces devastate individuals and their communities, I wish to show the ways Christian-based development endorses social inequality and contributes to a politically structured suffering (Bourgois 2002, Bourgois & Schonberg 2009, Scheper-Hughes 1993, Ryska & Schonberg 2012).

Theoretical Framework

For long I have resisted Michel Foucault. The almost hegemonic position this French scholar occupies within the field of anthropology (Boyer 2003) was suppressing any of my potential consideration to use his scholarship in my work. This form of resistance has been disrupted by Aihwa Ong who, as a foucauldian scholar, had a significant influence on my theoretical stance. Throughout the attempt to extend Foucault by combining his scholarship with Bourdieu to develop a theoretical framework for my thesis, I was encouraged and influenced by Tereza Stockelova, Liu Xin, Stanley Brandes and Jeff Schonberg to whom I am much grateful. My concerns about the ambiguous compatibility of these two scholars have been eased after I learned that Paul Rabinow, the world leading foucauldian scholar as well as his colleague and a friend, has been recently ruminating over the combination of these very two eminent French thinkers.

The attempt to complement the approaches of Bourdieu and Foucault should in no way be understood as a non-problematic matter of course. The differences between the two scholars and the limits of their scholarship are indeed a good reason to abolish the idea to use them together. However, it is exactly the differences that lead me to combine their concepts. Although the methods used by Bourdieu and Foucault are distinct, I believe it is feasible for their concepts to be utilized along side to each other within certain limits and at different levels of analysis. As Bourdieu argued: "Concepts can – and, to some extent, must – remain open and provisional, which doesn't mean vague, approximate or confused: any real thinking about scientific practice attests that this *openness* of concepts, which gives them their 'suggestive character', and thus their capacity to produce scientific effects is the essence of any scientific thought *in statu nascendi* ..." (Bourdieu 1990: 40–41).

Philippe Bourgois and Jeff Schonberg have used the combination of Bourdieu and Foucault to highlight "the way structurally imposed everyday suffering generates violent and destructive subjectivities" among homeless heroin addicts in San Francisco (2009: 19). Aihwa Ong has also used Bourdieu's concepts of capitals alongside Foucauldian notion of governmentality. In the study *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics Of Transnationality*, Ong (1999) scrutinizes citizenship and its transformation under conditions of transnational mobility. She applies Foucault's concept of governmentality as a set of modern rationalities and techniques of government focused on population to scrutinize relationships between migration and economic policies. In the ethnographic part however, Ong applies Bourdieu's different forms of capitals to follow practices of diasporic actors in a specific 'transnational fields' in which 'cultural citizenship' plays a central role.

However, neither of these scholars attempted to provide a synthesis between the work of Bourdieu and Foucault. Rather, it could be said, the differences in their approaches were not scrutinized. Basically, the studies do not question the affinity between their methodologies but make use of selected concepts within certain limits in order to elucidate different aspects of their data. In other words, the analytical contribution justifies the used methodologies.

Let me shortly mention the important differences between Bourdieu's and Foucault's methodologies, their conceptualization of individual, society and power. While Bourdieu used sociological and anthropological instruments for his research, Foucault interrogated new ways how to think about knowledge and society using historical and philosophical methods. Both, Bourdieu similarly to Foucault, were studying the complex relationships between the subject and society. However, Foucault, because of the data he worked with, could not elaborate the perspective of social agents. Contrary to Foucault, Bourdieu's particular interest was related

to the dynamics through which social agents acquire 'a feel for the game' and how they maneuver in various fields of power.

Bourdieu conceptualized the modern society as a complex of various, relatively autonomous, social spaces, that he called 'fields', in which competition centers around particular species of capital. He has recognized four basic forms of capital: economic, cultural, social and symbolic. Economic capital relates to various forms of material wealth, cultural capital could be understood as an accumulation of information as well as intellectual and artistic qualifications, the social capital represents existing or potential network of relationships a social agent disposes (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992: 104-105). The interplay between these forms of capital can provide an agent with symbolic capital if it is "misrecognized in its arbitrary truth as capital and recognized as legitimate" (Bourdieu 1990: 112). In other words, symbolic capital comprises the resources available to an agent on the basis of honor, prestige and/or recognition that serve as value one holds within a given field. Bourdieu contrasted field in a game, in the sense that social agents utilize the "feel for the game" or practical sense: "Produced by experience of the game, and therefore of the objective structures within which it is played out, the 'feel for the game' is what gives the game a subjective sense - a meaning and *raison d'être*, but also a direction, an orientation, an impending outcome, for those who take part and therefore acknowledge what is at stake" (Bourdieu 1992: 66). Field is thus "a field of forces, whose necessity is imposed on agents who are engaged in it, and a field of struggles within which agents confront each other, with differentiated means and ends according to their position in the structure of the field of forces, thus contributing to conserving or transforming its structure" (Bourdieu 1998: 32). The position an agent occupies in a field thus depends on the capital he or she possesses and the value it is being ascribed to. The struggle of social actors trying to occupy dominant positions within a field constitutes the hierarchy

and dynamics of fields. For Bourdieu, capital was closely related to power as the "energy of social physics" (Bourdieu 1990: 122).

Contrary to Marx, Bourdieu did not reduce his analyses of social struggle to fundamental economic antagonisms between social classes alone. Specific characteristics of social conflicts taking place in each of the fields are the result of various social relationships which are not solely economic (Bourdieu 1977). It should be made clear that a field is a dynamic social space where the value delegated to different forms of capital might change over time as a result of various investments conducted by agents and institutions in the field. In the course of a lifetime, social actors develop habitual dispositions appropriate for the social worlds they inhabit. According to Bourdieu, these strategies are unconscious and act on the level of a bodily logic.

According to Foucault, power is a "total structure of actions brought to bear upon possible actions; it incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult; in the extreme it constrains or forbids absolutely" (1982: 789). Although, for Foucault, violence may represent a part of some power relationships, "in itself the exercise of power is not violence; nor is it a consent which, implicitly, is renewable", it is "always a way of acting upon an acting subject or acting subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of action. A set of actions upon other actions" (1982: 789). In his later work, Foucault turns to the concept of 'government' in order to explain how power functions. Power, he argued, is less a confrontation between two adversaries or the linking of one to the other than a question of government. "To govern, in this sense, is to structure the possible field of action of others. The relationship proper to power would not, therefore, be sought on the side of violence or of struggle, nor on that of voluntary linking (all of which can, at best, only be the instruments of power), but rather in

the area of the singular mode of action, neither warlike nor juridical, which is government" (Foucault 1982: 790).

Foucault was concerned by the subject of modern governing especially in a series of lectures he has given at College de France in 1978 and 1979 from which the most important is the one entitled Governmentality (Foucault 2008). Foucault's genealogical analysis of the art of government scrutinizes modern political power which he calls governmentality. Although the word government bears a particular political meaning today, Foucault employed the term in the broader meaning it possessed in the sixteenth century. Government was a term discussed not only in political tracts, but also in philosophical, religious, medical and pedagogic texts. In addition to the management by the state or the administration, government also signified problems of self-control, guidance for the family and for children, management of the household, directing the soul and so on.

Foucault defined governmentality as 'the conduct of conduct' and thus as a concept which ranges from governing others to governing the self (1982: 789-790). As I have already mentioned, government, according to Foucault, does not refer to its narrow meaning of political structures and management of states. "Rather", Foucault argued, "it designated the way in which the conduct of individuals or of groups might be directed: the government of children, of souls, of communities, of families, of the sick. It did not only cover the legitimately constituted forms of political or economic subjection, but also modes of action, more or less considered and calculated, which were destined to act upon the possibilities of action of other people. To govern, in this sense, is to structure the possible field of action of others" (1982: 790).

For Foucault power related to government was particularly about guidance and administration of behaviour in the sense of governing the forms of self-government, structuring and shaping the field of possible action of subjects. This concept of power, instead of excluding consensual forms or resorting to violence, signifies that coercion or consensus are reformulated as means of government among others; they are elements or instruments rather than the foundation or source of power relationships (Foucault 1983: 788-790). While thinking through the questions related to government, Foucault instead of stressing 'docile bodies' and processes of discipline as he did in *Discipline and Punish* (1995), investigated the relations between technologies of the self and technologies of domination (Foucault 1988).

“I think that if one wants to analyze the genealogy of the subject in Western civilization, he has to take into account not only techniques of domination but also techniques of the self. Let's say: he has to take into account the interaction between those two types of techniques – techniques of domination and techniques of the self. He has to take into account the points where the technologies of domination of individuals over one another have recourse to processes by which the individual acts upon himself. And conversely, he has to take into account the points where the techniques of the self are integrated into structures of coercion and domination. The contact point, where the individuals are driven by others is tied to the way they conduct themselves, is what we can call, I think government. Governing people, in the broad meaning of the word, governing people is not a way to force people to do what the governor wants; it is always a versatile equilibrium, with complementarity and conflicts between techniques which assure coercion and processes through which the self is constructed or modified by himself”, writes Foucault (1993: 203-4).

Governmentality, as I understand and use the concept, does not simply stand for a top-down state policy ordinance. As will become clear throughout the thesis, the concept does not represent a tool to control population solely by the invisible hand of the state or supra-state entities. Although, technologies employed by the state govern the conduct of Akha in a significant way, during my fieldwork I have slowly realized, the state government has been accompanied by various other actors. These actors might be represented by non-governmental organisations and agencies, capital driven markets or media. All of them are concerned with exercising control over the conduct of the mountain ethnic minorities. While I was observing various technologies that govern the Akha, technologies by which the Akha govern the conduct of self became gradually visible. Back then I started to take interest not just in technologies as instrument of governing but gradually also in technologies of the self.

While number of scholars point out the theoretical call for detailed analysis of the fluctuation of power in various empirical sites, most studies of governmentality are abstract from real people that are being constituted and ruled as subjects through various technologies and assemblages of power (Frankel 1997; Larner 2000; O'Malley 1996; Rudnyckyj 2004). In a paper on neoliberal governmentality in the European Union via education, training and technologies, Mitchell (2006) argues that: "most studies of governmentality are generally abstracted from actually existing subjects and spaces". What these scholars actually criticise, is not the concept per se but rather the methodology used to analyse its social manifestation.

The interest in technologies of the self extended my understanding and the use of Foucault's governmentality beyond the dimension of theory as I began to perceive the concept also as a sort of methodological lead. Foucault attempted to develop a vocabulary that overcomes the dichotomy of micro and macro since it demonstrates how power constitutes the most personal

intimate moments through everyday mechanisms. It is internal, not external to subject and their agency. Thus, as I understand the concept, the perspective of governmentality directly calls for ethnography. To study technologies governing the conduct of one's self on the micro level, I have found the intensive method of participant observation fieldwork highly useful. That is also the very moment where Foucault's governmentality can be well extended by the concepts of Bourdieu. The very combination of these two scholars allowed me to scrutinize the ways development governs the conduct of mountain ethnic minorities, dynamics constructing the Akha social suffering within the Thai society and the ways social inequalities are being legitimised by their very victims.

Since Foucault defines governmentality as the conduct of conduct, it provided me with some understanding of the ways by which Thai state, Christian Children's Homes and others govern their subjects, while the subjects govern their self. Because of Foucault's methodology and the data he has been employing, he does not work with the perspective of a social actor. Thus, the concept of governmentality offers scanty theoretical device to analyze the everyday practices of individual agents. Thus, to get a better grasp on how the social dynamics of the Akha conduct is being constituted on the level of a theory, I extended Foucault's governmentality with Bourdieu's conceptualization. His concepts of cultural, social and symbolic capital, together with habitus, field and symbolic violence reveal the dynamics of power relations in social life on the micro level, emphasize the role of practice and embodiment as well as the construction of social actor's worldview. This theoretical perspective allowed me to analyze practices employed by the Akha and Christian aid workers and the means by which they embody and legitimize the social trajectories they occupy within the Thai society. In the following chapters the theoretical framing is present in the background. I return to it explicitly in the conclusion.

The Spirit of Neoliberalism

The story of the thesis, as I represent it through experiences and practices of my research partners, has been significantly influenced by 'something'. The 'something' was surrounding the places and spaces they occupied as well as minds of those who occupy them. The picture appearing in front of me represented effort to increase Akha children quality while the Akha sought to increase the quality of their self. Driven by their 'imagined worlds' (Appadurai 1996) they dedicated much to reach 'better lives'. Similarly to many in the West, the young Akha too long for a modern conveniences, up-to-date fashion and gadgets. Difficult is their encounter with the wider lowland Thai society after they leave the gates of Christian Homes. The dreams they construct through the teachings of Christian-based development organizations, and other channels such as television, do not await for these young, 'developed', Akha to enjoy. Gone is the hope for egalitarian futures, yet many still believe one can achieve anything if he or she tries hard enough and the international development industry actively supports such a faith, often giving a false hope to those on the margin of societies. What we see in many parts of the world is an army of citizens battling structural inequality in ever more ruthless appearance. What is it that has been happening in the last decades around the world? What is the 'something'?

More than ten years ago, Comaroffs wrote that 'something' "appears both to include and to marginalize in unanticipated ways; to produce desire and expectation on a global scale, yet to decrease the certainty of work or the security of persons; to magnify class differences but to undercut class consciousness; above all, to offer up vast, almost instantaneous riches to those who master its spectral technologies - and, simultaneously, to threaten the very existence of those who do not" (2001: 8). Be it health, education, labour, prisons, corporations and so on,

all these topics have been often marked by a term 'neoliberalism'. As Hilgers (2012) points out, in spite of the diversity of topics, most of the research is linked to the state in neoliberal age. While some scholars see the effect of neoliberalism in the reduction of the state (Prasad 2006, Haque 2008), the dominant trend believes neoliberalism leads to its redeployment (Ong 1999, 2006, Bayart 2006, Wacquant 2009). Neoliberalism, Hilgers argue, requires a strong state to guarantee essential conditions to a pure competition and extends the market mechanisms together with a judicial apparatus "that enables competition and frees up the potential of collective life for organising itself" (Hilgers 2012: 82). Thus, the effect of neoliberalism is to change people. Hilgers mentions the famous formulation: economics are the method, but the object is to change the soul. "The necessity of making people adapt to a world of generalised competition supposes a radical reform that transforms the way in which they perceive their destiny. Education in the neoliberal condition was conceived as an essential requirement for social change" (Ibid.: pp?).

The first scholar who saw the implication of neoliberalism was probably Foucault in his lectures on biopower. In his understanding, the market's organising principle was the competition that needed a state to provide it with a framework in order for "free market" to be performed. Such a reengineering of the state allows for a market competition and imposes a new socialisation of individuals. The market rationality is extended beyond the market. Through the technologies of self, social agents optimize their individuality while technologies and competitive arrangements regulate its population for optimal productivity. Via the concept of governmentality, Foucault allowed us to perceive neoliberalism not strictly as an economic project but rather as a social, political and anthropological one.

The anthropological understanding of neoliberalism, argues Wacquant (2012), has been polarised between representation by the means of an economic model of market rule as a rather coherent whole (e.g. Comaroff & Comaroff 2001, Edelman & Haugerud 2005, Ferguson 2006, Gamble 2001, Greenhouse 2009, Harvey 2005) and a more flowing and flexible notions, strategies and technologies aimed at altering populations and people, deriving from Foucauldian governmentality (e.g. Hamann 2009 [Neoliberalism, Governmentality, and Ethics - *Foucault Studies*, No 6, pp. 37-59, February 2009], Larner 2000, Ong 2007). Wacquant's concept of neoliberalism takes the 'middle road' between these two approaches as "an *articulation of state, market and citizenship* that harnesses the first to impose the stamp of the second onto the third" (2012: 66).

This is a moment where Foucault and Bourdieu meet once again. To offer a better understanding of the "slippery, hazy and contentious" concept of neoliberalism, Wacquant argues that Bourdieu's "bureaucratic field" provides "a powerful tool for dissecting the revamping of the state as stratification and classification machine driving the neoliberal revolution from above" (Ibid.). Bourdieu's "bureaucratic field" stands for the set of organisations that successfully monopolise the definition and distribution of public goods (1994). Wacquant has reworked the concept to specify the character of the neoliberal state (2010). It allows understanding neoliberalism behind the narrow conception of market rule or the broad understanding via governmentality. Wacquant describes neoliberalism as "a political project of state-crafting that puts disciplinary 'workfare', neutralising 'prisonfare' and the trope of individual responsibility at the service of commodification", as "a rightward tilting of the space of bureaucratic agencies that define and distribute public goods and spawns a Centaur-state that practises liberalism at the top of the class structure and punitive paternalism at the bottom" and finally "the growth and glorification of the penal wing of the state is an

integral component of the neoliberal Leviathan, such that the police, courts and prison need to be brought into the political anthropology of neoliberal rule” (2012: 66).

Hilgers, in his critique of Wacquant analysis of neoliberalism, claims that the impact of neoliberalism "can never be understood in radical separation from historical configurations" (2012: 81). On an example of African countries, he argues that privatisation does not have to weaken state but rather reorganize it: "In certain cases, we see a state that is expanding and even becoming stronger in some ways. Yet its weakness and porousness are revealed on a daily basis. The state thereby shows itself to be not an apparatus, but a set of processes that are not always linked to institutions – or that, in any case, cannot be reduced to these" (2012: 85). Another significant moment of the neoliberal project, writes Hilgers, is the climate in which an individuals make an effort to take a control of one's own future. In a situation when state provides limited help to its population, argues Hilgers, being an 'enterprising self' in Foucauldian sense, to take a responsibility over one's own destiny, often constitutes a necessary condition for a success and survival. As we could see on many places around the globe during the last twenty years, a number of development organisations appeared with projects mostly in education and health based on the model of enterprise. It is here that Hilgers criticizes Wacquant's idea that neoliberalism implies the weakening of the social state. While many Africans have never received any benefits and social security from their governments, "[S]ome countries that have undergone structural adjustment have nevertheless implemented social reforms. For political reasons Ghana, Niger and Nigeria have tried to enact health reforms that would ensure universal coverage. Such reforms are often little more than empty shells, but we should remember that the delegation of social missions by the state to NGOs has sometimes led to an improvement of existing structures" (Hilgers 2012: 87). As I show throughout the thesis it was not only NGOs that provided assistance to

the Akha in Thailand but the state has also organized a number of development projects towards the social benefits of its population. As will become clear, these efforts often lead to various forms of social suffering, violence and imprisonment.

As some scholars point out, religion played a significant role in these processes. "We can see a parallel here with the growth of Pentecostal movements, whose pastors, as entrepreneurs *par excellence*, embrace an ideology of self-realisation and prosperity; that is, the ethics that underpin such movements corresponds especially well with the spirit of neoliberalism", points out Hilgers (2012: 86). Comaroffs label neoliberalism as a millennial capitalism, a capitalism that presents itself as a gospel of salvation; a capitalism that, if rightly harnessed, is invested with the capacity wholly to transform the universe of the marginalized and disempowered (Comaroff & Comaroff 2001). One of its faces, they argue, is represented by 'Occult Economies and New Religious Movements' that "have two dimensions: a material aspect founded on the effort to conjure wealth - or to account for its accumulation - by appeal to techniques that defy explanation in the conventional terms of practical reason; and an ethical aspect grounded in the moral discourses and (re)actions sparked by the real or imagined production of value through such 'magical' means" (Comaroff & Comaroff 2001: 19). According to Comaroffs, there have been an explosion of occult-related activities in different parts of the world.

There is a close parallel between the occult economies and the spread of new religious movements around the world, where "the latter may be seen as holy-owned subsidiaries of the former" (Comaroff & Comaroff 2001: 23). The global mood of the moment, write Comaroffs, are fee-for-service, consumer-cult and prosperity-gospel denominations. To demonstrate their argument, Comaroffs make a use of the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, a

denomination of Brazilian origin operating at many parts of the world: "The Universal Church reforms the Protestant ethic with enterprise and urbanity, fulsomely embracing the material world. It owns a major television network in Brazil, has an elaborate Web site, and, above all, promises swift payback to those who embrace Christ, denounce Satan, and 'make their faith practical' by 'sacrificing' all they can to the movement" (2001: 23). It is here where Pentacostalism meets the spirit of neoliberalism. Similarly to Christian organisations operating among the Akha in northern Thailand, African churches offer everything from cures to health problems, remedies for a 'better job' through pragmatic material gain. "This shift has been endemic to many of the new religious movements of the late twentieth century. For them, and for their millions of members, the Second Coming evokes not a Jesus who saves, but one who pays dividends. Or, more accurately, one who promises a miraculous return on a limited spiritual investment [...] as the growth of prosperity gospels and fee-for-service movements illustrates, in a neoliberal age the chiliastic urge emphasizes a privatized millennium, a personalized rather than a communal sense of rebirth; in this, the messianic meets the magical" (Comaroff & Comaroff 2001: 24).

Wacquant's criticism of the broad understanding of neoliberalism via governmentality should not be ignored. As I have already mentioned above, I attempt to overstep this shortcoming by an emphasis on actions and practices of social agents and by combining Foucault's theory with Bourdieu. Similarly to Wacquant I attempt to show neoliberalism ethnographically through my informants' practices. As Ortner writes, ethnography: "[...] provide depth, richness, complexity, humanity, even humor, to bring to life abstract accounts of 'economic restructuring' and 'polarization of wealth'. But most of all – as I reflect on various studies of people and places at the short end of the neoliberal stick – ethnographies remind us that people live in worlds of meaning as well as of material conditions" (2011). In this sense, I

don't take neoliberalism for a coherent, totalizing phenomenon that can be used as an easy explanatory cause; rather, it is something to be ethnographically investigated, documented and finally explained in interplay with other processes and forces.

The Structure Of The Thesis

The text is divided into ten chapters including the introduction. All the chapters, each in its way, tell the story of how the ideas of salvation and progress, together with the capital driven market economy and the logic of neoliberalism, influence the ways Christian-based development is perceived, practiced and experienced. This thesis seeks to answer the following basic questions: How and why did Christian Children's Homes receive such an extraordinary position and power within the predominantly Buddhist Thai society as well as within the highland communities? How do these faith-based development initiatives work in practice and how is such a practice experienced by various parties involved in the process? And finally, what are the wider consequences of these operations?

In this introductory chapter I briefly introduced the space and place that constituted my research field, described the main theoretical framings of this study and shortly outline the way in which the thesis has been structured. The second chapter provides a brief overview of the existing literature examining the field of the international development, points to the more significant studies related to activities of Christian groups and missionaries in Southeast Asia and shortly introduces the historical experience with Christian Homes and boarding schools in various countries. In the third chapter I offer an insight into the background of the research as seen through my reflective glasses, in order to provide a deeper understanding of the relationships I hold with informants as well as of the position I occupy within the field of anthropology. The fourth chapter maps the geo-political changes in global humanitarianism

that took place during the 1980s and 1990s. These changes in development policy and aid transfers brought along a new perception of the aid and provided religious NGOs with a new and highly significant position within the international development community. Although this study takes place in Thailand, the image of the 'local' form of development does not exist in vacuum but has been significantly influenced by political economy as a product of global interests, forces and powers. These historical shifts are crucial for understanding the role Christian NGOs and orphanages play within the northern Thai society today. The fifth chapter scrutinizes the historically influenced relationship between the state and its mountain population via the lenses of the concept of governmentality. The next chapter analyzes the Christian-based development as realized by Children's Homes in Chiang Rai. In this chapter I employ the perspective of different parties involved in the Home's existence to demonstrate how diverse and even contradictory ideas and motivations act together to create a notion of a successful project. In chapter seven I get engaged with the ways Akha maximize the value of the self. I describe the Akha experience with state schools in Chiang Rai as well as the relationships they had with Thai teachers and schoolmates. A large part of this chapter pays attention to the social dynamics behind the New Life development operation. The next, eighth chapter, deals with the relationship between state school, Christian Home and the neoliberal notion of the individual's self, to provide an understanding of the resistance New Life students employ. The chapter also serves as a transition between the life behind the walls of the Christian Home and the one Akha face within the lowland Thai society after they leave the gates of the faith-based development institution. The chapter nine is based on the ethnographic moments of my Akha informants as I observed their lives and practices during the time we shared a household in Chiang Rai. To better understand how the Akha effort to maximize the individual's self through Christian-based development has been utilized, I describe my informants' experience related to the life in the city, work, leisure activities or

visits to their parents' villages. In the concluding chapter, *The Value Of Honor*, I attempt to grasp the foregoing ethnography of Christian-based development of the Akha, to build a model of the social world I studied. In this chapter I articulate the theory, that was rather implicit in the ethnographic body of the thesis, in an attempt to extend it.

2. Faith & Development

"It seems to us today almost non-sensical to deny that there is such a thing as 'development', or dismiss it as a meaningless concept, just as it must have been virtually impossible to reject the concept 'civilization' in the nineteenth century, or the concept 'God' in the twelfth", writes Ferguson (1994: xiii). Surprisingly, we have little understanding of what happens when 'development' and 'God' "join forces". It is not that religion and development endeavours would not share their histories, nonetheless, not much attention has been paid to the ways in which it guides and orients the aid today (e.g. Bornstein 2005, Clarke 2008, Hearn 2002, Hefferan 2007, Lunn 2009, Occhipinti 2005, Van Ufford et al. 1988). No longer is poverty perceived solely through economic means but rather as a combination of multiple variables that need to be understood and incorporated into development programs (e.g. Clarke 2008, Freidus 2010, Haynes 2007, 2008). This idea stands behind the immense trust faith-based development organizations (FBDO) have enjoyed from the international humanitarian community during the last decade. It is the very FBDO that embodies religious framing, and pragmatic and material action.

Since religion connects people across geographic, social, economic and sometimes also cultural divides, it enables FBDOs to operate with support from fellow worshippers who

might sympathize with 'brothers and sisters' living in a different part of the globe (Bornstein 2005, Dicklitch & Rice 2004, Freidus 2010) and have more confidence in the development initiative (Clarke 2008). As Burr (2006) argues, based on her research in Vietnam, Christian organizations are able to provide long-term assistance because of a secured funding from their donors. This shared feeling of moral responsibility and solidarity has its roots in the scriptural call to serve the poor and protect the vulnerable (Freidus 2010, Haynes 2008). Since scripture explicitly states that widows and orphans are to be cared for and protected, there has been an "explosion of faith-based responses to orphan care in Malawi and elsewhere" (Freidus 2010: 52).

Predominant majority of development projects considering highland ethnic minorities in the northern Thai province of Chiang Rai is operated by groups and individuals whose approach is based on Christian faith. According to available information these projects usually deal with issues related to education, poverty, drug abuse, HIV/AIDS and human trafficking. Though different areas and problems, the formula is too often similar - an orphanage offering a boarding and education in nearby state run schools. These Homes are usually composed of a compound of buildings enclosed by high, concrete walls isolating its inner space from the outside society. Significant number of mountain ethnic minority children and youth live in these institutions under strict Christian regulations. While thousands of minority children are being developed, they are being simultaneously saved from the 'darkness' of their culture².

For the last decade, during which I was closely observing these projects, I was repeatedly astonished by the fact how little consideration have Christian orphanages attracted from the

² Kammerer writes about the Western missionaries' activities among the Akha: "Proselytizers asked them to abandon their ancestral, agricultural, and local spirits in favor of the religion of the one true God, to leave the 'darkness' and enter the 'light'" (1990: 281).

social science production. Despite the fact that Christian Children's Homes represent one of the most popular development instruments for FBDOs in various countries of Africa and Asia, the knowledge is minimal. Within the wide literature on development and the so-called 'hilltribe problem', there is no detailed study of the role Christian Children's Homes play in the development aid neither on the context in which they operate within the Thai and mountain societies. Yet, for the last twenty years, Christian-based projects in northern Thailand have played a highly significant role in the lives of mountain ethnic minorities and became inseparable part of northern Thai society. As I am about to show, the scholarship of Christian-based development in neighboring countries of southeast Asia does not provide much reason for a delight neither. Hearn, among many others, has described similar pattern in other parts of the world: "... there has been no reference to, let alone detailed study of, how foreign mission organisations constitute an important element of the growing NGO sector in African countries. [...] within the recent rich literature on the constantly mutating nature of different forms of African Christianity, in particular Pentecostalism and its political implications, the role of missions, let alone their position as NGO actors within the context of the new political economy of development, has not been examined" (2002: 33). In this sense Hearn refers to Christian missions as 'invisible NGOs'.

The questions related to Christian-based NGOs in the international humanitarian industry have not been extensively explored³, despite the fact that large sums of donor money move through Christian organisations and their role as institutional actors increases within the international development community (Barrera-Osorio et al. 2009).

³ Bradley in his article 'A call for clarification and critical analysis of the work of faith based development organizations' notes that "little research has been done that considers what an FBDO actually is and which ones, if any, are good at development." (2009: 3).

Much has been written about development. We can find abundant literature examining development using different approaches and methods. There are many Marxist-influenced works that employ a political-economic frame emphasizing historical effects of exploitative colonial markets on local political entities and local economies (e.g. Amin 1976, Hyden 1980, Rodney 1974). Other studies move beyond such strict economic focus, but they still tend to ignore the role of religion (e.g. Chambers 1983). There has also been research done on the discursive culture of development itself (e.g. Escobar 1995, Ferguson, 1994) as well as work by critical economists such as Easterly (2006) standing in contrast to popular economists represented by Sachs (2006) who promised to end the world's poverty.

Although there are numerous publications and governments' policies related to faith-based development, analytical material from social science production, that does not a priori admire any kind of church aid or categorically dismiss all the faith-based development, is scarce. We possess some understanding of the concept of religious conversion as a number of researchers have investigated this matter among various ethnic groups around the world (e.g. Buckser & Glazier 2003, Comaroff 1985, Rambo 1995). We are aware of the history of Christian missions as well as of the history of colonialism (e.g. Comaroff 1985, Comaroff & Comaroff 1997, Meyer 1999). There is a growing volume of literature from political science, development and human rights which pay attention to the contemporary ways in which religious faith guides and directly impacts development (e.g. Clarke 2008, Hearn 2002, Hefferan 2007, Lunn 2009, Van Ufford et al. 1988). Yet only recently has there begun to be anthropological research scrutinizing how FBDOs operate in local communities and their impact on the wider society in which they operate as well as on the world of development organizations (Bornstein 2005, Hearn 2002, Hefferan & Adkins & Occhipinti, 2009, Occhipinti 2005).

Despite the above mentioned, rather insignificant, progress, dynamics behind the social actors' practice related to the processes of faith-based development still stand on the margin of scholarly knowledge. This dearth of scholarship may be compared to a relatively abundant literature on missionization connected by the main discursive belief in the 'universal truth', the growth of liberation theology, or the role of churches in national politics. To quote Thaut: "The lack of scholarship addressing the role of Christian faith-based agencies in humanitarianism is particularly glaring considering their prevalence and importance in the field. Little is known about how Christian beliefs shape the principles and activity of the agencies, how they are distinct from secular agencies, and whether such a distinction is important," (2009: 321).

If one drives around the northern Thai province of Chiang Rai, it becomes shortly obvious, the Christian missionary project is still alive, and more than ever before⁴. According to some, northern Thailand has the highest concentration of missionaries in the country. In the city of Chiang Rai itself we can count nearly as many Christian churches as there are Buddhist temples. Dozens of Christian organisations implement a variety of projects most often related to children and education. Although there are a few catholic groups operating in the area, the majority of the projects are based on a fundamentalist forms of Protestantism. Most of the Christian aid workers come from the United States but there are also missionaries from Europe, Australia and some of the Asian countries such as Singapore, Taiwan, China, Korea, Japan or India. There is also a growing number of pastors, missionaries and aid workers

⁴ The 1989 Mission Handbook commented: "Despite any rumours to the contrary, the overseas missionary movement in Protestant North America is clearly alive... there are now more missions, more missionaries, more short-termers and more dollars raised for overseas ministries than ever before" (Siewert & Kenyon 1989: 5).

recruited from the local population, be it members of the lowland Thai society or more frequently, members of the mountain ethnic minorities.

"The growth of the American missionary enterprise comes from the evangelical sector of American Protestantism", writes Hearn (2002: 38) in her article on the contemporary global impact of Christian missions with a special focus on Kenya. Hearn attempts to distinguish the broad evangelical camp by separating fundamentalism and Pentecostalism. Drawing on American mission historians Carpenter and Shenk (1990) she characterizes fundamentalists as those who put a stress on a highly literalist interpretation of the Bible and separation from those who do not share the same beliefs, while Pentecostalism emphasizes the 'gift of the spirit', together with speaking in tongues and healing. As this division might well be appropriate in other parts of the world, it certainly does not reflect reality of Christian aid workers in Chiang Rai. Aware of difficulties similar definability might create, van Engen argues: "Just the task of defining the evangelicals is difficult, given the amorphous, untidy nature of the movement" (1990: 205).

Most of the people I spoke to, similarly to my closest informants, did not consider their denomination to be of any importance. "Back in America, me and my husband were a part of a Baptist church. It does not matter what church we go to. Well, I am a Christian. I serve the Lord here," I was told by Penny, a skinny white woman in her forties, who together with her husband founded a Home for children in the year 2004. Many identify themselves as Pentecostal but still understand the Bible as the Truth and teach children in their care about the need to develop and maintain relationships with those who share the same belief. There are basically two categories widely used in northern Thailand - 'Christians' that refer to any Protestant denomination or movement and 'Catholics'. Catholics are not being considered to

be Christians by Protestants. Protestant aid workers in Chiang Rai consider Catholics as a distinct group from which they dissociate. Although the number of projects operated by Catholics in Chiang Rai is quite insignificant compared to those of Christians, the number of mountain children residing in Catholic Homes is still substantial. Since Christian projects constitute the overwhelming majority in the area and my research has been conducted particularly among people identifying themselves as such, the term Christian I employ throughout the thesis might refer to various Protestant denominations and other modern movements.

As number of scholars have mentioned, although it is the religion what differentiates FBDO from other NGOs, various religions are engaged in development and each of the religions itself is heterogeneous in its manifestations and practices, be it the organization's objectives, funding or structure, donor solicitations, staff hiring, project design and so on (Bradley 2009, Clarke and Jenings 2008, Haynes 2007, Freidus 2010, Hefferan & Adkins & Occhipinti 2009, Tyndale 2006). Having said that, the study I present is not meant, and should not be understood, as a representation of the faith-based development as a whole, neither it provides a general knowledge of the Christian-based development. However, although this thesis is a situated study, it occupies with more general processes such as governmentality, neoliberalism or social marginalisation that should have the ability to provide a more universal meanings.

Christianity in Southeast Asia

It was from the second half of the 1990s when Christian Homes, operated mostly by Americans, started to emerge in northern Thailand in more significant numbers. Until then, Christian groups dedicated much of their effort to classical missionary activities of religious conversions, be it "during the colonial era (when the Christianity propagated by the missions

was often the religion of the colonizing power) and during the postcolonial era (when Christianity was seen as alien and even antagonistic by the Buddhist, Muslim, Confucian/Taoist and Roman-Catholic majorities in the independent states)" (Salemink 2004: 1).

Keyes (1996), in his summary on Protestantism in Southeast Asia, argues that during colonial era conditions for Christian missions were much in their favor. This idea goes in line with the general historical knowledge of European colonialist and imperialist expansion which oftentimes combined military conquest of local populations and an economic exploitation of their labor and resources with religious conversions (Neill 1986, Rafael 1993, Tuck 1987, Salemink 2003). According to Salemink, the history of Protestant missions in Southeast Asia was different: "The British, Dutch and (after 1898) American colonial administrations were somewhat indifferent to the missionary endeavor, and did not encourage proselytizing among the dominant populations groups that already adhered to one of the world religions, in order to avoid antagonizing and hence politicizing these religious categories." (2004: 6). However, Salemink does not claim that there was no connection between colonialism and missionization: "In spite of a widespread image - circulated in missionary magazines, publications and sermons - of the solitary missionary living far from the civilized (Christian) world among pagan - if not outright barbarian or savage - people, such people had usually already been 'pacified' with military and political means. Missionaries may have found themselves in marginal places, in actual practice they acted as and were regarded as part and parcel of the colonial establishment, albeit often at the margins, as an outpost of colonialism." (2004: 6).

Based on a number of studies considering various Southeast Asian countries (Kipp 1990, Aragon 1996, 2000, Kammerer 1990, 1996, Tapp 1989, Zehner 1996, Salemink 2003, 2004) it

is apparent that Protestant conversions were numerically limited at that time. Missionaries' efforts took a new breath after the independence and conversions gained much more successful (Keyes 1996). However, according to contemporary missionaries in Thailand, many of those who converted did so because of material or other benefits. As soon as these benefits ceased many returned back to their original beliefs. These converts are often referred to as 'rice Christians'.

One of the explanation for religious conversions among Southeast Asia ethnic minorities is linked to identity and ethnicity (Tapp 1989). By pointing to "deeply unsettling experiences of life" (1996: 289) in the context of state integration and to a crisis of religious and political authority (1994), Keys describes the religious dilemma White Hmong of northern Thailand faced. Instead of converting to mainstream Thai Buddhism which would, according to Keys, account for a religious assimilation to the lowland Thai society, Hmong rather accepted Christianity which also represented a modern world religion but still ensures "the conceptual distance" between this ethnic minority and the state (Tapp 1989: 85). Tapp provides a number of different motivations for conversions in different and changing contexts. He argues for example that messianic tendencies among Hmong match well with Protestantism and thus lead them to accept more forbidding Protestantism instead of the more easygoing Catholicism (Tapp 1989). The messianic movement is partly related to the myths about the loss of writing, and prophecies about a Hmong king who will come down to the Earth to redeem the Hmong script and literacy and bring back the lost Hmong kingdom which they had to leave behind in China. In this movement, the Bible which missionaries brought was taken as their 'lost God's Book', and contact with missionaries was seen as the realization of prophecy. The argument of messianic expectations about the return of a lost script and of a lost kingdom which spark the

interest in Protestant Christianity can be found in studies considering some other ethnic groups such as the Lahu (Kataoka 2007) and Karen (Hayami 1996).

Other factor to rationalize religious conversions among ethnic minorities of Southeast Asia a number of studies present is the incompatibility of the original beliefs with modern world requirements. For example, Hayami notes that many Karen wish to change religion because they are "tired of feeding the spirits" (1996: 343). We can see similar argument made by Buadaeng (2003). Kammerer (1996) narrates the myth of Akha in which they received many strict and burdensome customs from the spirits in their basket. Because of their tightly woven basket, nothing fell through and all customs remained intact. Conversion then means 'discarding the basket' by reinterpreting customs and by letting Jesus 'shoulder the load'. On this basis Kammerer (1990) explains Akha conversions to Christianity. The customs to which Akha refer as 'zah', Kammerer argues, are difficult, burdensome and inflexible and thus hard to maintain in the modern world. That is why they adopt a new 'zah' which is more in tune with modern requirements. By converting to Christianity, they will not become second-rate Buddhists (Kammerer 1990). Similar argument has been made by other scholars (Tapp 1989, Aragon 1996, Keyes 1996, Steedly 1996, Salemink 2004).

Despite the significant number of ethnic minorities' children and young adults living in the Christian-based development institutions, it is highly surprising the only peer reviewed article, engaged directly with contemporary activities of Christian organisations in southeast Asia, is Baird's (2009) paper on religious changes amongst Brao in Northeastern Cambodia. Since orphanages operated by Christian groups are a new phenomenon introduced in Brao communities after 2002 by Foursquare Church, the information provided is limited. Despite the fact, the article is of an appreciable significance. Baird writes:

"The orphanages in Brao areas are, however, not really "orphanages" but rather "Christian places" where families can give their children over to be raised by the Church. At Kok Lak there were 12 Brao Kavet children living full-time at the Foursquare orphanage in early 2007, but in reality none of them are actually orphans. The implications of these orphanages will not be fully understood for a long time. However, they may end up being the equivalent to the Residential Schools for native peoples in Canada, which were Protestant Christian-based, and continued to operate until the 1970s. While the orphanages in Ratanakiri are fundamentally different, in that people volunteer their children to live there, they may well lead to similar important identity problems later. For the very young children that have mainly ended up there (often children from poor families), there is little awareness about what they have been "volunteered" for. Many are not Christians when they arrive at the orphanages" (2009: 466).

Baird notes that actions of the children are strictly regulated by Brao staff who is being paid to raise them in a Christian way. Contact with non Christian members of the ethnic group is limited and children are not allowed to visit their parents unless somebody from the orphanage observing the encounter is present. As will become apparent later, according to this partial description, it seems that the orphanages Baird observed in Cambodia are based on a similar model as those I studied in northern Thailand.

Children Homes, Residential Schools and Indigenous populations

Although children's Homes represent one of the most popular models for faith-based development, their role is largely absent in the academic literature. Even though the connection Baird made between Christian orphanages in Cambodia and residential schools in Canada might not be quite accurate, it is the closest we get in the search for data on Christian

Homes working with ethnic minorities and indigenous populations. Let me shortly mention the experience indigenous people had with these Christian-based development institutions in the history.

A story of a Canadian anthropologist and political scientist, Kevin Annett, who later graduated from the Vancouver School of Theology with a Master of Divinity and was subsequently ordained by British Columbia Conference of the United Church of Canada, resembles the tale of David and Goliath. "Kevin is more deserving of the Nobel Peace Prize than many who have received it in the past," wrote Noam Chomsky (Annett 2002).

In 1992, Annett was ordered to serve as a minister to St. Andrew's United Church in Port Alberni, British Columbia. Since the native people of the region did not attend his church he reached up to them to gradually learn about the hidden history of Christian residential schools for native children. As he was listening stories survivors of these faith-based development institutions narrated to him, horrible facts were emerging - stories full of violence, abuse, suffering and murders being committed on vulnerable native children (Full length recordings of native people's testimonies to be found here: <http://www.hiddenfromhistory.org/>). That was the beginning of Annett's journey on which he resigned from United Church and become a villain suppressed by the Church as well as by the state authorities.

In 1997, Annett has been placed on the Discontinued Service List of The United Church of Canada and expelled from his church after asking too many questions about the deaths of native children in his church's residential schools. Annet's persistent effort to investigate and disseminate his findings about Christian residential schools for native people in Canada

followed by continuous blacklisting and smear campaigns against him by both church and state, led eventually to a ground-breaking moment in Canadian history.

On June 11, 2008, Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper stood up in the House of Commons and offered a full apology on behalf of all Canadians to those indigenous people who were part of over one hundred years of residential school atrocities. Many saw this moment as a landmark day in the history of Canada, for this was the first time a sitting Prime Minister apologized to the First Citizens of this country:

"... I stand before you today to offer an apology to former students of Indian residential schools. The treatment of children in these schools is a sad chapter in our history. For more than a century, Indian Residential Schools separated over 150,000 Aboriginal children from their families and communities. In the 1870's, the federal government, partly in order to meet its obligation to educate Aboriginal children, began to play a role in the development and administration of these schools.

Two primary objectives of the Residential Schools system were to remove and isolate children from the influence of their homes, families, traditions and cultures, and to assimilate them into the dominant culture. These objectives were based on the assumption Aboriginal cultures and spiritual beliefs were inferior and unequal. Indeed, some sought, as it was infamously said, "to kill the Indian in the child". Today, we recognize that this policy of assimilation was wrong, has caused great harm, and has no place in our country.

One hundred and thirty-two federally-supported schools were located in every province and territory, except Newfoundland, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. Most schools

were operated as "joint ventures" with Anglican, Catholic, Presbyterian or United Churches. The Government of Canada built an educational system in which very young children were often forcibly removed from their homes, often taken far from their communities. Many were inadequately fed, clothed and housed. All were deprived of the care and nurturing of their parents, grandparents and communities. First Nations, Inuit and Métis languages and cultural practices were prohibited in these schools. Tragically, some of these children died while attending residential schools and others never returned home.

The government now recognizes that the consequences of the Indian Residential Schools policy were profoundly negative and that this policy has had a lasting and damaging impact on Aboriginal culture, heritage and language. While some former students have spoken positively about their experiences at residential schools, these stories are far overshadowed by tragic accounts of the emotional, physical and sexual abuse and neglect of helpless children, and their separation from powerless families and communities. ..." (http://www.shannonthunderbird.com/residential_schools.htm, 03/03/2012)

The apology made by Canadian government took place shortly after a similar historical event took place in Australia. On 13 February 2008, Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd apologised in parliament to the native people for laws and policies that "inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss". He singled out the "Stolen Generations" of thousands of children forcibly removed from their families (<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7241965.stm>, 03/03/2012).

"For the pain, suffering and hurt of the Stolen Generations, their descendants and for their families left behind, we say sorry. To the mothers and fathers, the brothers and the sisters, for the breaking up of families and communities, we say sorry. And for the indignity and

degradation thus inflicted on a proud people and a proud culture, we say sorry," (Parliamentary Debates, Commonwealth of Australia 2008:167).

The experience of the American native population has been, according to the literature (e.g. Annett 2002, Fontaine 2010, Adams 1997), and survivors' testimonies, similar. Thousands of children taken from their families to be placed into a development institutions that were supposed to raise the primitive Indians as obedient Christians and good American citizens. No official apology has been provided to the survivors and their families yet.

The reason I decided to shortly mention this significant part of the history of Christian-based development initiatives was to set the world of Christian Homes in northern Thailand into a wider frame. Although different places and times, some of the moments pointed out by prime ministers of the above mentioned countries are quite similar to those described by Baird, be it the separation of families or the suppression of a language.

The picture presented through a political representation of Canada and Australia took a long time to be socially, politically and economically accepted. While indigenous organisations together with other members of civil society celebrated this historical triumph, the power and significance of Christian aid organisations, as I will show in the fourth chapter, was on a rise and international organisations and governments were busy preparing policies to support their projects and activities overseas. However, the main battle was still ahead - Church for every people (<http://www.missionfrontiers.org/issue/article/a-church-for-every-people-by-the-year-2000-dream-or-reality>, 01/01/2012).

3. Reflexion

It was shortly after I finished my graduate studies of economics and development, in the year 2000, that I traveled to Thailand for the first time to get in line with thousands of other backpackers from all around the world who visit South East Asia to experience the "exotic East", feelings of authenticity and adventure. A part of my "authentic experience" was a three-night trek to the mountain villages of local ethnic minorities in the northern part of the Thai Kingdom. It was on this trip that I first met the Akha. And it was in those first few days I spent among them in their village that I was overwhelmed by feelings of "otherness". These feelings were complicated, intense and not entirely positive. On one side I was privy to an open framework of fascinating images of people and environment so removed from any of my previous experiences. On the other hand, besides the awkward position of voyeurist, the alienation, the creeping sense of otherness, was often overwhelming; as the way in which the Akha treated their animals often disgusted me. The conceptualizations I carried from my culture and world-view would not allow me to accept what for them was only natural. As the process of killing animals for food has been effectively muted in the mind of the average urban citizen, so was I disconnected, alienated from the natural life cycle of birth and death. Meat was a blood-red piece of edible matter one bought in the market while the wailing and suffering of the animal that provided that meat, the visceral slaughter on the killing floor, were removed from my vision and therefore my mind. Yet, the terrifying screams of a pig being slaughtered, the awful images of howling dogs being hit by large pieces of stone or a bamboo stick haunted me long after we left the "savages", as I was then tempted to view them.

Maybe due to the significance of this uncomfortable experience, I could not escape my memories and soon I realized my weakness. I felt comfortable enough to eat meat but not to

accept the death involved. I realized the way in which the Akha treated their animals was most likely more human than the way we "civilized people" often butcher live stock at slaughterhouses. Waking up from my urban, European, middle-class dream state that allowed for such hypocrisy, I decided to cease eating meat and began to read anything available about the Akha and other 'hill-tribe' minorities, as well as about the history of the mountainous region on the border of Thailand, Burma and Laos - the infamous Golden Triangle. I found myself longing to return, to experience again, with my new perceptions, the state in which my body did not play any lesser part than my mind. I soon returned and settled down in an Akha village in the northern Thai district of Mae Fahluang.

During my stay in the village, time played a major role. Every morning I was awoken by the whole interior of the hut was filled with smoke from an open fire in the corner of the room. Apí, an old Akha woman, would be cooking water for rice and tea and the fire filled the room with a thick smoke while trying to escape through slits in the wooden floor, bamboo walls and thatched roof⁵. Shortly after breakfast most of the villagers would set out from the village to work in their fields or in a nearby town. There was not much for me to do until the late afternoon when dirty, tired women and men returned to quickly wash themselves, prepare dinner and chat with neighbors. This routine played out day after day in much the same way; soon I was bored and restless. Since I did not understand Akha at the time I had to rely solely on my visual perceptions without a chance to really speak with the people I lived with.

It did not take long before I realized that something was wrong with the picture that was emerging as I observed and experienced life in the village. I was spending most of my days with old people, little babies and women somewhere along the stages just before, during and

⁵ Akha build their houses with no windows.

after child birth, none of whom could carry the heavy burden of work that mountain people usually do. In the evenings I was drinking and smoking with old men who tried their best to get me drunk. However, school-aged children, teens, the entire younger generation was missing from the scene; I was puzzled by the fact that so few children, teenagers and young adults were around. Since I was not able to ask anyone due to the language barrier I needed somebody who could translate for me. Finally I located an Akha NGO staffer from Chiang Rai who grew up in a Christian Home, spoke English and was willing to come to the mountains and translate for me.

It was then that I learned about the Homes for children from mountains managed by Christian organisations and missionaries in the lowlands. I was soon enthralled by what I learned from the villagers through my translator and also from narration of his own experience. The idea of missionaries working with indigenous peoples constituted images of a far distant history to me. It was hard to believe this could be happening at the beginning of the 21st Century. Growing up in the former Czechoslovakia, the idea of God's soldiers fighting evil spirits to rescue savages from the powers of Satan seemed just too absurd to be true. It did not take long and the gates of the world of a white god began to slowly open for me.

I have started this chapter with a reflexion on my experience with the Akha, which I am going to expand on the following pages, for two main reasons. Firstly I would like to introduce the reader to the world of my research, to the ways which lead me to it and to the relationships I hold with some of my informants. Secondly I wish to emphasize my initial cultural shock created by the encounter with 'otherness'. Otherness, which has accompanied anthropology as a formative reasoning for a large part of its existence. While sociology's original primary object of study has been the West's own internal subaltern classes, anthropology has been

concerned with the task of objectifying the Western colonized Other. As Sarukkai notes: "The primary role of anthropology thus was a process of 'inventing the human other' in order to develop a theory of humankind." (1997:1406). The epistemological Other created by anthropology was based on a notion of perceived difference, in Pandian (1987) terms this consisted of the fossil other, savage other, black other and the ethnographic other. Such a label went alongside Western obsession with progress and development that for a large period of time was understood through a concept of modernization which led scholars, politicians and development experts to believe that the rest of the world needed to follow the model of Western progress to become "developed". Just a brief look on the history of development aid does not offer any too pleasant image. Yet, one might get the feeling the hegemonic position of Western powers was, despite the discourse of humanitarianism born from Catholicism (Ong, class lecture, UC Berkeley, 01/2012), reinforced by the very efforts of development and their exclusiveness thus strengthened. As Sarukkai (1997) points out, the historical origins of the other stood for an inferior human and was even understood in the paradigm of the native children as against the adult West. The process of constructing the anthropological other comes from the scenario when the foreigner invades the territory of the native while upholding the autonomy of the western self. The other in this scenario is everything that the ethnographer is not. Consequently, anthropologists can describe the otherness of self but not the self of the native.

The concept of otherness began to be highly criticized in the 70's as a part of Western and colonial hegemony. "The programme of decolonizing our ways of thinking about otherness means that the anthropology practised today is not the same as yesterday's," write Rapport and Overing (2000:10). The objectification of imagining otherness has become a target of much of post-colonial critique (e.g. Asad 1975; Said 1978; de Certeau 1997; Bauman 1995;

Fabian 1983). Through this critique anthropology has shown an interest in the objectification of itself; to use Bourdieu's concept of "participant objectivation" - the objectivation of the subject of objectivation, of the analysing subject - in other words, of the researcher himself⁶ (Bourdieu 2003).

Influenced by Bourdieu, the original idea of this paper was to reflect on my research and personal as well as educational history. Despite some initial reservations towards Bourdieu I have increasingly begun to use his theories to understand and deconstruct my own position in both the research as well as the academic field. I believe my initial resistance against Bourdieu resulted from my laziness and reluctance to cope with his texts. Later I felt insufficient without a familiarity with his theories, surely also because the head of our department in Prague, Yasar Abu Ghosh, is the leading Czech Bourdieu scholar and my advisor at the same time. I was also largely influenced by Jan Snopek's seminar during which we slowly read and discussed *The Logic of Practice* (1992). However, it was not until I came to UC Berkeley that I slowly came to realize the importance Bourdieu assigned to the specificity of different departments, professors, countries and other variables that significantly affect not only the quality of education (whatever it means) but most importantly the way of thinking, the choice of research topics, theories and their conceptualization. Basically, I finally realized, there is no need to be worried over the fact anthropologists not always not always understand each other or surf the same wave. As there is plurality of opinions, there is

⁶ In his Huxley memorial lecture Bourdieu (2003) mentioned one of his students, Charles Soulié, who made a direct link between a research topic and social origins, gender, family lineage and educational trajectory. "This means that our seemingly most personal, most intimate, and therefore most cherished choices, namely, our choice of discipline and topics, our theoretical and methodological orientations, find their principle in socially constituted dispositions in which banally social, sadly impersonal properties still express themselves in a more-or-less transfigured form.", noted Bourdieu (2003: 284). Because of this very moment he considered the reflexive methodological tool of participant objectivation for scientific reflexivity contrasted with "the narcissistic reflexivity of postmodern anthropology as well as to the egological reflexivity of phenomenology" (2003:281). The very idea of this form of reflexivity applies the tools anthropology provides against the researcher himself. Scientific objectivation, Bourdieu argues, needs to objectivize the points of view of the objectivizer, interests he might have in objectivization as well as his unconscious coming from a personal history that he inevitably engages in his research.

also plurality of anthropologies. These do not necessarily have to resonate, they can even strongly criticize each other. Thus as a consequence, the style, interests and themes of Anthropology practiced by the faculty and direction they orient their students towards, are being significantly influenced by the history and traditions of a particular department.

It was in Berkeley when I realized why Bourdieu put such an emphasis in his conception of reflexivity on the particular academic background of a scholar. Bourdieu, who was so influential at the department in Prague was rather marginal in Berkeley. In fact he was not the only author. On the beginning of the first semester in Berkeley I had the impression I did not understand some of the anthropology graduate students and I was not quite familiar with a number of authors they mentioned I either did not read and did not even hear about. Later I found out that similar feelings experience others as well and such a misunderstanding or lack of a will to understand exists not only among the graduate students but also among the faculty. Their specializations and approaches were so dissimilar it even gave a rise to personal antipathy and grudge. Their students were products of this intellectually explosive environment. Although science likes to pose itself as impersonal, the given example allowed me to realize the significance and importance carries the particular teacher as well as the institutional context. Our knowledge is thus not simply transferable but rather multi-dimensional.

The research of Christian Children's Homes as a tool for a social and economic development of mountain ethnic minorities in Northern Thailand has been extended by a process of self analysis in which I have sought to grasp consciously my own dispositions in order to make a better sense of the practices of my informants as well as the relationships which guided our cooperation over the years. My research partners were embedded in the investigation just as

deeply as was I. Thus, in the following text I will provide several accounts focused on social location in a wider sense as well as a brief history in relation to formative events in my life and research. Through this essay I attempt to contribute to the debate on the anthropological concept of "otherness" and demonstrate that the point is not in exchanging difference for similarity but rather to study the play between the two. I will attempt to demonstrate my argument ethnographically through my position in the field. What actually does otherness mean for an anthropologist in the field?

In this chapter I take a closer look, through the mediation of some of the formative moments of my habitual dispositions, to pursue the relationships anthropologist can experience with his informants during a longterm ethnographic participant observation fieldwork. On the basis of the research experience among the Akha I will demonstrate how the anthropologist's formative dispositions daily meet those of his informants in quite diverse and unexpected situations and thus directly affect their mutual relationships. These habitual dispositions bring both, similarities and differences which in the field jointly constitute mutual relationships and their dynamics.

Transformative Sufferings

In the year 2005 I provided a part of my data I had gathered while among Christian aid workers in northern Thailand to an American NGO working closely with the Akha - one of the very few non-Christian organisations working in the area. The data contained audio and video material concerned with sexual and other forms of abuse committed against mountain children living in Children's Homes operated predominantly by American Evangelical groups and individuals – the very people I had been spending my time with and whose trust I had gained. Because of this trust I had the chance to observe and often record several Christian

missionaries working with the various ethnic minorities originally from the nearby mountains. I believed that the NGO would use my data for further investigation and political lobbying. However, they then placed the data, with photos, on their website – a site most of the aid workers in the area visited regularly. There was no doubt that the data had come from me. Simply, I had been exposed in the process of betraying my hosts and informants. And as we know, betrayal often demands vengeance.

But let me first return a few years back. After I left the Akha village where I had stayed in 2001, my aim was to learn about the Christian Homes villagers had told me about when I wondered aloud about missing children. This simple idea became difficult as soon as I attempted to convert it into practice. University libraries in Chiang Rai and Chiang Mai had no literature concerning the worlds of Christian Homes for mountain children and professors had no answers for my questions. Christian homes were still a quite new and isolated phenomenon in Thailand eleven years ago and nobody had yet conducted any research concerning them. Representatives of NGOs and INGOs were more than reluctant to engage in any open talk about the activities and practices of Christian organisations in northern Thailand. Anthropologist David Feingold, UNESCO Regional Office's expert on ethnic minorities in the region and renown Akha specialist, gave me one condition for recorded interview with him - no questions about Christian missionaries.

Directors of Christian Homes were worried and disconcerted by my request to be allowed to observe everyday life on their premises. The obstacle was represented by my religious faith, or more precisely, the lack of it. "It is like if a Communist agent was asking to be allowed to observe the Pentagon. No matter who you are, if you do not have the Holly Spirit inside your heart you will not be able to understand what is happening here and your understanding will

be nothing but a misinterpretation. Come back when you feel the Lord in your heart and accept him as your savior", I was told by one of the directors in accordance with the others. I felt dejected but my interest continued to grow. My image of missionaries was filled with notion of the past. Here I was observing its 21st century incarnation, which provided images so remote from my previous expectations.

Then I met Matt. This former auto-mechanic moved to Thailand with his family eight years ago. Since then they had established a home for 22 children in Chiang Rai with very secure funding. When I met Matt for the first time he invited me to sit on the large terrace of his large, luxurious house, and asked me where I was from. As soon as he heard I was from the Czech Republic he began telling me about his short term missionary visit to a christian school in my home country. Since there were few Christian schools in the Czech Republic in the early 1990s we agreed that he might have visited the very same school I attended - the Bishop Grammar School. After that he never asked me about my faith again. Later, during some of our talks I told him I do not go to church and have my own faith. "You know, brother Tomas, people judge each other for the frequency of church visits. The more you go to church the better Christian you are. Believe me, most of the people are not good Christians. Many people come here and say they are good Christians, they are missionaries. But they come and go. There is no such thing as a missionary in the Bible. I live here. I am not a missionary, I am a teacher," answered Matt.

Matt became my key informant and introduced me to his missionary community. I was allowed to observe the everyday lives of these missionaries and spend time with their families. I was invited for Sunday services at their Homes and joined them in dinners at upscale restaurants in Chiang Rai; I was allowed generous access to their lives. However, for

the entire time, my access to the children was controlled and limited; what I was learning about was the world of missionaries but not the world of the recipients of their aid.

It was during this time that I met Amue, a young Akha woman, who worked at the New Life Children's Home. I was killing time one day, a popular activity for me when in the field but unengaged, by driving my motorbike around Chiang Rai province, when I saw a compound surrounded by high walls. I immediately knew it was a Christian home since most of them looked alike. Upon entering I saw a group of Akha girls sitting behind a table and sewing. One of them, obviously in a position of authority, offered me a glass of water and without the usual questions about my religion, invited me in, showed me the premises and talked with me about the organisation and its activities. After that I visited this Home regularly, spent time with children Amue was taking care of and taught them some English.

In 2005 I began to get death threats from Christian aid workers for revealing that part of my findings mentioned before. I was strongly urged by some NGO friends and their police contact to leave Chiang Rai; after leaving (with a help of the Czech Embassy in Bangkok) I feared it was the end of my research of Christian-based development. Yet it was not long after that that Amue, together with some of the older children whom I had tutored, asked me to come back. I called Amue and told her my story, together with information about the abuse of children by Christian aid workers I knew about. She was neither surprised nor discouraged. She knew similar cases of abuse by missionaries herself and perceived it as a serious problem as well. It seemed I had found a worthy ally.

A year later I arrived at Chiang Rai international airport. Amue, together with children and staff of the New Life Children's Home, became my research partner. Unlike the time I spent

with the directors of other Christian Homes, we were with the children most of the time; several of the older ones who later left the Home to enter the world of Thai urban Buddhist society constituted the closest members of my social network among the Akha. Through the informants' life-stories I investigated the practices of the faith-based development organizations which provided mountain children with room, board and a 'new religion' while promising better lives through school education in the city.

Before I returned to Thailand in 2007 I was hired by an American organisation to conduct research on socioeconomic changes in Akha communities related to development projects aimed at reducing poverty in Luang Namtha province, Laos. Besides the immediate contact with immense suffering, hunger, poverty, illness and death, I was faced with the question as to the real value constituted by "anthropology" in localities where the interests of development organisations, scholars, consultants, indigenous populations and governments meet at the crossroads of symbolic capital.

During my research in Laos I was observing several Akha communities who had been internally resettled from remote, mountainous areas to lowlands and along the sides of major roads (Ryska 2006). This government-promoted program, meant to increase the quality of life for its recipients while eradicating opium production, was supported, directly and/or indirectly, by most multilateral and bilateral agencies and NGOs involved (Baird & Shoemaker 2009). The results I observed offered images which took me a long time to cope with. In 2005 the Economist wrote: "Charles Alton, a consultant for the UN Development Programme, reported in 2004 that hill-tribe people moving to new villages were not only short of rice but also faced diseases—malaria, gastro-intestinal problems and parasites—that were seldom experienced up in the mountains. An international NGO has documented mortality

rates among such people at almost four times the national average" (<http://www.economist.com/node/4284460>, 02/04/2012).

One day a young Akha woman asked me to help her baby who was suffering malaric fever. While sitting in her house sipping tea, I suddenly heard the deafening sound of silence - the baby's previously heavy breathing had ceased - this sudden silence overwhelmed me and I knew there was something horribly wrong; I took a filter out of my camera lens and put it under the baby's nose. There was no mist on the filter. Eyes full of grief and pain looked straight into my face: this was the second child this young woman had lost since their relocation. Surprisingly, I felt no sadness, no fear, no panic, no compassion. At the moment my feelings were dead.

The Communities I observed were relocated to Muang Long district; it was there where the largest aid projects of mostly western organisations were staged in Luang Namtha Province. One evening we were having dinner at a local Chinese shop with two young Akha staff of a development organisation - ACF (Action Contre la Fame/Action Against Hunger). During this dinner I learned that a high number of non-Akha staff in two major organisations - ACF and NCA (Norwegian Church Aid) – routinely demanded sex from girls in the villages they are meant to be aiding, the very communities where they were conducting their development efforts. In the following days I heard similar stories from other villagers: Stories of abuse of power committed on the poor. The development project was in no uncertain terms a disaster and being a victim of such horrible human suffering coupled with the fact that those in a position of power and respect were using it against the recipients of their aid was, from my perspective, an unbearable irony.

I consequently informed headquarters in Vientiane of the actions of the aforementioned accused organisations; to my chagrin, there was no interest from their side. I then informed the headquarters in the countries of origin - France and Norway - once again, no interest. At last, I informed the media: This brought on a storm of interest. Soon I was spending most of my time communicating with journalists from Europe as well as the US, since Action Against Hunger is supported by a number of international celebrities such as Bill Clinton, Angelina Jolie, Bishop Desmond Tutu, Nelson Mandela, Steve Buscemi, Brad Pitt, Annie Lennox, George Clooney, Elton John, Bono and many others (<http://www.looktothestars.org/charity/909-action-against-hunger>). In light of the fact that the Norwegian government was a major NCA donor I was soon contacted by the Norwegian minister of foreign affairs; it wasn't long after I was warned, by a Norwegian journalist who wrote a story on this case, that the Norwegian government together with NCA were looking for any 'dirt' they could find and use against me - a few days later he called me again to inform me they had found nothing they could use.

In the meantime NCA and ACF alike were busy spinning the story and promising to clean things up in front of the international community and the government of Laos; nobody seemed concerned about the abused Akha girls in question. It took some time before the Norwegian government informed me via NORAD (Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation) about their intent to conduct an independent investigation. The principal investigator was an Australian anthropology professor from Macquarie University, Chriss Lytletton. The alleged impartiality of the principal investigator was complicated by the fact he has closely collaborated with NCA in previous years. It is difficult to judge under what circumstances the final report has been produced. The main argument deemed the Akha culture as complicit in, if not responsible for, the alleged abuses. The absolute lack of any

consideration of the power relations between aid workers and impoverished people from isolated and highly vulnerable populations was striking. In support of my view, there was some criticism by a number of scholars towards the report. Social geography professor, Ian Baird, selected this case as among the most important moments in Laos in 2006 and his text was published as a part of *The Indigenous World 2007* at the UNPFII in New York (IWGIA 2007):

"... These allegations, which were recorded using videotaped testimonies from Akha, prompted NCA to commission an inquiry. Although the impartiality of the investigators was questioned, since the principal investigator was previously an employee of NCA⁷, the investigators determined that those working or associated with NCA were indeed asking villagers to provide young women for them to have sex with. Surprisingly, however, they tried to play down the significance of the allegations by claiming that this traditionally occurs in Akha society, and that the accusers were not familiar with the social customs of the Akha in Laos⁸. However, the anthropologist Eisel Mazard suggested that the investigators had ignored ethical issues. He also heavily criticized the investigators for understating the importance of power relations between indigenous people and outside NGO workers ⁹." (Baird 2007).

I was angry, sad and relieved. I was under a lot of pressure for some time and was happy that the report, whatever its impact, had confirmed my perception of the situation; as well as providing me some relief in the fact that I would likely no longer face any more of the

⁷ Ryska, T. 2006. Aid agency staff sexually abuse and exploit women and girls in Laos. *Bistandsaktuelt*, 16. 11. 2006.

⁸ Ingebrightsen, K. and C. Lyttleton, 2006. Investigations of alleged sexual exploitation and abuse of Akha girls and women by Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) in Laos. NORAD, 48 pp.

⁹ Mazard, E. 2006. Observations on an aid-worker sex scandal in Laos: a brief analysis of the Norwegian Church Aid report on allegations of rape and sexual misconduct by their staff in Muang Long district. Mimeo October 2006, 12 pp.

'charges' I had been threatened with by ACF representatives who often flew to Prague to discuss the issue with me. But a bitter aftertaste remained. The images I observed have morphed into memories that were nearly unimaginable living conditions of the relocated highlanders and the role development organizations played in the entire process (for a further information see Baird 2009). International development aid, lead by ideas of humanitarianism, as I got to know in Laos, turned out to be no less problematic than the one in Thailand.

The images surrounding my life in the Akha villages in Laos reminded pictures and videos capturing atrocities of the Holocaust. Since my childhood I have been exposed to images and raw footage of impoverished, extremely emaciated bodies - standing, working, dead, behind the fences of nazi camps - as a part of the socialist propaganda. During my time in the field I was often thinking about my roots, about my family histories that were inscribed in me. Similarly as highlanders in Laos or families of my Akha informants in Thailand lost their agricultural land in the name of the international development, the land of my father's agricultural family has been deprived in the name of the socialist development. Three decades before, "Lenin's revolution" deprived my ancestors of extensive property that comprised of hotels, schools or apartment buildings and forced my grandmother to leave her home country.

Similarities In Otherness

Ethnographic research based on a participant observation fieldwork exposes the anthropologist to the necessity of a close, long-term relationship with people who he later in a text designates as informants, requires not only large amount of reciprocity and compromises but also conduct acceptable for both parties involved to allow the relationship to develop and continue. The stay in a field places such situations and obstacles in front of us that, as in the

ordinary life, we can never be prepared good enough. And similarly to the ordinary life, relationships with informants are not easy but rather full of conflicts and misunderstandings. Then, I believe, it is the so called habitus and its mutual harmony and compatibility what allows the researcher to develop an intimate relationship with his informants. The formative moments of my dispositions were in many aspects surprisingly similar to those that generated practice of my informants. These dispositions have turned out to be, for our mutual relations, often more important than the power positions we occupied within these relationships.

If habitus generates the ways we perceive the world and movement within it, then certainly it also generates the everyday practice that defines the relationship between anthropologist and informants (Wacquant 2004). During long-term fieldwork both parties often wear an imagined guise on the beginning of their relationship. However, the historically formed dispositions come to the fore in the form of practice and affect the mutual interactions. It is then that the formative moments of dispositions of the ethnographer and his research partner play a crucial role.

During the time I spent among the Akha, violence and suffering were always present. Most Akha villages in Thailand had previously experienced development programs similar to the one in Laos. Few considered the horrible consequences of these projects that had already been instituted in Thailand; no lessons were learned from the Thai experience: "Past experience has shown that resettlement of highland people into the lowlands is accompanied by increased mortality, decreased nutritional status, breakdowns of social controls on domestic violence and theft, increasing problems with drug and alcohol abuse, transition from opium to heroin use, and dependence on low wage occasional labor." (Feingold 1997:6). That was the world my Akha informants lived in.

The year 2003 brought the so-called War on Drugs to Thailand and as a side product a significant number of deaths together with various forms of human rights violations. Villagers were often taken to army camps for interrogation which included the use of electric shock and other forms of physical torture on the suspects; many ended up in prisons. All my informants had a relative or neighbor who was jailed. During a visit to a family with one of my informants, police came to the village and arrested my informants' older brother; I sat in the house and observed the police brutality against this twenty three old Akha man who was charged with drug possession of 15 yaba (metamphetamin) pills, lost memories from my childhood appeared in my mind.

As the so-called 'Husak's child' I grew up at the time when the socialist regime of the state influenced the lives of the Czechoslovakian citizens in a significant way. My parents joined the minority of the population that refused 'to sign it' and did not enter the Party. They were not persecuted in any violent way, however the symbolic violence they were subjected to was always present: my parents menial professional careers with almost no potential for promotion and the need to work a second job created frustrations on their side and overshadowed my childhood. Both having PhDs in various fields, they were cleaning hospital halls and toilets during evenings while my brother and I had to spend those evenings alone. My sister joined a dissent group, signed Charta 77 and because of her activities against the establishment she was often detained and subjected to illegal personal searches of the apartment. A report from Human Rights Watch from 1988-1989 reports: "Police confiscated a variety of leaflets. In early July, Holcnerova's (my sister) passport was withdrawn. Before the 21st anniversary of the Warsaw Pact invasion on August 21, she was detained and warned not to participate in any commemoration. On August 22, her home was searched in connection with the "Few Sentences" petition. On September 25, she was detained to prevent her from attending a meeting of the Brno Forum, an environmental

group" (HRW 1989:100-101). I remember phone calls from police and dad going to pick my sister up from prison. Even though the constitutive moments of our dispositions happened in different geographical locations and the circumstances were not identical, there were surely similarities between the formative moments Akha children and I experienced.

I grew up in the era of post-socialism in Eastern Europe, characterized by significant socio-political and economic changes which were happening within a very short period of time during the 90's. The development aid to the mountainous areas of northern Thailand my informants experienced created a huge transformation in Akha societies. Similar to my case, these changes were highly significant, fast-paced and created new elites. The children I have been observing constituted the new elites - they were offered a chance to live in a Christian Home and study in a school in city.

Since the state-planned economy in former Czechoslovakia was not able to produce enough products for its population there was always a lack of something - be it a toilet paper, napkins, books, jeans or fruit. Many people longed for merchandise from western Europe and America which were considered to be modern, stylish and of superior quality. Shortly after the regime collapsed any possible product was suddenly available. What was not available were resources to satisfy ever growing expectations and needs. This was the case for the Akha as well. Increased needs and a desire to live "the good, modern life", together with limited opportunities to satisfy these needs, expose villagers to a number of different kinds of exploitation. These experiences were being inscribed into our imagined habitus and directly formed our dispositions.

In the interest of clarity, I do not suggest that the positions of power occupied by myself and the closest members of my social network among the Akha were equal: They clearly were not. Nor

did we share the same social positions. Yet, it is no exaggeration to consider my Akha informants as elite, that within the development efforts obtained an opportunity to grow up in Christian Home and attend a school in a city. Elite among the mountain population. On the contrary, within the lowland Thai society the Akha represent the very bottom. As a graduate student I received scholarships and grants which meant that I was poor but financially secured. Coupled with my middle class European background, my social position was definitely distinct from highly marginalized members of a mountain ethnic minority. In spite of that the similarity between the lives of my research partners and my own life trajectory is striking and analytically fertile. As shown by time, dispositions that I brought into the field significantly influenced not only the research itself but also mutual relationships with my Akha friends.

The first Christian high school in Czechoslovakia, the Bishop Grammar School, was opened in the 1990 and I was one of its first students. Coming from an atheist family I had no knowledge of Christianity whatsoever. The first day in school started with a common Mass. It was the first one I attended and I felt awkward. During my time at this school I intensively studied the Bible and liturgy. I observed my schoolmates describe their meetings with God, which some of them were experiencing in the school chapel. During the first grade a priest who taught us catechism stepped into my world; he was well aware of my lack of faith and was always perceptive. Although he was very strict towards the other students, he was always kind to me. After a while I began to talk with him outside the classroom and we built a close relationship which even found me visiting him at his home. The next year he was not on the teaching staff and nobody knew why. I lost contact but because of our talks I was very close to a religious conversion. I thought I was starting to feel God in my heart. The leave of father Provaznik disrupted the development of my growing faith. I lost my teacher, a mentor who might guide me through my budding interest in

faith; My faith was immature and weak and I had little interest to continue on my own without trusted guidance.

In 1993, shortly after the collapse of socialism in Eastern Europe I got a chance to spend my senior year at an American high school. In the early 90s the difference between the USA and Czechoslovakia was huge. I felt uprooted and missed my family and friends. My knowledge of English was poor and I did not understand much during the first several weeks. Once again my experience mirrored that which Akha children experience when they enter the Christian Home for mountain children in Chiang Rai. They are uprooted from the mountain village community, live under strong Christian control and attend a Thai school in the city with little knowledge of Thai language and hampered by the unique dispositions they have brought with them from their mountain homes. Their cultural capital played a significant role much as in my case in American high school.

The Dissimilar Others

As I have mentioned above, resources I hold comprised asymmetric power relations towards my research partners. As a white male or Westerner, I disposed of a symbolic capital that allowed me for an exceptional position. Also the fact that the Akha suffering provided me with an idea of a graduate studies and especially the fact that I was able to fulfill such an idea set me apart from those with whom I lived and whom I studied. This privileged position and questions connected to reflection of power, authority, positionality or representation was repeatedly an object of discussions (např. Kobayashi 1994, Rose 1997, Lawson 1995).

Feminist social geographers, Staeheli and Lawson, place these issues into the context of research in the so-called Third World countries: "when Western feminists enter developing

settings, they cannot escape the power relations that exist between those societies or between themselves as academics and their research subjects, even when they wish to do so" (1994: 332). I believe that these and similar frustrations, which we cope with in our fields all the time, are necessary to be perceived in wider context. Although ethnographer repeatedly commits symbolic violence on his research partners, neither he is spared from situations in which he is becoming a target of such a violence: "The intervening social scientist cannot avoid domination, both dominating and being dominated. Entry is often a prolonged and surreptitious power struggle between the intrusive outsider and the resisting insider", writes Burawoy about the ethnographic research (1988: 22).

Gaining an access into a desired community itself exposes the anthropologist to a willingness and a good will of his future research partners who seek to satisfy their own interests, agendas and to strengthen their own power in relation to others. Simultaneously, informants assume the role of teachers on the researcher's journey to familiarize with particular community, their social norms and customs. Informants thus become a pedagogic authority to the anthropologist. According to Bourdieu and Passeron, any pedagogic activity could be labeled as a legitimate symbolic violence. The strength of such a violence comes from unequal power relations that is hidden behind the pedagogic authority (1990: 13-5, 24-5).

Without trying to disprove or play down the problems connected to the anthropologist's position in the field, as Rose and others point out, I argue that problem connected to the unequal power relations and the related symbolic violence is more complicated and that informants are not as defenseless as some might think. Similarly to the unequal relations of power between researcher and informants, relations that informants maintain among each

other are also not distributed evenly. Also, these relations are not static but continuously develop and researcher quite often becomes weaker then he or she is able to realize or accept.

The relationships I hold with the members of my closest network among the Akha are heterogeneous, often problematic and sometimes wonderful; these relationships have also changed through continuous development during the years. As my story demonstrates, the idea that it is the anthropologist who chooses and finds informants is less than absolute; Informants can find their anthropologist, it is usually a two-way street in my experience.

Years ago when I thought I lost a chance to continue my research of faith-based development, Amue offered her assistance. She also warned me that an Akha woman with a "farang" (foreigner) might be a bit problematic. At that time I was aware that cross-gender relationships in the field are problematic but did not understand what she meant exactly. We spoke about my research extensively but as I came to realize later, we spoke much more about my needs. I was so selfishly arrogant to not consider my research partners' needs and expectations. I was concentrating on my research and did not realize that it was not just me who wanted to gain something out of the partnership. Once we as anthropologists realize that our informants, the "exotic others", are not so dissimilar from us as some might believe (or hope) they are, we may be better able to recognize the multiple ways in which informants engage in the fieldwork encounter together with their heterogeneous motivations. While the desire to be helpful often plays a significant role it would be naive to think that it is the only motivation.

As time went by I slowly came to realize that one of Amue's motives to participate in my research was to build a better social position for herself. According to a number of criteria she

was very successful – she worked for a foreign NGO, finished high school, graduated from college and was in a close relationship with the missionary community in Chiang Rai. Basically, she had accomplished the dreams of many Akha. However, her image was not purely positive: she was an Akha woman of middle age and still not married; just as in Thai or Muslim or Jewish and even the more conservative Christian communities such a situation is often considered a blemish on a woman's reputation. For her I constituted a way to experience a social role she desired. When she told me about the problems a cross-gender relationship could cause in Thailand she was basically asking for my informed consent. We were both getting what we were looking for and most likely we both provided a kind of mutually informed consent without a clear idea of what we were necessarily asking of one another.

The inner circle of my social network among the Akha well understood what kind of relationship Amue and I shared. However, most of the people we met in restaurants, at street stalls, bus stations, in stores, etc. believed we were a married couple. We were often asked if we were married while waiting for a bus or in villages we visited. I would usually stand aside and Amue, if an explicit question came, would explain we were not married. This sometimes confused the questioner. This also brought confusion from my side. One could ask if this kind of relationship could not discredit my informant. Many anthropologists live with a feeling of indebtedness to their research partners; they may feel they got what they wanted and feel obliged to give something back. Questions of ethics are always present in the field. Honestly speaking I do not feel this so much towards my Akha informants. To put it directly, sometimes I felt used. If we turn our research ethic standards towards informants then I was more ethical towards them than they were towards me: I was repeatedly trying to explain to them my research and even consulted my findings with some of them. In contrast, I was not informed

about my research partners' expectations. Would I have accepted working with them if I knew their objectives? There were times I know I would think twice.

Once, Amue asked me to accompany her on a trip to Chiang Mai to visit her youngest brother who lived there in a Christian Children's Home. Chiang Mai, contrary to Chiang Rai, is one of the hotspots for foreigners to meet Thai girls. The image of a western man with a Thai girl is common; in the eyes of many I was a 'sex-tourist'. Being cast in this role was always highly unpleasant for me. I could often feel tourists staring at us in restaurants and other public places. If one looked at Amue's physical appearance then I had to appear as a sex-tourist with a fetish for corpulent women. I could not accept this role. I felt horrible.

When I began to visit New Life I had no knowledge of the Akha language. The only people I could communicate with were those who spoke English. Since the environment surrounding Christian organisations in Chiang Rai is largely English-speaking, the language barrier was not a real issue. Children from the Home learned English in school but also heard English on a regular basis from directors of the home, missionaries, Christian groups visits, from volunteers, etc. Most of the older children spoke English to some degree. This gave me a chance to be around them and speak with them. However, it was not I who had chosen these informants. They had chosen me.

The Akhas who would eventually become my closest informants were those with whom I spent most time at New Life. As I later found out they were using me as an easy target to practice their English on. Most of the time I did not mind; all of us were getting what we were looking for. Their interest to spend time with me was different than what interested me. They had their own agency, desires and dreams and I was a tool to get them closer to it. My

research partners were practicing their English and I was slowly getting access to the worlds of Christian Home's and the Akha children in their care.

For many Akhas I represented their 'imagined worlds' (Appadurai 1996), the worlds they were imagining based on TV, advertisements, visits to Chiang Rai and from the Christian community. Contrary to television, advertisements and missionaries I was easily available and approachable. Usually, I was happy to comply with my informants desires; after all, ethnography as a method, as it is affected by the mutual commitment between an anthropologist and his or her informants, requires engagement as an imperative for various forms of reciprocity which jointly form the social dynamics of any fieldwork (Ryska 2009). My Akha informants lived on the margin of Thai society and their lives in the city were influenced by different forms of social suffering. Yet, their parents and other villagers believed that they were successful since they lived in a city and were thus so close to their imaginations of "good lives". I constituted a convenient means to meet these expectations by offering my informants the social and symbolic capital a close relationship with a white westerner provided.

One of Amue's three brothers married a Thai woman. There is no 'official' caste system in Thailand but if there was, the Akha would constitute the "untouchables"; Thai lowland society looks down on *chao khao*, people from mountains, and the Akha represent the very bottom of the Thai society. When Amue asked me to accompany her on a 400 km trip to a far away city to take part in the negotiation of the conditions of the wedding and the bride-price Amue's brother would pay to the bride's parents, I first refused - No V.I.P. bus was going there at the time we needed to travel and I was too lazy to spend hours on an uncomfortable coach with no air-conditioning. Later, I changed my mind. Firstly, I could see how much it meant for

Amue and secondly, I knew I would risk reproach for missing a moment which could be important for my research.

Shortly after arrival we were picked up at the bus station by the bride's sister I realized that the reason Amue asked me to join her was not because of my brilliant company (maybe partly) but mostly because I as a 'farang' increased the symbolic value of her Akha family which she was there to represent. For this Thai middle class family, as I have soon to found out, their daughter's decision to marry a chao khao was a painful one. Although I initially resisted, this visit, as will become clear later in the thesis, was an important ethnographic experience for me after all.

There was a number of such moments during the time I spent in the field. Among many others I was quite often asked to join some of my research partners to visit government offices; Thai officials who usually scorn people from the mountains did not want to lose face in front of a foreigner and the particular application my informants presented was dealt with quite smoothly. This way I was not just able to meet the need of reciprocity but had also a chance to ethnographically observe situations and moments I would likely not encounter otherwise. Expectations which accompanied this mutual relationship with informants uncovered differences which I was only able to perceive from a 'time distance'. "You can't connect the dots looking forward, you can only connect them looking backwards.", notes Jobs in his 2005 Stanford commencement address (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UF8uR6Z6KLe>).

The Gift Of Engagement

On the following pages, I am going to describe a moral dilemma that an anthropologist meets in the field affected by structural inequality and social suffering; in an environment where he

is exposed to everyday interactions with members of economically, socially and culturally marginalized group of population. These people are not only the object of such moral dilemma but at the same time its co-actors. Both the anthropologist and his or her hosts usually try to build mutual relationships based on good deeds. However, whether they are helpfulness, generosity or hospitality, these good deeds may be persecuted by calculation, deception and gossip. The purpose of writing this chapter is to show that 'everyday forms of engagement', despite the fact such an integral interconnection brings difficulties and dilemmas, are an integral part of ethnographic research. I argue that engagement and ethnography are sisters; hardly separable allies that achieve more when united.

As I demonstrated in the previous subchapter, building mutual relationships and the related greater or smaller forms of help may at the same time be a breeding ground for doubt and hostility. The very nature of intense, participant observation casts the anthropologist into social relationships that are constructed by reciprocal obligations with his or her informants that are based on exchange of various forms of 'gift'. The exchange of gifts needs not to be balanced and is not always sufficiently mutually understood, and so manifestations of generosity may cause disagreement, misunderstanding and grudge. It should therefore come as no surprise that the notion of 'doing good' might also lead to gossips, unfulfilled expectations and frustration.

I was first brought to Meu Nga Akha village by Amue. Usually I divided my fieldwork between the world my Akha informants occupied in Chiang Rai, be it New Life or not, and I also spent a time in the mountains. To understand each of these two seemingly distinct social spaces in its own terms was a necessary prerequisite for any meaningful analysis of Christian-based development I studied. At that time I repeatedly reflected on ethnography as a method

of anthropological knowledge, with a growing suspicion that not only are the requirements related to it hard to meet but they are also naturally antagonistic. The question I repeatedly asked myself was, whether it is possible to remain unengaged in an environment that engages one fundamentally? In an environment that creates situations within which an anthropologist must move, live with strangers and negotiate mutual relationships.

"Ethnographers usually live in the communities they study, and they establish long-term, organic relationships with the people they write about. In other words, in order to collect "accurate data," ethnographers violate the canons of positivist research; we become intimately involved with the people we study", mentions Bourgois (2002: 13). The main pitfall of participant observation on the level of interaction is to convince people, our future informants, to let us into their lives to "rob their souls", to give us the 'gift' of their own privacy, feelings, opinions and knowledge without a direct possibility to influence the subsequent life of thus obtained and often highly sensitive information. All that, in exchange for what? For a chance that they may once appear in a specialized publication and the world of anthropology where the pen of a foreigner writes the history of a people who had until recently not been known to have one (Scheper-Hughes 1995: 418). The anthropologist is driven by desire, passion and commitment to deeper knowledge that he or she will, most frequently by form of a text, publish in specialized publications in order to share his or her knowledge with colleagues or with the vision of academic awards, degrees, and career. The reasons of our hosts for engaging in our research are similarly varied and may include gaining a social status, a form of pride of the fact that a "rich farang¹⁰" has shown interest in our trivial lives which may not be a small thing for structurally oppressed and marginalized groups, or a vision of a closer relationship to the "imagined worlds" (Appadurai 1996) which, among other things, the

¹⁰ A Thai term generally denoting a foreigner. Although the meaning of the word farang is neutral, depending on the context it may be mocking or even offensive.

global media has taught us to crave. Our informants may thus be motivated by a promise of social and symbolic capital (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992) that unfolds and may be intentionally developed by a close relationship with the “powerful foreigner”.

A self-reflecting anthropologist, usually a member of the European or American middle class (nowadays certainly not exclusively) might often become aware of his or her dominance following from holding a cultural and symbolic capital through which a higher power had been delegated than the one his or her structurally disadvantaged informants dispose of. Equipped with education, specialized training and often disproportionately higher economic capital, the anthropologist obtains what he or she needs from his or her informants often without realizing sufficiently what they are actually gaining, why they want it, what they will do with it, and why they need all that for.

Imbalanced relationships of power between the anthropologist and his or her informants need to be perceived through the politics of representation. During 1980s anthropologists started to question the essence of ethnographic authority (Clifford 1988; Marcus & Cushman 1982; Said 1989; Tyler 1987). In these and later texts ethnographers were, epistemologically speaking, alarmed by motivations and interests, representation, meanings or dialectics of ethnographers and their subjects, and their suppressed voices (Bourgois 2002; Dwyer 1987; Jackson 1986). Poststructuralist and postmodern critique has turned the notions of objective representation into ruins. One does not write isolated from the cultural and historical conditions (Barthes 1978). Writing is not free from the context; on the contrary, it is influenced by political and social factors. Set in a whirlwind of the constantly changing dynamics of political, social, historical, and cultural circumstances, the anthropologists must choose between various opinions, while being influenced themselves by social and historical factors. Postmodernists

preoccupied with representation occupied by own text have shown little interest in conflicts constructed by unequal power relationships and suffering in the world of people they wrote their ethnographies about. Instead of placing colonialism, genocide, and social suffering at the center of its largely internal debates over the politics of representation over the past two decades, anthropology has been most creative and prolific in its critique of the textual inadequacies of its method", writes Bourgois (2002: 417). Yet, he views the aspects of postmodern critique as beneficial to ethnography: "It has debunked the naively positivist enlightenment project of mainstream social science and humanities and has unsettled the essentializing tendencies of anthropology's culture concept which so easily slide into yet another version of racism and postcolonial domination" (2002: 418).

It would be wrong, however, to view the relationship between the anthropologist and his or her informants as one-sided. Although the anthropologist repeatedly commits symbolic violence on the informants (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992) during his or her research, the situation may be more complex. As Scheper-Hughes writes in her brilliant ethnography from the Brazilian slum *Death Without Weeping*, our research partners also commit violence against themselves: "For anthropologists to deny, because it implies a privileged position (i.e., the power of the outsider to name an ill or a wrong) and because it is not pretty, the extent to which dominated people come to play the role, finally, of their own executioners is to collaborate with the relations of power and silence that allow the destruction to continue" (1992: 172). Likewise, as I have already mentioned above, the anthropologist is not spared situations when he or she is the target of symbolic violence by the informants. At the very moment anthropologist asks for a permission to enter the desired community, he or she is exposed to the willingness and good will of his or her future research partners who simultaneously take on the role of teachers on the journey to becoming acquainted with the

given community, its social norms and customs. It should be no surprise then, that in the environment where the anthropologist is a stranger, he or she is also exposed to symbolic violence and ulterior interests of the people he or she is studying.

Professional discussions on engaged anthropology usually focus on application of professional knowledge and skills by means of anthropologists' participation in the services of colonial powers and imperialist structures (Asad 1995; Hymes 1999), in military activities in World War II¹¹ (Price 2008; Wax 1986), in projects of regional and international development (Escobar 1991; Rahnema & Bawtree 1997; Sachs 1992), in research at time of the Vietnam War (Horowitz 1967, Jones 1971), within advocacy¹² (Ervin 2004; Hopper 2003; Johnston 2001; Gross & Plattner 2002; Farmer 2003; Lamphere 2004) or, quite currently, in cooperation with the U.S. intelligence in the Middle East conflict¹³ (González 2009; Price 2011). These discussions are interconnected on one hand by doubts on the scholarship (Escobar 1991; Lewis 2005; van Willigen 1984); and on the other hand, by the desire and need to use anthropological knowledge and experience to solve complex social problems (Bourgois 2002; Rylko-Bauer & Singer & van Willigen 2006; Scheper-Hughes 2004; Speed 2006).

Within the workshop supported by the Wenner-Gren Foundation resulting in a special edition of *Current Anthropology* journal, Low and Merry (2010) "outline an exceptionally broad

¹¹ Price (2008) states that when the U.S. officially entered World War II, more than a half of the American anthropologists were using their expertise and experience to support the war efforts.

¹² Sanjek mentions examples of strategies of public engagement such as publication in non-academic media, testimonies before government hearings and commission, consultation work for organizations, playing the role of a specialized witness, and also the less anthropological matters such as work for private companies, NGOs, governmental agencies, civic activism, election campaigns or political administration (2004: 453).

¹³ In his book *American Counterinsurgency* González (2009) describes the so called Human Terrain System, a program of the Intelligence Service with a budget of \$ 60 million which includes social scientists into battle brigades in Iraq and Afghanistan.

framework for what might reasonably constitute *engagement*" (Mullins 2011: 236), by the inclusion of sharing and personal support, teaching and public education, social critique, partnership research, advocacy and activism. The dilemma that Low and Merry formulate into three questions: "how, when, and to what extent anthropological work should be engaged" (2010: 211) gives rise to the suspicion that the authors, in spite of the undoubted progress in the scope of their approach, view engagement as a unified whole without differentiating between instrumentalization of knowledge (that may pose as objective and neutral in terms of values), from the form that is born of the explicit self-understanding of the researcher as an inevitable anchorage of value and practice of a research.¹⁴ Now, I would like to shortly focus on the latter of the above mentioned forms.

I believe that ethnography as a method marked by the commitment between the anthropologist and informants requires engagement as a prerequisite for various forms of reciprocity that co-create the social dynamics of field research. I will therefore argue that using anthropological knowledge and training for solving social conflicts is merely one of the forms of engagement. I will show that engagement has an irreplaceable role in the daily life of the ethnographic method of participating observation, thus largely contributing to the increasing of the anthropological knowledge. Although my understanding is just another one of a number of variants of possible engagement of anthropologists, I suggest dealing also with its prosaic but continuous manifestations that co-create the relationship between the anthropologist and informants, or if you will, research partners. Everyday forms of engagement, these mutual manifestations of sharing and support do not have much in common with advocacy or activism, with 'collaboration' with governmental, bilateral or international organizations, with the army, CIA, IMF or with religious missions but they

¹⁴ Meanwhile it is advisable to perceive these forms separately, they are not categories that exclude each other as they frequently overlap.

express the anthropologist's sense of responsibility and reciprocity that accompanies and builds the practice of fieldwork.

What I call the everyday forms of engagement are activities an anthropologist meets with on a regular basis in the field. They include mutual help, expressions of concern, care, affection or respect. As Low and Merry write: "Most anthropologists share not only social and political commitments with the people they work with or study but also their housing, food, medicine, automobile, and other economic, material, and social resources, both at home and in the field" (Low & Merry 2010: 208). A typical part of ethnographic research is the daily practice of sharing, support and mutual influence. By the everyday forms of engagement I mean quite mundane acts such as helping out the hosts or neighbors with preparing wood at a time when they are bending their tired bodies on the mountain slopes while working on the field (to grow e.g. rice which the anthropologist will consume, too), carrying water, small or bigger help with the construction and repair of houses but also cooking, helping to clean the spring and water pipe or in illness or another misfortune.

Engagement is not much more than an active response to coexistence with the research field and its subjects. The everyday forms of engagement help re-evaluate the original aim of research and to abandon biases and plans engineered in a university library that frequently become unsustainable after the anthropologist meets with the actual people and the specific, unexpected context of the given field. The everyday forms of engagement maintain the equilibrium of mutual relationships between the anthropologist and his or her informants thus allowing and enhancing the application of the fundamental ethnographic method of participating observation fieldwork.

In order to explain my argument that engagement is not a special, different, frequently criticized non-scientific practice but rather an inherent part of an ethnographic research, I will use the anthropological theory of gift and exchange. "On the one hand, a gift, on the other, poison", wrote Mauss on the characteristic of a gift and its ambivalence (1990: 81). Engagement in my understanding is therefore not an altruistic gesture, a form of post-Christian heritage, but rather a form of economic transaction. In the *Gift*, Mauss (1990) has shown how gift constructs social relationships and commitments.¹⁵ Preface to English edition of the book starts with Mary Douglas' words: "Charity is meant to be a free gift, a voluntary, unrequited surrender of resources", on the other hand, as Mauss' work shows, "that the whole idea of a free gift is based on a misunderstanding" (1990: ix). Mauss has pointed out how the economy of gift is separated from other forms of distribution, accompanied by social obligations of giving, receiving and returning. A gift creates social relationships between the giving and the receiving. What mainly differentiates a gift exchange from a goods exchange is the development of more stable and lasting relationships. A gift is a form of loan with delayed maturity when its receiver, i.e. the gifted, remains a debtor until he or she pays his or her debt back to the giving. The societies Mauss studied did not only exchange property, riches and goods in this way. The object of exchange was also politeness where the transfer of riches was only one of the features of a more general and permanent agreement. Gifts and counter-gifts appeared to be of voluntary nature but at the same time were compulsory. Mauss calls one of the powers of gift that motivates the receiver to return it, the spirit of gift. A gift cannot be completely freed from the donor, which means that there is always a bond between the gift and its donor. It is this characteristic of gift that differentiates it from a goods exchange. Mauss calls the system of gift exchange in archaic societies a system of total obligations that

¹⁵ "It also makes it clear that the term can apply to an enormous variety of transactions, and that the term "gift economy" can apply to any not organized on market principles" (Graeber 2001: 225).

achieves several qualities: exchange and distribution, peace keeping, solidarity and friendship and confirms the social positions.

Fieldwork, an activity in which the anthropologist strives to come to people, his or her informants, as close as possible, to participate in their joys and worries, to experience happy moments of their lives with them but also the less happy ones, is in fact one long series of exchanges; whether we mean a material, emotional, social or intellectual exchange. It is the everyday forms of engagement such as small presents that a researcher exchanges with his or her informants, protection that is provided for him or her more often than he or she is able to provide for the hosts or hospitality itself without which fieldwork would become almost impossible, including the willingness of the informants to become research objects, all these represent 'gifts' that require a closing of the cycle of reciprocity.

Although part of a long-term stay in the field is followed by a boredom, another partner accompanying us in these research activities is insecurity. By being obligated to live with people, we are constantly being followed by the question about our position within the given community. The question an anthropologist asks for the whole duration of his or her research: "What is it that I actually want?" is extended by contact with informants to the question "What do they want from me?" We seek answers to these questions in very complex ways and even in the moments when we think we have found them, we cannot be completely sure. As put by Pierre Bourdieu: "The most ordinary and even the seemingly most routine exchanges of ordinary life, like the 'little gifts' that 'bind friendship' presuppose an improvisation, and therefore a constant uncertainty, which, as we say, make all their charm, and hence all their social efficacy" (1997: 191).

For most of the Akha I was, at least at the beginning of our relationship, the same as any other farang. They formed their conceptions by their experience with state officers, development workers and missionaries or through media. They expected me as the rich foreigner to help their village; either the village as such or the households or individuals. The villagers' expectations were very varied and subjected to frequent discussions. Similarly as they could not completely understand my interests and motivations, many times neither could I. Simply, I could never be sure what and how big form of gift and its exchange was appropriate both for me and my hosts, or rather, by the size of obligations our mutual 'gifts' were creating.

Life in the Thai mountains is tough and mutual help and cooperation, although far from being always ideal and harmonious, is a prerequisite to survival. The villagers must grow, pick or hunt for themselves most of the things they consume. Even though in the village almost every day early in the morning one can hear, apart from the roosters' crowing, advertising from a loud speaker fixed on the roof of a pick-up truck of a Thai merchant, notifying of the opportunity to buy food and other necessities, most of the village inhabitants usually lack the funds necessary to do so. As I once involuntarily learnt the hard way, it is the reciprocal help that maintains the daily continuity of social life in a village community.

In the first days and weeks in Meu Nga it did not even occur to me to refuse requests for cigarettes by the village men. Every time somebody asked me, I swiftly pulled out a package of cigarettes and happily offered. I was the guest, a debtor and I felt obligated to acknowledge that. My initial euphoria lessened over time and supplying villagers with cigarettes, in spite of their relatively low price in Thailand, started to become costly. Most of all, however, I was bothered by the influence of the gift of cigarettes on the construction of social hierarchy, as it was casting me into the role of a "rich foreigner" who, in my own measures, I was not and in

the given situation did not even wish to be; at least not in the eyes of my hosts. The whole experience, however, allowed me to understand more closely the significance of exchange which is the foundation of the continuity of life in an Akha village.

One afternoon, when most villagers were in their fields, in the woods hunting or picking berries or working hard as wage laborers for one of the Thai businessmen, I became extremely bored and started to tremendously crave a cigarette that would help me while-away. The last package which, as I had thought I had safely hidden, was not in its place. Mad but without success I searched through all my stuff. Upon my request, my neighbor Adju matter-of-factly and without embarrassment offered me a cigarette from my lost package. I let him keep the almost full pack but at the same time I felt used. How dared he take my cigarettes? For me, he was simply a thief. Since I was little, I was taught: no touching other people's stuff.

A few days later I got gastric problems and the medicines I brought with me from Europe did not work. I asked Ama to bring me opium from someone from the village but she came back empty-handed. Before long, Adju appeared in the door with a pipe, a burner and the medicine. This event was one of my first lessons in the Akha norms of exchange and at the same time a sort of reflection of my own norms that I brought with me into the field. When Adju needed cigarettes, it was me who had them. When I needed opium for my gastric problems, it was he who had it. This form of exchange and sharing is the basic prerequisite of the community's survival in the hostile conditions of the Indochinese Peninsula mountains.

Metaphors of gift, debt and its return are used daily either as reciprocal help among the households, in the religious sense of merits, in family relations, in expectations following

from the relationship to development organizations, missions or State. Life in mountain communities is hard and people must daily face uneasy decisions as to how to use their limited resources. However, it would be wrong to assume that the only purpose or goal is the effort to survive.

Being an Engaged Anthropologist

Much has been written about the highlanders of Southeast Asia. While it seems highly impossible that ethnographers studying the Akha in Thailand would ignore the immense significance of Christian-based development via Children's Homes in the lives of mountain ethnic minorities, their existence has been practically unnoticed. The immense number of books, journals, theses, peer-reviewed articles, articles published in newspapers and magazines or on the internet, the majority has been more or less engaged in either the Akha history, the traditional culture and its breakdown, including important studies related to land and agriculture, religion, illicit drugs production, abuse and trafficking or maybe a sex trade. This thesis is an attempt to initiate a critical discussion on the significant subject Christian-based development presents for the upland minorities in northern Thailand, via the means of Children's Homes.

The anthropological method of participant observation requires a long-term physical presence in the world of our informants who become, during the course of the fieldwork, the closest peers. This fact often influences the theme as well as the field of a research. Most of us prefer to live with people with whom we can get engaged. Also, a consent from those we study is usually easier to get if we sympathize with our future informants. Since the majority of ethnographers recognize the anthropological tenet of cultural relativism, it often hinders them from constructing a critical argument; cultures have their inner logic and any notion of 'good'

or 'bad' is perceived as simply biased by our own culture. This is what allows for a suffering to be ignored. "In fact, however, suffering is usually hideous; it is a solvent of human integrity, and ethnographers never want to make the people they study look ugly. [...] This has seriously limited the ability of intellectuals to debate issues of poverty, ethnic discrimination, and immigration", notes Bourgois (2002: 15).

It might be even more complicated if religion gets involved; let alone the combination of humanitarianism, Christianity, development and social marginalization, as materialized through Christian orphanages in Chiang Rai. Who likes to adopt a critical stance against people helping poor orphans and children in need, especially if their motivation is lead by Christian values such as 'loving your neighbour'? Bourgois (2002) argues that such a moment leads to an unconscious self-censorship that significantly affects the decision related to the research setting as well as the subjects chosen to be studied. Not only it is easier to obtain a consent to conduct a research if it addresses harmless and pleasant individuals; environment surrounded by a human suffering such as Christian Homes, where abused children are meant to find a shelter and be saved, might be psychologically devastating.

The conduct of participant observation fieldwork carries also, among many other significant issues, the ever present questions of ethics, morality and engagement anthropologists have to face on a daily bases. The physical and personal presence of anthropologists in the field "encourages them to overlook negative dynamics because they need to be empathetically engaged with the people they study" (Bourgois 2002: 14). While in the field, there were countless moments I had to deal with these and similar issues. However, it was not until I began to transform the generated data into a text of this thesis that I have realized, how much power I hold over my informants, be it Christian aid workers, international donors or the

Akha. The same power had a significant effect on me as well. The politics behind decision making of what to say and what to conceal, what ethnographic moment or an interview to employ in the effort to support my argument, this all puts agonizing feelings of doubt and responsibility on me.

For a number of years, I have been carefully separating two of my identities. I was afraid my activist position would distort the anthropological understanding I was trying hard to achieve. I accepted such a separation as a needed and important aspect of a credible scholarship. Later on, two of my advisors from Prague, Tereza Stockelova and Yasar Abu Ghosh, offered me a different perspective. Themselves having a history and presence in a number of activist movements and actions, they did not see such a separation as necessary. When I mentioned my concerns about my engaged position to Nancy Scheper-Hughes, she has made much effort to assure me about the crucial significance engagement and activism have in the field of anthropology. One of the emails I received from Nancy was entitled with a subject: "keep the fires burning!" I had a similar experience with two other of my advisors in Berkeley - Stanley Brandes and Jeff Schonberg.

Because of the separation between anthropology and activism I was trying to achieve, I have not mentioned any of the documentary films I made to people at the anthropology department at UC Berkeley. One day, Stanley Brandes wrote me an email that he has watched my film *Prisoners of a White God* on the internet. He spoke highly about the documentary and praised it so much that later he repeatedly recommended the film to other people at our department. In my reply to his email, I made an effort to emphasize it is rather an activist film. The next day I received an email from Jeff Schonberg who had to learn about the film from Stanley: "Hey Tomas, Your film is really amazing. I see no need to make the distinction between activism

and anthropology. In fact, I am assuming that it will be a great teaching tool together with your writing."

The film has had a significant influence on this thesis as well as on my life. Apart of the unforgettable experiences I was provided with (e.g. a private jet flight from Moscow to an international anthropological festival of Russian Ethnographic Burro and The Russian Academy of Sciences financed by Gazprom in a restricted part of Siberia where about 50 anthropologists from different parts of the world watched films, discussed anthropology and for a week, drank quite a lot of high quality vodka), I have also been presented with a number of Grand Prix prizes and other awards and introduced to some incredible people I would hardly meet otherwise. At the time when Steve Lichtag and Radim Kotesovec finished the editing job, the last cut was made, narration recorded, music composed and all the mixes and postproduction necessities completed, there was not much of a discussion on sexual abuses committed by thousands of Christian authorities all over the world in the public discourse. All these information seized the media after the film has been already screened at international festivals and TV stations around the world.

While the media were happy to make a profit, a series of international and local scandals of various Christian groups, organisations and denominations have been stirred up. Clergy in a number of European countries have been charged for horrible crimes committed on children in their care. Similar scandals were exposed in the United States, Canada, Australia and many other countries. Hundreds if not thousands of young Americans, in their 20s and 30s, began to openly speak about atrocities committed on their bodies and psyche at Christian missionary boarding schools for children of American missionaries operating overseas.

Despite the fact many cases of these sexual abuses have been already proven, sometimes I had a feeling I was watching a witch-hunt on Christians or maybe even the religion itself. It was then, when I began to have doubts about the film. Although I was confident about my decision to make a small part of my data, regarding sexual abuse of Akha children, public, I felt uncomfortable to take a part in this witch-hunt. The moment was significant for the text of this thesis. Because of the fear my intention would be misrecognized and also because the issue of sexual abuse might lure too much interest while the other highly significant issues might end up unnoticed, I decided to avoid this issue in my thesis. While I definitely consider the issue of sexual abuse of children to be of an immense significance, for the purpose of this thesis I am going to leave this topic aside.

In the year 2010 I was offered and accepted a membership in a board of an American organisation supporting victims of abuses committed on children of American missionaries. Number of large scale abuses have been investigated and exposed, yet many still wait for reparations. Serious crimes have been committed by Christian authorities on children all over the world. Some have been proven, in other cases nobody made the effort to attempt to do so and in most cases, such an information has never left the intimate relationship between the victim and its perpetrator. Still, too often those who are being blamed are the victims themselves. While I was engaged with cases of these American victims, and heard, read and experienced some of the hatred and denial thousands of American Christian demonstrated against people who have been hurt during their childhood by those in power and dared to share this horrible experience, I have realized how important my film was. If it was so painful, humiliating and incredibly complicated for an American citizens to bring these charges against Christian mission organizations and utilize their rights, how could an Akha be heard?

It was Jeff Schonberg who later liberated me of my doubts related to activism and engagement. During one of our discussions, he said that to him engaged anthropology does not mean to stay uncritical towards the people we might consider as friends. What Jeff has said exactly reflected the way I perceive not only my position in anthropology but also the one I hold in my ordinary life outside of the field. Even with my closest friends at home I often do not share same opinions, sometimes I even dislike their decisions and often I am even explicitly critical. Despite of that, they are still my good friends and I would fight for them. This is the kind of engagement I employ in my anthropology. Honestly, such an engagement desires a responsibility that I found, while working on the text of this thesis, overwhelming.

The engaged position I hold made the effort to provide as candid a picture of the Christian-based development of the Akha as possible to be a highly demanding task. Although, throughout the analysis, I am being critical towards my Akha friends, my sympathies were on the side of the victims of social inequalities, on the side of the Akha. A text that carries critical message about people one considers to be friends is not always easy to produce. It is no less difficult to describe the practices and to select the proper ethnographic moments and interviews of people we do not agree with and sometimes we even do not like. That was the case with most Christian aid workers I met.

John, one of the main characters of the thesis and the director of New Life Children's Home, was one of exceptions. Not really an exception though. We both live in completely different worlds. So different that sometimes I felt we were separated by the whole galaxies. I am not sure John felt the same way but sometimes, I was horrified by ideas he presented and I did not agree with many decisions and activities he took. Despite of that, John's behaviour was

usually decent and I really enjoyed some of the time we spent together. As much as I stepped into a different world with John ideologically, there was a huge material difference between the life I lived with the Akha and the one I enjoyed with John. The whole atmosphere of sufficiency was a pleasing contrast to the pictures of social inequalities I so often observed while with the Akha.

I would never think about John as a friend, yet there were moments I enjoyed his company. While I have sympathies for him, I am rather critical towards the development practice and activities he orchestrated in Thailand. Despite of my criticism, I sincerely believe that a Christian reader, and especially those who operate Children's Homes in Chiang Rai, will not find the description I present in the text of the thesis to be misleading or offensive. I put much effort in providing such a picture of John's beliefs and practice that Christian aid workers in Chiang Rai could identify with.

When I began to study international development in the 1990s, at Masaryk University in Czech Republic, any information about faith-based development organizations was totally absent. My initial concern for Children's' Homes was not motivated by an interest in the relationship between religion and development, neither I wanted to examine "how religious ideas inform and intersect with the moral dynamics of economic development" (Bornstein 2005: 1). I was simply interested to learn stories of the children who were taken from their families to Christian Homes. This initial interest stayed with me in the years that followed while new questions constantly emerged. My interest was lead by the dynamics behind the fascinating facets of the social practices I was observing while in the field. Also, the longer I stayed, the more personal have some of my reasons become. During the years, I have developed close relationships with number of Akha, most of whom do not represent any of the

character of this thesis. However, their life stories, practice and insights had an immense influence on my conceptualization of the social world Akha inhabit, be it the one in village or in city.

Some of the Akha I befriended were the New Life staff members and several older New Life's children. Later, when they moved out of the Home I stayed with them in a common household in Chiang Rai. Those are the people who constitute the main characters of the thesis. It would be difficult today to separate my research interest from the personal one. I was fascinated by the social world of Christian Homes in its widest meaning. With an immense interest I was observing the everyday life of New Life and practices of its children, staff and director as well as the one of international sponsors while in Chiang Rai. I also studied the social dynamics of the world Akha occupy outside of the Home's gates, within the wider lowland Thai society. I scrutinized Akha students' experience in state schools, I was closely observing the way the 'developed' Akha organized their lives, friendships, marriages and other relationships, how they nurture their own children or their experiences at the labour market.

No less I was fascinated by the world inhabited by members of the international Christian aid community in Chiang Rai. I carefully listened to stories, ideas, opinions, arguments and explanations they provided me with and often also honestly enjoyed the hospitality I was given. Needless to say, during the nearly three years I have spent in the field, I have seen good things but also experienced some more difficult moments with my informants, be it the Akha, Thai or foreigners Christian aid workers. All these moments influenced the final form of the thesis.

To gain a better understanding of the dreams and images the Akha informants shared with me it was necessary to get more familiar with the world they came from. I have repeatedly stayed in villages of my informants' relatives and often joined my Akha friends on their visits to their parents in order to study and observe the social life of mountain communities my urban-based informants came from and the relationships between the urban and rural spaces Akha occupy. I have also visited some of the churches that support New Life in Oregon and California and spoke with some of their members. In this sense my research could be understood as multi-sited.

The main ethnographic character of the thesis is in fact my closest Akha friend. For the purpose of this thesis I call her Amue. I changed names of all informants and camouflaged the Children's Home in question to protect their privacy and security. Amue, an Akha woman just a bit younger than me, was the first New Life staff member. It was her who opened the door for me to enter the world of the Home. Amue was also my Akha language teacher. It should be noted that she has been more patient teacher than I was a student. Naturally then, Amue constitutes the main ethnographic character of the story I am going to narrate.

From a number of points of view, Amue was a perfect informant. She was also a perfect example of the highest possible achievement Christian-based development was capable of. She was its pure and successful product. Amue has lived in a children Home, graduated from a Bible College, finished her secondary education, even received a university degree in social work and development and worked for various Christian organizations in the region. While with her, I was repeatedly astonished by the fact a university graduate was as poor and marginalized, within the lowland Thai society as well as within the Christian community in Chiang Rai, as most of the other Akha I met. While I was observing the social world of

Christian Homes and spent time with young Akha who were products of these development institutions, images of social suffering constituted an ordinary experience. I struggled to understand the relationship between Akha social suffering and Christian Homes' operations. How is it that "developed" Akha do not experience an upward social and economic mobility? What are the dynamics structuring the social inequalities?

The length of my research allowed me not only to see some of my informants to go through the process of Christian-based development and to follow the same people and their practices after they left the Home. It has also provided me with an overwhelming amount of material. It seems there is still too much unsaid. Too often, during the process of editing my notebooks as well as the audio and video files I recorded, I had to make a decision what ethnographic moment to choose while the rest had to be abandoned. Also, the overwhelming amount of audio material did not allow me to listen all of the recordings.

Although the understanding behind the thesis was shaped by many people, for a better clarity I represent the dynamics of the Christian-based development in northern Thailand through nine main ethnographic characters and few minor ones. Interviews or other types of conversation I made a use of throughout the thesis were originally conducted in English, Akha or Thai. All interviews conducted in Thai were done through an interpreter and the translation double-checked with another native speaker. Parts of my recordings in Akha which I had a hard time to understand were discussed and translated with an assistance of some of my Akha friends. Most of the communication I recorded was in English and Akha. During the process of editing, in an effort to clarify meanings, the original conversations have sometimes been adjusted. Having said that, I hope I have always respected the original message.

During the years, when all the seemingly heterogeneous pieces of the puzzle, represented by the worlds of Christian aid workers and Homes, the Akha parents and children, government officials or international donors, did not fit into each other, I have often discussed my understanding with Amue and several other of my closest informants. The pieces of mosaic that initially seemed shallow and colourless, slowly began to fill in and colour up. The picture I am going to present, although it represents exclusively my understanding, is thus a result of a common effort of all my informants to whom I am much grateful. Yet, they might not necessarily share the same view. The story I present through the text of this thesis, although based on a thorough effort for accuracy in description of the ethnographic events, is likely not the one I have observed. Such is the totalizing quality of a text (Liu Xin, graduate seminar 2011). In spite of that, I honestly believe I made the best effort to present a credible image of the worlds my informants inhabit as well as of their practice and conduct. And as such, without claiming the truth, the text lives its own life from now on. The author is dead (Foucault 1969).

4. Global Humanitarianism With A Brand New Guise

Every follower of Christ has been given a mandate, the responsibility to reach this world with the Good News of Jesus Christ. The good news is that for over two thousand years the body of Christ has seen a tremendous growth. In fact, in the past ten years Christianity has grown by three hundred million believers. In China alone, there are twelve thousand people coming to Christ each day. Despite all this progress there still remains a great challenge to reach the rest of the world. Unbelievably over two million people have yet to hear the gospel for the first time. If you were to place them side by side they would surround the globe twenty five

times. If would show their faces, five faces per second, it would take more than ten years to complete. This waste number of lost people live among unreached people groups. An unreached people group is a people group among which there is no indigenous community of believing Christians with adequate numbers and resources to evangelize the group. [...] Reaching these people groups is a challenge. But it is very tainable today. In 100 A.D., for each congregation there were twelve unreached people groups. Today there are nine hundred congregations for each unreached people group. It said, there are seventeen times the necessary financial recourses to meet the needs as well. So, we have the recourses we just need to recognise the obstacles, develop the proper strategy and make sure we are allocating our resources appropriately to meet the challenges (World Mission 2010; <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EwPZq-sEfAc&feature=related>).

The 1980s and 1990s have experienced significant changes in global humanitarian aid. According to Edward & Hulme, the number of development NGOs in the OECD countries of the North was estimated as 1,600 in 1980 while in the 1993 it almost doubled with 2,970 NGOs (1995: 1). Salamon's figures of 4,600 NGOs suggest even more dramatic growth (1994: 111). It is however not only the number of NGOs what should attract our attention but also the budgets available to them.

The OECD estimates that the total spending of NGOs during the same period increased from \$2.8 billion to \$5.7 billion (Edward & Hulme 1995: 1). Numbers provided by Smillie (1993, 1995) are closer to \$9-10 billion since American NGOs operated with \$5.8 billion in 1991 alone (1993: 40-41). In the book 'NGOs, States and Donors: Too Close for Comfort?' Hulme and Edwards (1994: 5) bring fascinating numbers - in 1989 NGOs contributed, via their projects in 'less-developed' countries, more than the World Bank. "In 1994 the largest NGOs

in the world, well-known American giants like CARE, had a budget of \$400 million, Catholic Relief Services \$300 million, and, interestingly, American evangelical PVOs were not far behind these giants, World Vision spent about \$300 million and MAP \$129 million” (InterAction 1995). In the same year Eritrea with a population of about two and a half million was estimated to have a GDP of \$250 million (Africa Confidential 1995: 2)," writes Hearn (2002: 44). As the UNDP estimates, in the period between 1970 and 1990 governments increased their funding of NGOs from less than \$200 million to \$2.2 billion. That said the role and influence of non-governmental organisations in the international aid skyrocketed as the end of the twentieth century was about to come. Now, let us shortly examine the extent to which changes related to the development political economy affected the Christian missionary community.

As Hearn rightly observes, although the nineteenth century is called the 'great century' of Christianity's expansion, "the twentieth century witnessed an even more astonishing growth of the missionary enterprise" (Hearn 2002: 36). While the estimates indicate there were 62,000 on the missionary force by 1900, the numbers of Christian aid workers from 1994 show an increase up to 320,000 (Johnstone 1993: 23-24). "Despite any rumours to the contrary, the overseas missionary movement in Protestant North America is clearly alive... there are now more missions, more missionaries, more short-termers and more dollars raised for overseas ministries than ever before," point out Siewert & Kenyon (1989: 5). Diamond observes the significance of the Christian missionary enterprise: "Southern California is the headquarters for dozens of highly sophisticated missionary agencies. Inside air-conditioned offices with wall-to-wall carpeting and fluorescent lighting, hundreds of trained and committed missionary strategists sit in front of computer terminals, quietly typing numbers and names [...] The data goes into main-frame computers the size of refrigerators where it is formatted, tabulated and

crunched into final reports [...] that determine the tactics and resource expenditures necessary to 'bring the gospel of Jesus Christ' to the farthest regions of the earth." (1989: 205). One such organisation refers to itself as 'a Pentagon for mission agencies': "It would be difficult to run an effective military campaign with the high command of the Navy in Kansas, the Army in Florida, and the Marines in Alaska. And so we have a Pentagon..." (cited in Diamond 1989: 214).

The turn in international aid which granted non-governmental organisations with an unprecedented power and influence motivated governments and donors to closer cooperation. Christian community made a use of this historical moment and number of missionary projects, enriched by a social work, entered the scene of development aid. Identifying themselves NGOs and being classified as such provides missionaries with trust, legitimacy and support beyond the church community while governments often welcome their operations with open arms. It was the very 1990s when Homes for highland children in Chiang Rai started to emerge in increasing numbers.

Faith, Bono & Politics

She's utterly radiant and drop-dead gorgeous. Her Royal Highness Rania Al Abdullah, the charming queen of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, dazzled the 920 guests as she entered the Grand Ballroom of the Waldorf-Astoria for the 2009 annual awards dinner of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation. It was a week of frenzied traffic gridlock in Manhattan as one motorcade after another, escorted by wailing patrol cars packed with appropriate defensive gear, brought kings, queens, heads of state and unabashed dictators through the jammed streets of Midtown to the annual gabfest of the UN General Assembly. Prime Minister Gordon Brown of Britain was one of three honorees at the Appeal of Conscience event. He came for

the press conference but skipped the dinner – it was that kind of hectic night. He had dinner with leaders of the G-20 to discuss climate change. New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg was also at the photo op but couldn't stay to eat as he had three other appointments that night. At the dinner, former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, got up to present the British prime minister with the foundation's World Statesman Award, and was flummoxed. He looked around but couldn't find Brown. Kissinger recalled last year's dinner when he presented the award to French President Nicolas Sarkozy. "I introduced Sarkozy—after he spoke. This time I'm introducing Brown who's not even here." Rabbi Schneier introduced the second honoree, Coca-Cola chairman and CEO Muhtar Kent, as the son of Necdet Kent, vice consul for Turkey in Marseilles during the Second World War, who saved a lot of Jewish lives by issuing visas to escape occupied France. The third honoree, Bernard J. Arnault, chairman and CEO of LVMH¹⁶, was proud to follow in Sarkozy's footsteps as recipient of an Appeal of Conscience Award. Among the many notables who applauded the three honorees were Bono, former NYC Mayor Edward Koch, former NY Governor George Pataki, Wilbur L. Ross Jr., Archbishop Demetrios, primate of the Greek Orthodox Church of America; Imam Yayha M. Hendi, Muslim chaplain at Georgetown University; fashion designer Donna Karan; Dr. Klaus Kleinfeld, president and CEO of ALCOA¹⁷; media titan Rupert Murdoch of News Corporation; James D. Wolfensohn, former president of the World Bank; Dr. Srgjan Kerim, president of the General Assembly; Ehud Barak, defense minister of Israel; plus the prime minister of Hungary, foreign minister of Spain, intelligence chief of Morocco and so on.

(Shortened story written by Tim Boxer; http://15minutesmagazine.com/archives/issue_95/front_page.htm)

¹⁶ LVMH Group: World leader in luxury, LVMH Moët Hennessy - Louis Vuitton possesses a unique portfolio of over 60 prestigious brands. "LVMH carries out a number of initiatives through its commitment to protecting the environment. Faithful to its vocation as a patron, the Group is also involved in culture and heritage, humanitarian action, education and supporting young artists and designers," states on its website (<http://www.lvmh.com/the-group/lvmh-group>).

¹⁷ ALCOA (Aluminum Company of America) is the world's third largest producer of aluminium.

The exhibition of wealth and power was nothing less than the 2009 annual awards dinner of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation (ACF) in the Grand Ballroom of the New York City luxury hotel Waldorf-Astoria. ACF is an interfaith partnership of corporate and spiritual leaders from all faiths who come together to promote “peace, tolerance and ethnic conflict resolution.” “A crime committed in the name of religion is the greatest crime against religion” is the organization’s motto. Following the events of September 11th, the ACF has rallied religious leaders worldwide to take a stand against terrorism and to use their influence to halt violence and promote tolerance.

Although ACF was founded in 1965, it would be unlikely to see world leaders, financial institutions, businessmen and celebrities to meet on such a scale for a faith-based humanitarian initiative at that time. Over the last two decades, however, there has been a shift in the way international aid is negotiated and set. These changes in development policy and aid transfers, referring to the transition from liberalism to neo-liberalist approach, have been labeled as the New Policy Agenda (Edwards & Hulme 1994, 1995, 1996; Dicklich 1998). This new approach in the international aid industry represents the shift in which the role of state is being reduced while the one of non-state actors increased. The world of development has been opened to a broader range of actors referred to as civil society of which NGOs became to be the most prominent part.

It became clear in the 1970's that efforts to bring the "undeveloped" to the progress, as initiated by the famous inauguration speech of the American president Truman, has not been successful. The poor were growing poorer, the rich were getting richer, new elites were emerging and social inequalities were increasing (Escobar 1995). It did not take long before

the then unfamiliar phenomenon of NGO ascended from the underground to the very summit of the international development aid apparatus. NGOs represented a new hope for the international development aid - small, highly effective institutions with low operational costs, present in the very center of the affairs. This significant transformation of the international development politics lead to the decreased role of states and bigger role of the non-governmental agencies among which NGOs played the first fiddle. NGOs were given trust of the governments as well as of international financial institutions and other donors. However, the time of 'faith' had yet to come.

McDuié-Ra and Rees (2010) scrutinize faith-based development as a top-down process in which international financial institution such as the World Bank play a central role. The roots of the World Bank's close cooperation with religious groups, they argue, reach back to the eighties and nineties. At the time when civil society was on its rise, some NGOs including religious groups were using their gained power to advocate against World Bank's environmental policies. In addition, a coalition of advocacy groups on environmental issues called the Alliance for Religion and Conservation (ARC) emerged in the mid-1980s and was formalised as an NGO in 1995 (Palmer and Finlay 2003: xv). In 1997 the ARC network facilitated the first high-level linkages between the World Bank and religious leaders (ARC 2008). Second crucial point on the World Bank's way to close relationship with religious groups is related to religious advocacy on debt in the South via the Jubilee 2000 campaign which influenced the policy priorities of in-coming World Bank President James Wolfensohn on the issue of highly indebted countries (Marshall and Keough 2004: 44, Valley 1990). Faith-based advocacy on debt relief and human rights subsequently became inseparable part of influential policy networks and has continued to be a prominent part of the international development agenda (Busby 2007, Clarke 2007). Thirdly, to note McDuié-Ra and Rees

(2010), the United Nations, Inter-American Development Bank, World Health Organisation and the International Labour Organisation influenced the World Bank policy developments on religion. Beckmann, the co-founder of Friday Morning Group, that explicitly linked religion to a 'values' discussion at the Bank, has warned the World Bank in 1983 that the Bank's activities moved from issues concerned with poverty reduction and suggested to move beyond a structural adjustment ethos (Beckmann et al. 1991, Kapur et al. 1997: 349, Thomas 2005: 225-226). The World Bank's World Development Report 2000-2001 revealed that 'churches and mosques, as well as sacred trees, rivers, and mountains' were highly valued among the poor.

This all has led the World Bank's President Wolfensohn (1995-2005) to bring religion into the Bank's operations (Marshall and Van Saanen, 2007: 5-8). During the voting of the Executive Board in 2001, Wolfensohn's proposal to establish a small 'Directorate on Faith' was rejected by 24 votes to zero (Wolfensohn 2004: 21-22, Tyndale 2003: 25, Clarke 2007). Finally, the program was designed as a specialised unit within the External Affairs Vice-Presidency to be funded by the discretionary President's Contingency Fund and the Development Dialogue for Values and Ethics was established to operationalise World Bank partnerships with religious actors (World Bank 2006).

Governments took similar position towards the cooperation with faith-based projects. The British government promised to double the amount allotted to faith-based organizations through the so-called White Paper (DFID 2009). The Swedish development agency SIDA organized a workshop in 2004 that was supposed to uncover the "Role of Religion in Development" and the Dutch government formed a Policy Platform on Faith and asked church organizations to explain "What is the added-value of your faith to your work?" (James

2001). So far, the United States have gone the furthest. During the President Bush administration, the financial support to Christian organizations working outside the U.S. boundaries had doubled from 10.5 percent of aid in 2001 to 19.9 percent in 2005 (Rick 2009).

"However, countries have now begun to reach out to faith communities as part of their outreach within the Poverty Reduction Strategy process, recognizing that theirs is a trusted voice for local communities to channel their hopes and priorities to government decision makers. Professionals across many disciplines within the World Bank are recognizing more and more that faith leaders and communities are important partners," wrote Wolfensohn, in the foreword for the World Bank's publication 'Finding Global Balance: Common Ground between the Worlds of Development and Faith' (Wolfensohn in Marshall and Keough 2005: xi).

This new connection between development and religion has been promoted also by popular global celebrities. Famous musicians, successful business people, actors, fashion models and/or athletes are being photographed along with high-positioned Church leaders, international funders and religious aid organisations' representatives. They also often support various Christian-based projects such as orphanages while encouraging other foundations and donors to follow. The significance of pop star celebrities in the newly formed aid approach has been demonstrated, for example, by Bono, the lead singer of U2.

Bono was among those invited to the World Leaders of Faith and Development conference in 2002 as well as to the Appeal of Conscience Foundation event that I started this chapter with. Bono's interest in poverty, debt and AIDS has won him worldwide recognition as it made all these issues a part of a popular discourse. The fierce crusader for the international aid who

assisted Jeffrey Sachs, the economist, to end poverty (2006), created a powerful image of the sorry state of the world: "God is on his knees to us and imploring us to save humanity. We must respond urgently" (http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/default.asp?page=story_1-11-2002_pg3_4). Bono's greeting to the Bishop of Canterbury was published as a part of the above mentioned World Bank's report: "I hope everybody at this Faith and Development Conference knows just how important a role the Church have to play. I have been amazed at what has happened in the United States with the most conservative denominations. They listened, they learned and when the sleeping giant woke up they really went to work. On HIV/AIDS, on inequality. The Church has a chance to redescribe itself for a new generation of sceptics by placing issue of poverty as the greatest moral challenge of the age" (Marshall & Keough 2005: xiii). These were the ways in which religious faith entered the policy discourse, networks and institutional framework of the most influential actors involved in the international development agenda.

World famous business and pop stars, these non-state, glamorous and sexy celebrities, have played a significant role in the contemporary efforts of the international development industry. Bono, Angelina Jolie, Bill Gates and the like, are being labeled as 'philanthropreneurs' (Edwards 2008). As the shifts in political economy have influenced the development industry, a number of new approaches have been introduced. The philanthropreneurism combines two seemingly incompatible worlds - solidarity with entrepreneurial aspect. "The approach of these philanthropreneurs reflects the culture of the business that brought them their wealth: information technology, with its ethos that everyone should have access to information. By their way of thinking, the marketplace can have the same level-the-playing-field impact, and supply the world's poor with basic needs like food, sanitation and shelter", writes Strom for the New York Times (<http://www.nytimes.com/>

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_r=1&pagewanted=1&ei=5088&en=7b1664f51e15449f&ex=1321074000&partner=rssnyt&emc=rss](http://2006/11/13/us/13strom.html?_r=1&pagewanted=1&ei=5088&en=7b1664f51e15449f&ex=1321074000&partner=rssnyt&emc=rss)

(06/20/2012). According to Ong, such an approach carries the neoliberal logic and has a significant influence on the humanitarian discourse (class lecture, UC Berkeley, 01/2012).

On the following pages of the thesis I will transit from the global perspective to the local to show the social dynamics generated by the faith-based development. I am going to ethnographically describe how the fusion of religious faith, philanthropy and capitalism affects the lives, beliefs and practices of mountain ethnic minorities in northern Thailand.

5. Chao Khao Technology

Amue's two younger brothers were among the first five New Life's children. At the age of eight, Pulah was taken away of his own family to live in the city with Christian missionaries. Before he finished his secondary education he was offered a chance to study at one of the Bible Colleges in northern Thailand. With unfinished formal education, Pulah left New Life to study Bible and discipline his body through a combination of long lasting starvation diet and physically demanding activities at Bible College in Chiang Mai. Three years later he graduated.

According to his narration, mainly because of economic reasons, shortly after graduation, Pulah left to Thailand where he worked as an illegal labor force in a factory producing computer components. It was there he started to frequent bars, drink alcohol and use illicit drugs. Two years later he returned back to Thailand. Since he saved no money and had

nowhere to stay, he returned back to his parents' village. Pulah who was accustomed to a urban lifestyle soon found himself subsequently bored and isolated. "I just could not stay there. There is nothing to do. The village people live differently. I have nothing in common with them," he recalled. Subsequently Pulah joined a mission organization. His job was to visit Akha villages, identify non-Christians and convert them. Few years later he quit his missionary carrier to assist a Thai pastor in a church in Chiang Rai. It was there he met Mali, a university student and his future wife.

Since Pulah was going to marry a Thai woman, he was obliged to follow a set of standard Thai customs related to marriage. One of the customs requires the groom to identify a respectful person who asks bride's father for a permission to marry and to hand over a negotiated bride-price (in cash or gold) as an acknowledgement of raising his daughter well. The one who usually takes this role is the groom's father or other member of family. It can also be a boss or anybody else the groom considers to be respectful. Pulah's father passed away three years before this event took place and their mother did not speak Thai, was not familiar with Thai customs and most of all she was embraced by feelings of inferiority: "I would prefer Pulah to marry an Akha woman. Not just I would understand her but she would not look down at me. I think Thai family will never accept Pulah well." Pulah faced similar difficulty. He was embarrassed to bring his Thai wife to the village he was born in. The sense of inferiority related to the affiliation to chao khao was deeply inculcated in highlanders' minds. The lack of cultural capital, and the self-government stemming from the technologies of government represented by the constructed dichotomy between the good Thai citizen and inferior chao khao, did not allow Pulah's mother to handle the situation. Amue was the only possible person to take care of this family obligation.

A week before Amue and I traveled to Phitsanulok I met Mali at the new Chiang Rai shopping mall, Central Plaza. She was there for a lunch with a Thai pastor who had just returned from his mission to Cambodia. Since I was considered to be a part of her future husband's family, Mali called me to join them. This shrine of consumerism did not only serve as a place to purchase new things but it also separated people by socioeconomic status according to who was able to shop there and who was not.

Until the year 2011 when this mall was opened most people purchased their cloths either at a street market or in a department store named Big C. Big C offered pretty much the same products as the market with the luxury of air conditioned environment. It also served as a meeting point for young generation which felt closer to the world media and advertisement convince them to adore. Soon after Central Plaza was opened, most of my Akha friends were eager to go there. "There is nothing there," they shared their disappointment with me later. What they actually meant was that there was nothing they could or would buy. The concept of brands and brand name clothing which most of the stores carried was remote to them: "Why would I buy a shirt for thousand baht if I could get the same one for two hundred?", they lamented about the irrationality of paying a high price. Mali, on the other hand, was excited. While she, together with the pastor, entered one store after another I asked her about something that concerned not just me but both Pulah's mother and his sister, Amue.

Tomas: How did you like Pulah's village?

Mali: I haven't been there yet.

Tomas: [surprised] Really? How is it for you as a Thai to enter Akha village? Is it like [I made a disgusted expression on my face] or is it ok?

Mali: It is rather [her faced turned into disgusted expression]

Tomas: So, how is it to marry an Akha man then?

Mali: First I thought I could have nothing to do with such a guy. Then, God told me: "Who are you to pass judgments on others?"

Tomas: What about your parents? What do they think that their daughter is getting married to Akha?

Mali: My dad is a teacher¹⁸ [says with a pride]. He and his friends do not really like people from mountains. My parents were unhappy about it. Finally my father said it will be me who will live with Pulah, not him. So, it is up to me to decide. He added he is old and that he is looking forward his new grandson.

Upon our arrival to Phitsanulok where Mali's family lived, Amue and I were picked up by her and her older sister at the bus station. Before we were taken to their house we went to pick up Mali's sister's daughter at her elementary school to take her to her everyday extra education program. As thousands of other Thai middle class students, this little girl was receiving additional schooling in math and Thai. Everyday after her regular school finished she would attend this private school that offered an extra education in several subjects. Her school day would be over shortly before seven after which she works on homeworks. This way are the young students being prepared for heavy competition and increase their chances to be accepted to a good university with the hope they will later receive a good job. That is what their parents believe in. This practice of modern relatively wealthy educated middle class Thais deprives their offsprings of a childhood.

Simply, it did not take long after our arrival to Phitsanulok to recognize the immense social and economic gap between the two families. In spite of the fact Pulah came from a poor Akha

¹⁸ Teacher, together with the king and a mother, comprise three most respectable social figures in Thai society (Mulder 2001).

family, spent a big part of his life in a Christian orphanage and did not finish his formal education, he was going to get married into a lowland Thai family whose members drive brand new SUVs on big matt black alloy wheels and pay money for the extra education for their children. While we were waiting for the sister's daughter to come out of school I asked Mali if her family was Christian.

Mali's sister: No! We are Buddhists.

Tomas: How come you are a Christian then?

Mali: When I studied at university in Chiang Rai, there was a group of young missionaries from America. They were very nice and cool and I joined their Christian group.

Tomas: Does it cause any problem to be a Christian in a Buddhist family?

Several years ago I was introduced to similar group of Christian converts among Thai students at one of Bangkok's universities. The stories they shared with me were full of disapproval and outrage from their parents and families.

Mali: Yes, my dad was mad when I told him I was a Christian. He does not understand. I try to explain them how bad Buddhism is. I am working hard to lead them to the right path.

The ritual started soon after we arrived to Mali's parents' house and were greeted by her father, mother and an aunt. We were sitting in a living room of a house which was decorated by a big number of Buddhist statuettes and amulets offering no doubts about the religious affiliation of this family. While the father, dressed in a beige suit with dark purple shirt and polished black shoes, sat in a chair, Amue knell in front of him. With a little red box with a gold in her arms that extended towards him she was asking to give a permission for Pulah to marry his younger daughter. Mali sat right next to me and translated everything being said while she explained the custom and its practice that we were observing. "I am honoured to

finally meet you and welcome you to our house. [...] I have to say that we were first surprised by our daughter's decision. She has not met our expectation. But we have raised her the best way we could and that is why we believe that she has made the right decision. We will support them both as much as we will be able to. Now, when Pulah will become a member of our family, it also means that our families will be related. Please, welcome then to our family. I wish you feel here like at home", said the father in a slow and serious ceremonial tone. Although the observed moment did not offer such a conclusion and its meaning was quite different, while I was observing kneeling Amue in a subordinate position looking up to the father who sat in the chair looking at her from above, I thought the situation well represented the relations between lowland Thais and chao khao ¹⁹.

In the evening we were invited to an up-scale riverside restaurant for a dinner. On the way to the restaurant Mali made a comment about a foul smelling perfume in the car. She turned to me and Amue with disgusted expression on her face: "Can you smell it too?" Of course I could smell it. It was the cheap perfume Amue bought few days ago at the night market in Chaing Rai. Although I did not like the smell either and the amount Amue sprayed over herself was bewildering I refrained from any comment. "It is me," said Amue with a shame in her voice. The two sisters sitting in front of the car looked at each with a scornful expression. Not just that Amue's cultural capital and dispositions did affect her selection and use of the perfume, the situation also shows one of many ways Thai people scorn the Akha. The chao khao discourse affects both - while Thais humiliate Akha for their inferiority, Akha leave with the experience of being humiliated. These moments are being inscribed into their habitual dispositions.

¹⁹ The meaning was to show a respect to the bride's father, an older man. Similar situation would take a place if Amue was a Thai.

The dinner was prepared at a boat garden restaurant. We sat around a white laid table with a beautiful night view on the city. Courteous personnel served delicious dishes together with alcohol. The only two who refrained from the alcohol was Mali and Amue. After a while, members of the bride's family, refreshed by alcohol, eagerly spoke about a visit to the groom's village, Amue's mothers' house. What represented a part of the everyday experience of social suffering of poor and marginalised people, now relatives, constituted for these Thais an exotic excursion, adventure, fun. Tourists eager for exotic pictures and experiences visiting impoverished Akha villages in Laos came to my mind.

Mali's mother: What do you eat in the village?

Amue: We eat many things. Similar to Thai people.

Mali's mother: [Turned towards me] Can you eat the food? [Before I could say anything

Amue jumped in with a smile on her face]

Amue: He eats everything. He really likes a dog.

Mali's mother: What? [shout together with the rest of the table]

Tomas: Yes, before I did not want to eat dog and I though it is disgusting but later I tried it and it tastes great. [this caused an excitement around the table]

Mali's mother: Well, when we go to visit your mother, we will buy tents to sleep in and we would also try a bit of the dog meat.

During dinner the sister left to pick up her daughter from the extra school and Mali spoke about the need for her Akha husband to accept her Thai family name since it would be humiliating to carry a chao khao last name.

The next day Amue has been very quiet and did not talk much. It was not difficult to see how sad she was. While we sat on the bus back to Chiang Rai, I asked her what was her feeling from the visit of Mali's family. Amue spoke about her concern that they would not really accept her younger brother. "Our family is poor. We are Akha. Thai people never accept us as we are. They will always look down on us. I told him [brother] that before but he said why should I care. Of course I care. I have always taken care of my younger brothers. You know that, right?" she said slowly with a sad voice.

Government policies surrounding the issue of mountain ethnic minorities created the discourse of chao khao which has been solidified by media and as I will show later, non-governmental organisations also contributed significantly. The media coverage of people from mountains presents the Akha basically in two ways. Since tourism with its request for 'authenticity' and 'traditions' represents a significant part of Thai economy, images of colorful Akha costumes are being used to promote this important sector of the economy. Besides these advertisements, images of 'hill tribe festivals' and 'traditional culture' present the mountain people as an exotic attraction, primitive people trapped in time. Chao khao are being positioned as the ultimate others, different from Thais. The second type of the media coverage on mountain ethnic minorities engages with illegal activities, showing highlanders as dangerous criminals most often in relation to drug or sex trafficking and environmental destruction. Such a discourse of chao khao has been deeply inculcated in the minds of the members of Thai society, be it people from lowlands or the highlands. The mundane, everyday practices involved in producing the discourse of chao khao separating the 'good' and 'bad' citizens, are being encouraged by the lowland Thai society as well as by the Akha governing of the self.

Akha in Thailand

The original homeland of the Akha people was Tibet, China but, in the past century and a half, the Akha people have, due to various political and economic forces, been involved in a continuing diasporization in the Asian region. The movement of the Akha into Thailand was a part of a long, slow process of migration out of Tibet moving southwards. The Akha live in a discontinuous belt of autonomous villages that stretch from Thailand up through Burma into Yunan, China and into northern Laos. The total Akha population has been estimated at 2.5 million persons counting also the related group called Hani. They live in a central part of the so-called 'Mekong Quadrangle' between 19 and 24 degrees North, 99 and 105 degrees East, an area of about 500 by 600 km or 30,000 square kilometers, somewhat the size of the European Alps. The area is crossed by several major rivers: the Mekong, the Red and Black Rivers, and the Salween, and their many tributaries which cut steep valleys, up to 2,500-3,000 meters above sea level. Of crucial contemporary significance, this border area abuts the territories of five modern nation-states. The total population of this region, including quickly growing industrial centres, is about 15-20 million (Geusau 2002).

Linguistically, Akha is one of a number of different Tibeto-Burman languages related to other mountain ethnic groups from the region – Lahu and Lisu; Lahu is considered the lingua franca of the multi-linguistic region and many different groups learn Lahu to communicate among the various groups but very few highlanders learn Akha language. There are a large number of different Akha dialects but many people in Thailand could also speak with Akha, for example, in China; It was often said that traditionally highland people had more in common with fellow members of their own ethnic group which might be thousand kilometers away than they had with people who were two hours walk down the mountain from them.

Akha society is a village society, knit together by a series of beliefs and practices which the Akha refer to as Akhazang. It is not only a set of what some might think of as religious beliefs but is actually a concept of how one should live; It contains concepts of justice and mechanisms by which inter-group disputes are mediated. Such effective methods of self-government had held the society together. There were movements of villages but also movements of people between villages, sometimes because of disputes within a village, sometimes due to overpopulation in a certain area out of need to expand into new lands.

It is believed that the Akha arrived in Thailand at some point during the last 200 years, as a consequence of wars and disturbances in neighboring countries. Their villages are to be found in the northern border province of Chiang Rai, but some have spread to Chiang Mai, Phrao, Phayao, and Lamphang Provinces (Tribal Research Institute, 1995: 52-9). Mountains that constitute approximately 35% of Thailand mainland and 65% of its northern 22 provinces, were relatively thinly populated up until the 1970s. The mountain peoples represented the majority. Since the defeat of Chiang Kai Chek in 1949, the northern Thai mountains have been inhabited by a number of Kuomintang refugees, known as Haw or Yunnanese Chinese refugees (Hanks 1975). Since the 1970s-80s poor Thai peasants have moved into the mountains looking for land. This demographic change found the ethnic minorities to constitute only 10% of the population in the mountains by the late 1980s (Geusau 2000), notwithstanding an influx of refugees from Burma. The official number of the Akha population in Thailand has been established at 58,000 (Tribal Research Institute 1995). Given the high number of non-registered Akha and large scale urbanisation, the total number is likely closer to 75,000 persons.

White God State

In the year 2008 on the way to Bangkok I met a representative of an international organisation while waiting for my boarding pass at the Chiang Rai international airport. He was not there, in the north of the country, for any mission related to his job but as he learned I was doing a research among NGOs he was immediately interested: "So what did you find?" Since I did not feel comfortable to discuss my research with a stranger, I said: "If you look around Chiang Rai it seems that there was a war or at least some environmental disaster. There are dozens of orphanages accommodating thousands of children". The man seemed confused so I continued: "But in reality, there was no war neither any environmental disaster", I added. "Why are there so many orphans then?" he asked. "Well, that is why I am here." We got our tickets and each of us went his own way.

Later, when I read Sampson's (2003) article "Trouble Spots": Projects, Bandits and State Fragmentation, I was able to understand the comparison to a post-war environment I provided the development consultant with in an entirely new light. To explain the ways by which the state is being undermined by international organizations and global forces, Sampson employs a concept of 'white-jeep state' in which white jeeps represent the icon of the international community and of development project society. These non-governmental actors often enjoy, according to Sampson, such an amount of power in and over the states in which they operate to be able to destabilize them. No matter no significant disaster took place in northern Thailand recently and cars of Christian organizations are usually not white. The fact there was no war in Chiang Rai recently makes it rather more interesting. What matters for the concept of State, according to Sampson, is sovereignty over territory, the ability to provide basic services, to impose order and to collect taxes. As will become clear through this thesis, Christian organizations operating in Chiang Rai got it all.

There are dozens of Christian aid organizations operating with a little control over their activities in Chiang Rai. Thai government does not keep track of the number of mountain children living behind the high walls of these institutions nor in fact was it even aware of the number of Homes operating in their country. During our meeting with the director of The Social Welfare Department in Chiang Rai I have learned there was no obligation for Homes to be registered. The state did not require an orphanage to register and many thus did not. As soon as she passed me a list of organizations operating in the province she noticed my surprise. Many of the Homes I knew were not mentioned. "Only those who enjoy the statute of foundation need to register with our office. In other words, anybody can house children. A church can have children and ask for money from abroad," the woman sitting in front of me patiently explained. "If you do not keep track of institutions taking children from villages it opens doors for a variety of abuses and exploitation," I shouted out with astonishment. "Foundations have to give us a report every year. Those which do not meet this regulation are subjected to a control". "What about all the others?" I was curious about the majority of the Homes in Chiang Rai that were not registered as foundations and thus absent from the government list. "Since we do not know about the rest there is no way to control them. However, if there is an accusation of an abuse the authorities investigate it", assured me the director. What I have learned that day about was the environment immune of state control in which Homes in Thailand operate. Although they impose control over thousands of ethnic minority children in their care and over the children's families in mountain villages, there is little supervision imposed on them by Thai state authorities.

According to Sampson, a part of the concept of a state is constituted by its territory. If one travels around Chiang Rai he often notices signs of different colors and sizes posted all over

the province. These signs are usually fastened in tree trunks or on electricity poles high enough to not be removed or destroyed. They bear short biblical messages either in Thai or English such as "Repent The Kingdom of God Is Near" or "After Death Judgment". Soon after I start to notice these signs I was caught by the incredible density with which they appear in the province. There are thousand of them. They are all over, in the city, in towns, in villages as well as in the countryside. They constitute the demarcation borders indicating the space under Christian governance. However, they have little to do with the official boundaries of the state as shown on maps or codified in treaties.

As is the case for many so-called states, their functions are, Sampson argues: "carried out in areas much more limited than the ostensible state boundaries." (2003: 332). The areas where Christian organisations' government is carried in its full force are mountain villages, mission headquarters, churches, Bible colleges and orphanages. There is a little need for an exertion to gain control over these territories. It is the state itself who gladly provides Christian groups with the floor.

Homes enjoy an incredible amount of freedom in northern Thailand with a little of state control. Authorities are happy that somebody takes care of the so-called 'hill tribe problem' and helps them assimilate ethnic minority groups from mountains into the lowland Thai society. Village communities comprise another space within the demarcated area where the Christian groups and individuals exercise control over lives of the inhabitants. Dominant feature of most Akha villages is a church (or two of them). Villagers know very well under which organisation one belongs and oftentimes one village would be separated by several organisations fighting not only against "evil forces from the darkness" but also against each other.

Let us for a moment believe that these signs, churches, Home compounds, cars and so on did not appear in the region through God's miracle but were manufactured and installed, build and bought by man as a result of a well coordinated projects. To run such projects there is a need for financial resources. These, similarly to taxes, have to be collected and used for governing. The money which come in a form of global donor subsidy are in most cases used to finance direct outreach in villages, production of Bibles, Hymn Books, Jesus Film and other necessities for successful religious conversions, church building and all the operations related to Children's Homes and Bible Colleges.

Finally, the concept of state brings the need for a government along the way. The discourse of humanitarianism penetrated every pore of contemporary Western society and became unspeakable part of national as well as transnational politics. What has emerged, Fassin argues, is humanitarian government at the global as well as the local level: "This is a government that defines itself through the introduction of morality into politics, in a so-called New World Order that appears to have succeeded the Realpolitik of the Cold War" (2007: 508). The carriers of humanitarian discourse are for the most part international and non-governmental organisations which were delegated often hardly controllable power of their conduct with little or no real accountability to the recipient of the aid as well as their donors. What has been actually constructed is a highly contradictory yet significant phenomenon - a non-governmental government.

It is in this sense that we might consider the province of Chiang Rai as a state under the government of Christian NGOs. This God led state has even got its own constitution (Bible),

symbol (cross), diplomatic representation, ministries and programs for development. The story I am going to tell is taking place in a state within a state - in a White God State.

'White god', as I employ the concept, is not a metaphor of any institutionalized form of religion. It is rather a wider concept by which I mean the whole blend of a capital driven market, a western values with their Christian roots and images and dreams it produces to govern and control people's conduct. As will come clear throughout the thesis, the concept also refers to the carriers of these values and ideas, to the Western development organisations.

Chao Khao and National Security

State authorities did not show much interest in the people from the mountains until the 1960s, mainly in connection with national as well as international interests and development. Most of the chao khao settlements were not even included in the Thai administration system until the first half of the 20th century (Sturgeon 1999: 54). Since 1960 when the Hill Tribe Welfare Committee was founded, mountain ethnic groups were repeatedly accused of forest destruction, opium production, drug trafficking and even of being a threat to state security. Gradually the frequency of these accusations increased and became part of mass media reporting and general knowledge for the majority of the Thai population. Lieutenant General Ruamsak Chaikomin, commander of the Third Army, reflected on the government's perspective: "Those destroying the nation are not those who illegally cut down 20 or 30 trees, but (rather) the hill tribes." Deputy Director General of the Royal Forestry Department Phairot Suvanakon went as far as to suggest how to solve this problem: "In order to truly end the problem of hill tribes, they must be forcibly sterilized, so that their numbers cannot increase. (...) Besides, we must try to assimilate them" (Kesmanee 1988: 2). The effort to

integrate members of the mountain ethnic groups included support of elementary schools and health care centers, as well as agricultural consultations (Pasuk/Baker 1997; Kunstadter 1967; Buergin 2000). The state's biopolitics were driven by the effort to secure the biological as well as mental needs of the population to arrange for its productivity.

At the time of the pre-modern state, political and economic centers were found in the densely populated valleys among wet rice cultivators and frontier people were those who cleared the land in areas peripheral to those centers, in the deep forests and inaccessible mountains (Akin 1996; Tambiah 1976). The ruling state was obliged to provide protection to its tributaries in return for their allegiance. According to Scott (2010), mountain people were looking for independence from the state. For these anarchists, as Scott labels them, the harsh, mountainous environment was redeemed by freedom from wars, taxes, serfdom or army enlistment.

Although mountain ethnic minorities were able to live outside the realm of the Siamese kingdom and enjoyed a relative independence at the edges of a superior power, they have never lived isolated. For most of their history, Akha people in Thailand have lived in villages that were autonomous, while simultaneously in contact with other ethnic groups. The average Akha man might speak five to six languages fluently even though they could rarely read or write in any of these. In truth, though, there was relatively limited contact with the lowland society. Forty years ago there was very little of the Thai state that reached up to the hills. Basically, people were able to live quite independently of the lowland state of which they were ostensibly a part.

According to Likhit Theerawekhin (1978), state consideration of ethnic highlanders was related to the first survey of 'hill tribes' by the Siam Society in 1920. It took another forty years before the discourse of 'hill tribes' was made official. The term 'hill tribes' (chao khao) received an official status in 1959 as a consequence of the newly formed Central Hill Tribe Committee. Shortly after, with financial support from international donors such as SEATO and UNESCO, a Tribal Research Center was founded in Chiang Mai to "provide a sound basis for the extension to the hill areas of educational and welfare services and measures for the economic improvement of the peoples of the areas. This policy also marked an initial step in the assimilation of the peripheral hill people into Thai culture" (Delang 2003:29). While chao khao literally means 'hill' or 'mountain people' the term also acts in binary opposition to the term 'chao rao' ('us people'). In this sense then the meaning is also 'those people' (Ibid.).

Delang provides an example drawing on a senior Border Patrol Police official's notion of the definition of 'chao khao' as recorded by Likhit Theerawekhin (1978): "[They are] minorities who have settled in the hill areas under 10,000 feet above sea level; having similar traditional customs, spoken languages, beliefs, occupations and habits among each other, sharing common administrative systems [with the Thai], but obviously distinct in terms of customs and spoken languages. And [they] believe in animism" (Delang 2003: 29). Delang rightly argues that the official discourse on 'hill tribes' created a category which does not consider any possible distinctions among different ethnic groups be it cultural or historical. As Kammerer points out, the Karen feel no affinity with hill people of the higher slopes since they, contrary to peoples like the Akha, inhabit lower altitudes (1989: 262). Nevertheless, all the groups have been put into the same gross ethnic category of 'highland tribes'.

Chao khao basically represent people of lesser value, wild primitives subordinated to the dominant Thais from the lowlands, causing a number of problems related to illicit drugs, national security and/or the natural environment. Thus, it was in the public interest to establish mechanisms for managing these problems. While being part of the state their socio-political position is being restricted by the dichotomy "them-us". This is being enacted, for example, by their limited access to official status of legal citizens. This deprives them of a number of rights related to citizenship. Thirty, forty years ago it did not matter since they were not dependent upon state services but right now if a people are not citizens they do not have any legal identity. It means for example that they cannot register a marriage, they can not work outside of their district without special permission, they can not get a school certificate, they are not allowed to participate in the public health system, and the list goes on.

As I have mentioned, forty years ago the state's scope of interests did not reach far up into the mountains. However, as some of the surrounding countries experienced unrest related to the extending influence of communism, the areas in question began to be politicized with regard to border areas inhabited by ethnic minorities such as the Akha. Borders were associated with national security and 'chao khao' were labeled as its threat: "A threat to national security is like a twin to opium production in that both issues serve as major preoccupations of the Hill Tribe Welfare Committee (HTWC)", writes Kesmanee (1994: 680).

As the self-appointed international surveillance world power, the United States together with their allies initiated the concern for the problem of national security. In 1956, shortly before the formation of the Hill Tribe Welfare Committee, the Committee for the Welfare of People in Remote Areas (CWPR) was formed. Three years prior to that, in 1953, the Border Patrol Police (BPP) was established and carried out the tasks set by the CWPR (Ibid.). The BPP

equipment as well as the funding were provided by the U.S. Operation Mission. Since Americans were concerned with Communist insurgency, they pressured the Thais to exercise control over "people in the remote and difficult areas" (Tapp 1990: 32, 70).

"While 'border' is associated with national security," writes Delang, "'elevation' has become the key to the country's ecological integrity. Cultural distinctiveness has been made problematic to the nation's imagined homogeneity" (2003: 31). Nationalism comprised the government's prime interest. The new name 'Thailand' which replaced the original 'Siam' was supposed to intensify the relationship between the land and the dominant ethnic group, the Thais. Nationalist propaganda together with centralized educational curriculum were the means to constitute a homogenized Thai citizenry. While the state, enclosed by its borders, attempts to accomplish a concept of a cultural homogeneity and national integration, it is repeatedly reminded by ethnic minorities from the mountains that the attempt was still not quite successful. Cultural differences thus become the signs of defiance and unlawfulness. As a result, assimilation policies have been put forward by the state to resolve ethnic and cultural dissimilarity. A number of international and bilateral agencies worked alongside those of the government.

Development, Aiding or Abetting?

"Do you see that mountain?" asked Api. "That is where we used to live. About twenty five years ago Thais came and told us to move. They told us we had to move down because our fields were in Burma," she continued. Often, when I joined Amue on her trip to the village where she was born and where her parents lived, we visited her neighbor, an older Akha woman in her fifties. Usually, we would arrive after most villagers had left for work and 'Api', as I called her [a term of address for an elder woman], would prepare a breakfast for

the three of us. We would sit on the bamboo floor around a low-set round bamboo table on which Api served bowls with different dishes and a shallow basket containing a high-quality mountain rice some Akha still grow. While she spoke about the history of the village I was slowly eating dog-meat leftovers from the previous days' dinner and freshly cooked chopped pork we had brought from Mae Chan, fried eggs and various leaves which we dipped in a delicious chilli sauce.

Api: [plainly] Shortly after we moved, Thai people from the town told us to leave. They did not want Akha to live here. Few weeks after our arrival there was a huge explosion in the village.

Tomas: What explosion? What are you talking about?

Api: Before we moved we had a big farm, we had animals and there was always enough food to eat. [I interrupted the old woman]

Tomas: Api, you said there was an explosion...

Api: After we moved here we had no fields to grow our food at. There was a little to eat here. Many people got sick. We could not find the Akha medicine here. Government people told us we had to buy a land. Every family had to buy a land. We paid for a land but we never received any documents. Now they want to take the land from us again. They say our fields are needed for a development project.

Tomas: Do you remember that? I asked Amue who sat next to me.

Amue: [slowly putting chop sticks holding rice into her mouth] I was at home preparing food for my brothers and parents who were on the way back from a farm. My dad's mother who lived with us was sick then. She was cooking and taking care of us in the old village but after we moved here she soon got sick and died. ... I remember I was very scared. People were

screaming. I stayed inside the house with my brothers and grandma until 'ama' and 'ada' returned home.

Api: On the way from our field back to the village I heard stunning noise. Bang! [draw her arms. Amue nodded in agreement.]

Tomas: What caused the explosion?

Api: Thai people did not want us to live here. They told us to go back to the mountains [said with a smile on her face that did not represent joy or happiness.]

Tomas: Thais did not want you here so they destroyed your village?

Api: Some people were scared and wanted to leave. Few families left to Burma. My husband said that he rather dies here than leaves. We had already prepared our field for sowing. So we stayed. [While recalling her memories she prepared some tea for us on an open fire in the corner of the room.] I am always happy when you come here. Usually, I eat breakfast alone. [...] When we moved here, Thais did not like us. We had many problems. One time police came and said that my husband stole some food in a store in the Thai village [pointing the direction towards a road]. They found a wrap near to our house. They said he has to go with them to town. They claimed it was just because of some formalities. It was the last time I saw him. They put him in jail. He has died there three years later. [taking a sip of a tea from a bamboo cup] Two years later I have got married again. My husband was very sick and died four years after our wedding. [...] My son is in jail now. He was arrested with yaba (methamphetamine) and sentenced to twenty five years. I was sad. Sad and mad. I am usually not sad and I am always happy when you come. But when you are here it is like if my son was here.

Api's narration of the history of the Meu Nga Akha Village reveals events which had fundamental significance for ethnic minorities that inhabit the mountains of northern

Thailand. State policies that mountain communities were exposed to ranged from bans on traditional farming methods deemed unsuitable by environmentalists and development experts, a strict ban on opium production, to restrictions on using agricultural land and often to involuntary relocations of entire villages. The decision-making process related to development policy and administration for ethnic highlanders has been influenced by external as well as internal concerns (Kesmanee 1994: 673). The idea of the integrity of the nation-state leads the Thai government to enforce strict assimilation policies in the mountains while pressure from the international community drove the government to eradicate opium and replace it with the cultivation of other cash crops. Internal resettlements, arrests, and forceful intimidation have become a standard part of the so-called 'hill tribes' discourse and as commonly accepted methods for solving the problems it was believed they caused.

Let The Primitives Be Developed

The history of development efforts in the hills of Thailand, many of them very well meant, have not been of overall benefit to most of the highland peoples. If we look at the contemporary social and economic situation of highland villages in Thailand, by most measures they were better off forty years ago. Although most people like the idea that they can have a motorbike, the demand for more material things to achieve the “good life” coupled with a real lack of economic opportunities have made the highland villages vulnerable to a variety of different types of exploitation.

Beginning in the 1960s and continuing into the mid-1990's, at least 22 government agencies supported by many international funders have been operating in the highlands of Thailand. International agencies supported primarily projects related to education, health, opium eradication and crop replacement. These included the Australian Development Assistance

Bureau (ADAB), the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO), Canada's International Development Research Center (IDRC), the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the Thai-German projects (GTZ), the Thai-Norwegian Projects and the World Bank. Besides this there have been many smaller foreign and Thai government related projects such as the Netherlands' Coffee project, the Japanese (JICA) Pine-Tree project and the 'Royal Projects' promoted by His Majesty the King and Queen of Thailand. During this period, many programs were implemented to develop the Thai highlands. Most of the government-related programs were operated through some of those 22 Thai government agencies having jurisdiction in the mountains, such as the Public Welfare Department, the Agriculture and Education Department, etc.

Since the 1980s the gap between the poor and a much smaller group of extremely wealthy people in the country has increased. At the beginning of the 21st Century, ten million out of a population of sixty million people in Thailand live below the "poverty-line" on an income of less than 1 US\$ a day, and most of those are to be found in the North including a majority of the mountain peoples²⁰. This means that most of highlanders have economically "de-developed" or rather grown impoverished in spite of all the development projects. It was thus somewhat ironic that by the mid-90's most foreign government related funding agencies withdrew from Thailand. At that time it was estimated that Thailand could not be considered a "developing country" anymore as the Per Capita Income seemed to have been 'appropriately' raised, while Laos, Cambodia and Burma seemed to lag behind.

²⁰ According to a United Nations report issued in 2000, Thailand has 9.8 million poor people, 5.8 million ultra poor people and 3.4 million almost poor people. The total figure is 19 million, or 29.9% of the population, and is concentrated in provinces along the borders in the West, North, and Northeast regions.

However, The United Nations Development Programme measures poverty in terms of access to basic social services such as health, education, employment, income, housing and environment, transport and communications. The status of women is also taken into measurement in any given region. By this yardstick, Thailand fairs much better with an "official" poverty figure of less than 5 %.

Eradicating Opium, Protecting the Western Child

A key issue for highland people has been pressure to eradicate opium. The roots of the concern for opium production go far beyond Thailand though. Opium had represented an important trade commodity since the 18th century and the profit it generated contributed greatly to the accumulation of capital in Western nations. At that time, opium dens were commonplace not only in Thailand but in other southeast Asian countries as well as in China. However, during the first U.N. meeting in 1946, Thailand was labeled as the only country in Southeast Asia with a government-controlled opium trade monopoly (Kesmanee 1994: 674). Shortly after, Thai government permitted opium growing only in the mountainous area of the north. Due to continuous outside pressures, in 1959 the Thai government officially outlawed the cultivation of opium; that same year, the Hill Tribe Welfare Committee was established (Kesmanee 1989: 65-66).

Since opium was the major source of cash income, its eradication disrupted the "economic equilibrium" of the mountain communities. During the 1960s, the government decided to provide other cash crops for them to grow (Kesmanee 1994: 674). This action served to create a groundbreaking transition in the local economy since "the rationale for cash-crop replacement right from the beginning has been based on capitalist ideology" (Kesmanee 1994: 675). Most of the highlanders were not yet engaged in commercial crop production and the cash earnings from opium were mainly used to buy rice. Opium eradication and cash-crops promotion soon became an important component of development programs in the highlands. Most of the large-scale projects funded either by other individual nations or by international agencies have been concentrated in opium-producing areas (Kesmanee 1989: 67-68; McKinnon 1989: 336-41; Tapp 1989: 32-33). As history has shown, those who benefited from

opium eradication were not the highlanders but rather foreign donors whose aid for highland development in Thailand was driven primarily by the concern to solve drug-related issues in their own countries, not those of another. "Aggressive 'Top-Down' development projects which think for people and assume that the experts know best can often come to decisions which, in the long run, endanger the wide variety of indigenous germplasm by replacing it with a few improved varieties," point out Chantaboon Sutthi (1989: 135).

The role of opium in highland societies is often very much misunderstood. Opium as a crop is rather difficult to grow - It takes much more labor input than upland rice (some say 80%) and the crop is lost once in every five years. So although it is not a terribly 'good' crop for the grower, it does allow for a good counterbalance to those years when the rice crop fails. First of all it acts as a natural currency. In other words the trade through the upland regions of South East Asia is underwritten by opium. It is a very effective drug for relief of diarrhea, asthma and pain in societies where there is very little access to modern medicine. Additionally, opium has been treated as a recreational drug, though one traditionally managed with restrictions and controls. For example, young people should not use opium. In fact, opium was appropriate only for elder men. A man became an elder officially at forty-four years of age. Opium was something that was only supposed to be used recreationally by elder men. There were also restrictions on its use by women in situations other than where it was used as a medicinal. It also was used socially for welcoming guests; very similarly to the way alcohol or tobacco is used for the same purpose in many other societies. There was and is opium abuse among highland people but the idea that everyone who smokes opium in a village is an opium addict is categorically false. The average morphine content of South East Asian opium, which is the main active ingredient, is about ten percent. That means that if someone smokes he is getting approximately one percent morphine content. It is quite

possible for people to smoke for an extended period of time without becoming addicted. Many people imagine the picture of, for instance, Chinese opium addicts; but they were smoking a kind of 'prepared opium', which had nearly double the morphine content. It is like the difference between having a glass of beer compared with the same of hard alcohol (Information based on interview with David Feingold, UNESCO Bangkok 09/2005).

With the movement away from opium production people were pushed from consuming opium to consuming heroin; as a result of the eradication of opium-growing, heroin became cheaper - not in absolute terms but rather in relative terms - than opium. Since people were generally poverty stricken it pushed them towards more efficient modes of administration, i.e. into needle use. This was also to a great extent responsible for the spread of AIDS not only in the highlands but also in the lowlands. HIV/AIDS started in Thailand as a primarily IV drug-related epidemic which transitioned into a sexually-related epidemic (Ibid.). Geusau observed an increase in drug use in the early 1990's, particularly in the highland communities that were more exposed to development activities (1990: 21). So there was a temporary effect in terms of drug consumption, which later moved the opposite direction. There also occurred significant human rights violations related to anti-drug policies in Thailand.

In the year 2003 Thai government initiated the so-called 'War on Drugs', ostensibly engaged due to the fear of an 'amphetamine epidemic'. One by-product of this was a large number of extrajudicial killings. According to official estimation, approximately 3,000 people were killed during a three-month period without trial (February to April of 2003). The crackdown saw rampant human rights violations, including government promotion of violence against drug suspects, extrajudicial executions, blacklisting of drug suspects without due process,

intimidation of human rights defenders, violence and other breaches of due process by the Royal Thai Police (Human Rights Watch 2004).

From Shifting Cultivation to Shifting the Cultivator

Akha similar to other ethnic groups in the mountains were traditionally swidden agriculturalists. They cut down the forest, burned down the smaller trees and planted their crops. Then they worked a rotation system. Unfortunately for highland people this kind of 'shifting cultivation', sometimes termed 'slash and burn agriculture', has been largely misunderstood by the government, environmentalists, development workers as well as by many researchers and the public. Following such misunderstandings, shifting cultivation happened to be associated with deforestation and deteriorating climatic conditions. In truth though, highlanders had been using this agricultural technique successfully for thousands of years. They would start in one place, plant and if it was, for example, rice they could grow rice for about three years. Then it would take them approximately ten years to get back to that field by which time the field had regenerated (Kunstadter 1980: 4-6, 15-16). According to Kesmanee, "the cycle clearly creates a balance between soil condition, crops, geology, and climate in an area" (Kesmanee 1994: 678; Kesmanee 1988: 29). Peter Kunstadter argues for the positive environmental impact: "If efficiency is measured in terms of the ratio of food calories produced per unit of human energy expended, the Lua' [field rotation] system was not efficient, but the Lua' system was very effective in terms of long-term stability." (1980:6).

In spite of the widely accepted discourse blaming chao khao for deforestation, empirical data tell a rather different story. At the time when King Rama V introduced the modernization policies and opened the kingdom to the West in 1850, most of the country was covered by forest. Kesmanee (1994) argues that it was the modernization related to a more efficient

transport system (especially the railway) that brought a change that resulted in the deforestation of the central lowlands. Forests on the fringe of the broad plains to the east and northeast were rapidly cleared after World War II. McKinnon points out that the lowest rate of forest destruction was actually found in the north (1989: 316-18). "Because of the hill tribes, the Northern region has more forests left than the other regions," writes Kesmanee (1988: 33). In short, the destruction of the forests in the mountains of northern Thailand has not been due to traditional agriculture but rather because of commercial logging. Now it is against the law in Thailand to cut down most trees but essentially that prohibition took place after most of the trees were already harvested.

Nevertheless, shifting cultivation became one of the issues related to the so-called 'hill tribe problem' and a number of government as well as bilateral and non-governmental projects were engaged to combat the 'problem'. With the aim to stop slash-and-burn, or shifting cultivation in mind, sedentary agriculture was promoted. The fact that the mountainous topography of the north has limited irrigable land and that there was not enough suitable land available to develop, let alone to support the entire highland population, was not a part of the consideration.

Then there came the idea to resettle the highland villages to the lowlands. In theory, this policy could solve a number of problems related to 'hilltribes', not only the problems related to traditional farming and environmental degradation. By relocating mountain people to the lowlands where the reach of the state was not compromised by problematic infrastructure, authorities gained much improved control over the highlanders to pursue their desired assimilation with ease. As opined by Api, the elder Akha woman mentioned earlier, the authorities forgot to take the lack of arable land into consideration. This fact is reflected by

the increasing number of people from lowlands moving up into the hills in a search of unoccupied, cultivable land. When the highlanders came to the lowland there was not enough land available and what they acquired was often hardly cultivatable. These poor farmers, deprived of their economic security, faced a number of other problems upon their arrival to the lowlands. Apart from the lack of food, they experienced gastrointestinal health issues related to water which was of lower quality than that which they were used to in the mountains; now they had to contend with parasites and malaria. These caused a rapid increase in mortality among the relocated highlander population, especially among children and elders. As already mentioned above, Amue's grandmother was one of the victims.

Separating Connections

The endeavor of Thai government to gain control over 'hill tribes' (meaning space, place and people) was followed, as I have explained, by a number of projects and policies. Be it opium eradication, bans on traditional farming or land-use related policies, all had a major impact on the lives of mountain ethnic minorities upon driving them into the market economy. This social and economic transformation offered mountain people limited resources and few avenues to 'integration' and thus little chance to succeed in the market of 'free competition' into which they had been thrust. One of the important projects related to the development of highland communities was related to the expansion of roads into the hills.

From an economic and development point of view, road-building is reasonable. According to a number of studies, geographical marginalization does not allow for sufficient services for its high costs from remote administrative centers and thus contributes into the standards of poverty (e.g. Mason 1996, van de Walle 1996, ADB (Lao PDR 2001) and World Food Programme 1999). Roads enable the state to provide remote communities with its institutions

and services such as health or education. Roads also offer the chance to integrate the isolated population into the mainstream thus allowing them access to the opportunities and advantages enjoyed by people in the lowlands. They also connect the remote areas with non-governmental and private initiatives, be they business or humanitarian enterprises.

The role of this state led development initiative is, however, much more complex. As the control of the frontier became a higher priority of the state, roads were "a central means of exerting their authority over remote and marginal regions and their populations" (Rigg 2003: 208). The services that the state delivered were related to the ban on shifting cultivation and opium eradication. To use Scott (1999), the roads as a state's virility became the instrument to control people and space. Road construction also connected the highlands to the lowland market economy.

Advocates of the free market as a solution to poverty view the poor and their poverty through the lens of *rational choice theory* - the poor themselves are the best judges of what is in their best interests and make such choices that increase their economic welfare. "Yet these advocates", points out Karnani, "do not acknowledge that the poor lack the education, information, and other economic, cultural, and social capital that would allow them to take advantage of - and shield themselves against - the vagaries of the free market" (2009:40). Generally, neoliberals do not recognize structures, backgrounds and experiences that affect and shape desires, decision-making and actions.

No matter how we look at it, whether from the point of view that highland people were able to participate in markets and trade in the lowlands or that the lowland market could reach the upland communities, these relationships created winners and losers. The winners, for the most

part, were outsiders who gained new opportunities through access to the enlarged markets in the mountains. Unequal positions of power between the businessmen and highlanders contributed to deepening of mountain people's poverty. It was the roads what brought the end of subsistence shifting cultivation and subsequent encouragement of cash crops that marked the beginning of capitalist neoliberalism in the mountain regions. This development also had an immense impact on social and cultural changes (Rigg 2004: 209).

As Dearden points out, the road network had "probably done more to change the landscape of the North and the mindscape of its inhabitants than any other single factor" (1995: 118). New products, ideas and lifestyles to which the highlanders were exposed brought also new 'needs' and these needs influenced newfound desires. Nevertheless, neither the desires nor the needs were truly satisfied. Paradoxically, the construction of roads, although justified by the connecting of people, places and spaces, led to an even deeper separation between the center and periphery. And since the government, in the 'Foucaultian' understanding of the term, represents strategies to minimize inequalities of its citizens, this historical moment serves as an another example of the marginal position chao khao inhabit in Thai society; The state did not set up any regulatory system to protect the ethnic minority people from the market and the capital. At the same time, roads were an excellent technology to assimilate highlanders into Thai society. The Market coupled with other technologies of governmentality such as media and education were the ways in which the state invested into the quality of its population's lives as a potential productive workforce.

6. From The Darkness to The Light: Imagining The Christian Orphanage

The exterior area of New Life Children's Home was slowly getting crowded with people of different nationalities, ages and histories all connected by their interest in this faith-based development organisation. New Life was celebrating its 15th anniversary of existence and operation. Guests were standing in small groups talking. Each of the groups ostensibly represented particular sets of interests and motives in attending. As far as I could see the bearers of these various interests and motives did not mix with each other. Missionaries were conversing loudly with hardy laughter, Thai government officials were standing off to the side carrying on a quiet conversation, children were running around or standing next to some members of the Christian teams and other overseas donors who looked insecure with awkward smiles on their faces. The Home's director, an American missionary named John, was nervously observing New Life's staff making the final preparations for the celebration while exchanging friendly greetings with important guests. The attention of the media was captured by a small group of mountain parents in traditional Akha costume.

Finally, doors were opened and guests welcomed and invited into a building in the center of the compound which usually served as a church and a meeting point for daily lectures on Bible studies. The whole interior was newly painted and decorated with pictures capturing moments of the Home's history. I was a bit surprised that I knew most of the children in the pictures and realized that I had been a part of its history as well. People sat on chairs covered with fancy white covers in an order which once again divided people into the same groups they had arrived in. Government representatives and significant donors sat in the front, Akha parents in the back and the rest in between. The front wall was decorated with a large wooden

cross and embroidered canvas with the slogan "15th New Life Children's Home Anniversary".

The Ceremony started with singing and prayers followed by several speakers.

The First speaker was a government representative who eagerly thanked the management of the New Life for the great work done on behalf of the poor. He continued by hailing the great effort the Thai government invests in assisting mountain people in their education and development and eagerly emphasized the need for close cooperation between the government and the Home. A member of New Life's administrative board pointed out the great work this faith-based organisation was doing on behalf of the needy and emphasized there is no future for poor children from the mountains if they are not given a chance by New Life to attend school and live in a secure environment such as the one the Home offers to its children. One of the Home's children, a teenage girl named Nalee, the best student of her class, stood up behind one of the microphones, emphasized the great opportunity to study New Life provides its children with, expressed her thanks to the Home and Thai Kingdom and promised to be good student, Christian and citizen.

The last speech was given by John who founded the organisation:

" [...] You and I have the responsibility to the world around us. All over the world groups of people, especially children are exposed in different ways. [...] Most of the children we were able to take into our home are orphans and high-risk situation children. Parents of some are drug addicts with little interest in their own children. Others have seen their parents dying or being taken to prison. Some of them were even sold by their own parents. From the very moment we were blessed to open this home we were able to save many children's lives. Apart from love and care which they never got to know in their own homes and families they have

the opportunity to study. That will provide them with a good future. If there would not be New Life our children would not have a chance to receive an education. [...]"

During his speech John provided the audience with an excellent self-definition of 'humanitarian governmentality'. It was all there - formation of a new man through the reform of his history, heart and body. This all topped off with the highest indicator of an effective member of society - the schooling. While the missionary was speaking with grief in his voice describing the children's unfortunate experiences I was observing people in the audience. Some of the older western women were drying their tears with handkerchiefs, Thais in the first rows were sitting still while missionaries behind them were nodding their heads in agreement, and the Akha parents were sitting quietly at the back. Since most of the talks were given in English and the rest in Thai with an English speaking translator, these mountain parents had no idea what was being said. While they were being represented as evil monsters who trade their children for a television, as drug addicts and criminals with a lack of interest in their own children, they were feeling pride that they could provide them with a good future. There was nothing better they could do for their children than to place them into a Christian Home in a city, they believed. I was sitting at the very end of the auditorium to better observe the surroundings. It was then, during the director's talk, I came to understand that each of the above mentioned group's imagination of this project, even though highly contradictory, were creating a synergy which allowed the Home to exist and be successful.

According to Mosse (2004), a development project cannot proclaim its own reality that can only be contingent through outside judgments. A project does not exist independent of our (expert) opinion (Latour 1996: 76). A project's reality has to be determined through the interpretative work of experts. "When authorised observers - reviewers, evaluators - construct

stories that affirm that a project has genuine participants, functioning programmes, has been implemented on schedule, is sustainable, replicable or has achieved an impact, it acquires reality," argues Mosse (2005: 157). However, as Phillips and Edwards (2000) emphasize, there are no objective meters here, only interpretations, only more or less acceptable stories which are always means to particular ends - a project's success or failure.

The New Life anniversary allowed me to realize how diverse the imagination related to the Home's operation, hold by various parties present at the celebration, was. I will argue that through the synergy of these often conflicting imaginaries, any possible success of the project could have been created and defined. Simply, each of these groups longs for something even though their desires might be largely distinct. However, these diverse desires and needs, as I will show, feed each other to create a discourse which allows the project to flourish. These are of course "ideal types" and while it is arguable that they represent apt models, I strongly believe the picture I provide is quite accurate and represents a general understanding hold by the various parties involved in the existence of Christian Children's Homes in northern Thailand. Drawing on Sneath, Holbraad and Pedersen (2009) I do not attempt to scrutinize the imagination in theoretical or abstract terms but rather tangibly as an ethnographic object. The aim is thus not to develop a general, theoretical account of imagination but to analyze its concrete forms.

Education, Dreaming the Pipe Dream

According to governments, international organizations, NGOs and many others, education is "a prerequisite to building a food-secure world, reducing poverty and conserving and enhancing natural resources" (FAO 2002: 8). It is also, according to some others, a technology for assimilation of minorities and the reproduction of social inequalities. Up until the nineties,

school education was very limited for highland children in northern Thailand. The role of the 'teacher' in most villages was enacted by members of the Thai Border patrol police. The quality of education was low and children often did not learn Thai even after several years of schooling. According to Lewis, there were few opportunities for a school education available to Akha children in the mid-1970s. Border police founded schools in four villages where classes were held four to five days a month. Thirteen Akha out of 466 students had a chance to study at a boarding school for social care in Mae Chan. A Catholic school, Santi Witayalai Academy north of Chiang Rai enrolled thirty children from mountain minorities of which twelve were Akha. There was also the Boarding school, United Village School, in Namlat, founded by Baptists, where twenty Akha children studied (Lewis 1975). Radical change came in the second half of the nineties. The Government undertook new policies towards education while the newly developed geopolitical situation drew non-governmental organizations, which emerged in numbers northern Thailand have never experienced before. The vast majority of organizations working with mountain ethnic minorities were developed and motivated by members of various denominations of the Christian faith.

"Christian projects are very important. The homes help poor children from the mountains to get education in a city," said a high government official while pointing his arm towards the hills. We were sitting in an office of the Chiang Rai Social Development Centre 12 on Doi Mae Salong Road²¹ and talked about Children's Homes operated by Christian organisations and individuals from Europe, the United States and several Asian Countries such as China, Japan, Taiwan and Singapore. I had been hearing similar answers from most government officials I had communicated with over the years. "Aren't you worried about the religious influence of Christian missionaries?" I questioned. "No. Thailand is open to any religion. We

²¹ Pa Sang Sub-district, Mae Chan district, Chiang Rai province.

consider these projects to be very important. We accept them as our partners. We do not care whether they are Christians or Buddhists. We all are here to help the poor hill tribe people," answered the official convincingly.

Under the influence of the international community (see UNCRC adoption), among others, in the 1990s education in Thailand, encouraged by the economic crisis of 1997, became one of the government's priorities. Construction of schools even in the most remote areas of the country soon became an integral part of the key development efforts of government agencies. The major milestones include the adoption of the Education For All Act in 1990, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1992 and the Education Act of 1999. In connection with the Constitution from 1997 and the so-called Education Act, the Thai government decided to initiate education reforms with the aim to develop Thailand into an educated society as a prerequisite to the 'knowledge economy'. The reforms were supposed to provide the Thai public with equal access to life-long education and training which allowed for gaining the knowledge and capital needed for generating income for the country to gradually rise above its protracted economic and social 'crisis'. With this aim in mind, the government followed the principle "Education builds the nation, strengthens the individual and creates jobs." (<http://www.mfa.go.th/web/17.php>, August 2, 2010).

At that time the majority of Thai people had long understood the importance of education for their children. During the 1960s the number of students of tertiary level rose from 15,000 at the beginning of the decade to 55,000 by the end of 1970. Since then the increase has skyrocketed with almost 600,000 students attending colleges and universities by 1990. It is important to include also a smaller but very important elite group of individuals studying abroad, estimated at approximately 8,000 people in mid-1990s (Mulder 1998: 16).

However, among some parents from the mountains, distrust of formal education persisted. To overcome this barrier, government officials organized meetings with village chieftains where education was presented as a panacea to all the social and economic problems poor mountaineers had to face. The discourse that surrounded and influenced these communications is expressed by the idea: "The understanding that education can secure safer, healthier, more successful and environmentally fair world, at the same time contributing to the social, economic, and cultural progress, tolerance and international cooperation" (World Conference on Education for All, 1990). Village leaders consequently explained to the inhabitants of their villages that school education could secure better futures for their children. However, financial and material limits did not allow the government to maintain schools in some remote areas of the country throughout the 90s. When Children's Homes began to emerge in Northern Thailand at that time, government officials welcomed Christian aid workers and missionaries as partners in their struggle to educate and assimilate the chao khao.

All of the Akha villages in Chiang Rai I have visited over the last twelve years have had access to primary school education. Usually the school would be closer than the distance most students in the West have to walk. In the case there were no schools within walking distance, there was a boarding school provided by the state where children stayed from Monday to Friday. Weekends and vacations they spent with their families.

During nearly any meeting I had with Thai government officials of different rank and position, at different offices and departments, be it for social issues, children or education, be it in Bangkok or Chiang Rai, I would receive similar answers - NGOs are important partners to the government's endeavors to develop the highlanders and provide education to their

children. For a long time I have believed that if there is any truly homogenous group in contemporary society today, that group is the one composed entirely of Thai government officials.

In the fall of 2009 I visited the director of the government office for education in Chiang Rai. As this experience shows, the imaginations of Thai government officials as described towards the homes as partners should not be perceived as homogenous. As Sneath, Holbraad and Pedersen (2009) would have it, conditions engendering imagination are neither deterministic nor teleological. During our long conversation I realised that the relationship between state representatives and NGOs is not as clear-cut as it seemed.

Tomas: As you say, the government established schools in villages. However, NGOs take children from the villages to their Homes. Isn't it a waste of government money?

Director: Are you from some organisation?

Tomas: No, no, no. I am not. I do PhD research.

Director: It is all just propaganda! [upset voice] They just come to take children to build a new Home. For example, we have a problem in Muang Kan Luang village now. The school will have to be closed due to lack of students. The children are in Homes in Chiang Rai.

Tomas: You say these NGOs take children from the schools the government builds in villages?

Director: Yes. That is absolutely correct. They take children from our schools.

Although this ethnographic moment offered me with a wholly new perception on the relationship between the government representatives and Children's Homes, the understanding of the director was rather exceptional. It changes a little on the fact that Children's Homes are

being perceived by government officials as partners. By providing children with education they assist the government to develop the chao khao and to accomplish its international obligations such as, for example, the UNCRC. As I will explain in the following chapter, missionaries' motivation to come to Thailand and operate Homes for mountain children was driven by entirely distinct imaginations.

Saving the Children, Saving The Souls

While I sat in a comfortable chair under the marquise shading a large area of spacious terrace, John, the New Life Children's Home director, was preparing a coffee for the two of us in the kitchen. The elevated position of the terrace offered a good view over the area of the Home's compound that was separated by high concrete wall from the surrounding area. The house for boys was on the right side of the estate, same as the one girls lived in, kitchen and dining hall in between. The church building was oriented in the center of the area while sport field in the far left. House for special guests stood right next to the John's one. Similarly to his house, it also had a spacious terrace that offered a good view over the whole compound and its residents, be it the staff or children. The space of the compound was carefully maintained. Shortly cut grass, gorgeous flowers of various colors and shapes, pond with goldfishes and a number of healthy coconut and palm trees. One could notice immediately that New Life was financially quite secured project. As many other Children's Homes in Chiang Rai, New Life represented success, wealth and power not just to me but especially to Thais, mountain parents as well as to their children. It did not take long and John returned with two mugs of coffee which he placed on a small white plastic table separating the distance between our chairs. John was quite a handsome man in his forties, with a shortly cut dark hair and meticulously shaven mustache. As usually, he was well dressed. Similarly to the project he

has founded, his khaki pants, Oxford shoes and long sleeve shirt tucked into his pants emanated the image of success and material sufficiency.

The first time John came to Thailand he was forty seven years old office worker from Texas. According to his narration his life was a roller coaster. In his early thirties he made a fortune on an illegal sport betting. Soon he wasted all the money on alcohol, drugs and women to find himself, according to his narrative, on the very bottom, living on streets. It was Jesus, the son of God, who showed him the light. "If I wasn't obedient and did not let the Lord to guide my ways, I would end up bad," said confidently. Later, John became an active member of his home church.

John: One day, a missionary serving in Zimbabwe visited our church. I was fascinated by his story, by the sacrifice he took to reach the needy and share the gospel with them. I could not imagine myself doing something similar at that time but the idea to serve the Lord in a poor country was breathtaking. It took some more time before I realized that God had a plan prepared for me.

For Christian aid workers and missionaries I met in Chiang Rai, the initial motivator of respective decisions to come to Thailand was most often the idea to obey a spiritual calling by Lord. That was also the case for John. The orientation on children in their development endeavors was a direct consequence of their faith. "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world," reads James 1:27 as many other scriptures considering orphans and calling Christian into the field, no less than the innumerable passages appealing on serving the poor.

John: For about four years I felt the Lord was calling me into this missionary field but I felt uncomfortable about that. I couldn't believe that God was calling me to be going to the field to work as a missionary but when I finally put aside all the reasons why I should not, I went to a missionary training school. At that time I did not know I was going to be working with children. In the next phase of my outreach after the school, I came to Chiang Rai and worked at an orphanage and I did my outreach up to the mountains, north of here about 50 kilometers. And it was in one of the villages that I felt I would be called back into this region to help.

Tomas: John, you founded this Home with the idea to help the highland children, right? How does development and Christianity go together?

John: You know, they are haunted by all the spirits they believe in. They believe in so many things. [smiling with disgust] They live in fear. [serious look] They really need to know the gospel, the love of Christ. It is the evil culture and religion what creates all the problems. Why do you think the Akha sell their children while the Shans don't?

Tomas: Are you saying the gospel can solve the problem of poverty?

John: Yes, as they are enlightened with the gospel and they are taken out of the grief of the fear of this and that, their world outlook will be different. And definitely, as they know the gospel along with that they will improve, I believe. Without the gospel, they would not have enough power and will to resist all the evil spirits by whom they have been imprisoned in the poverty. They need a help of the Lord Jesus to fight and win the final battle with these dark forces.

John, similarly to many other Christian aid workers in Chiang Rai, proceeded the economic development work from ideas of salvation, redemption, rationality, economic progress and the neoliberal notion of individualism with regards to a relation with God. One would almost

believe, they were drawing upon the Weber's classical work on Calvinism, Protestantism and the birth of capitalist practices, *The Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism* (2002 [1920]). However, as I am going to show, the ideological sources behind their world views and practice were slightly different.

A great number of missionaries attended preparatory courses before they left their home countries. One of the training courses known worldwide is the Discipleship Training School (DTS) operated by a Christian organisation Youth With A Mission (YWAM). According to the promotional material, "[DTS] is designed to help you understand God more deeply, live more like Jesus and identify your unique gifts and purpose to use in missions. DTS is a full-time, residential training course which begins with an 11 or 12 week classroom phase, followed by an 8-12 week outreach time. The DTS emphasizes cross-cultural exposure and global awareness, preparing students to answer the call to 'Go into all the world and make disciples of all nations' (Matthew 28:19)" (<http://www.ywam.org/Training>; 01/09/12).

YWAM publications clearly demonstrate the aim and discourse of its education. During missionary preparation training students get familiar with the AD2000 and Beyond Movement, the concept of the 10/40 Window as well as with the Christian teachings concerning an ongoing spiritual warfare in the larger world. According to the movement's website, "the AD2000 & Beyond Movement seeks to encourage cooperation in establishing a church within every unreached people group and making the gospel available to every person by the year 2000. Ralph Winter, founder of the U.S. Center for World Mission, calls the AD2000 & Beyond Movement "the largest, most pervasive global evangelical network ever to exist." Patrick Johnstone, author of the book *Operation World*, writes, "I believe that God has given us the best opportunity in all history to gain a wide level of support among Christians

committed to world evangelization in the AD2000 vision" (<http://www.ad2000.org/ad2kbroc.htm>, 29/03/2012). The 10/40 Window, a region first identified by the Movement's International Director, Luis Bush, is described as "the rectangular area of North Africa, the Middle East and Asia between 10 degrees north and 40 degrees north latitude where 95 percent of the world's least-evangelized poor are found. The AD2000 prayer initiatives called "Praying Through the Window" have mobilized over 30 million intercessors to pray for the 10/40 Window over several years" (<http://www.ad2000.org/ad2kbroc.htm>). Bush further explains:

Why do committed Christians need to focus on the 10/40 Window? Because it is a stronghold of Satan. The people living in the 10/40 Window have suffered not only hunger and a lower quality of life compared with the rest of humanity, but have also been kept from the transforming, life-giving, community-changing power of the gospel. The Scripture makes it clear from the writings of Paul the apostle that "the god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God (2 Corinthians 4:4). In the same letter, the apostle writes in 10:3-4: "For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds." It appears from a careful observation of the 10/40 Window that Satan has established a territorial stronghold with his forces to restrain the advance of the gospel in that territory. We need to significantly increase our efforts in this decade to reach those who are in the 10/40 Window. If we are to be faithful to Scripture and obedient to the mandate of Christ, if we are to see the establishment of a mission-minded church-planting movement within every unreached people and city by A.D. 2000, if we are to give all peoples a valid opportunity to experience the love, truth, and saving power of Jesus Christ, we must get down to the core of

the unreached - the 10/40 Window (Bush 1995:15, <http://www.tumi.org/migration/images/stories/pdf/lga/docs/WHATIS10.pdf>)

Images constructed through such a discourse in conjunction with deep inner experience of God's calling, reinforced John's intentions to leave his home country and travel to far away Thailand. An orphanage represents an excellent means to fulfill these religious duties: "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6). However, to be a good missionary and fulfill the demands of spiritual warfare one first needs a Thai visa, funding and safety. A Home for poor children provided all these necessities.

John: When I first came here I thought 'oh we need to make power-point presentations, pamphlets and brochures, web-pages and everything else.' And for the most part they were a waste of money. And going back to the belief that God is going to sustain, provide for us. We haven't made brochures and pamphlets and DVD presentations for four, five years. And slowly, by word of mouth our name has become known, more people have visited. Look around now. Everything has been provided for us and we haven't advertised. We do no advertising at all. God provides the money at his timing. God's gonna provide that money that we need to sustain this Home, this whole project and everything along with what goes with it.

New Life has been founded in the 1995 as one of the first Homes in Chiang Rai. Since the mid-1990s Christian NGOs together with orphanages slowly began to appear in Northern Thailand in growing numbers. Over the years, dozens of Christian children's homes have been founded, enabling Akha children and other mountain ethnic minority groups to live in an urban environment and to obtain education at state schools. The second half of 90s was the right moment for John and other Christian Missionaries to open a Home for mountain

children in northern Thailand. (1) The Thai government adopted new policies towards education and schooling, (2) non-governmental organisations came to be significant players in international and regional development, (3) faith was accepted as an important component of international aid by donors and governments, (4) the concept of chao khao as a problem has constituted a public discourse that needed to be solved, (5) coupled with a global Evangelistic movements such as the AD2000 & Beyond whose aim was to provide "Church for Every People and the Gospel for Every Person by the Year 2000" (<http://www.ad2000.org/tut0701t.htm>). These five moments had a significant impact on the structure of international aid not only in northern Thailand or Southeast Asia. Similar variables affected the development of international aid and humanitarianism across the globe.

Riding on the Wave: Chao Khao Discourse and Humanitarianism

The image of mountain people as drug abusers and traffickers supported by the government constituted a part of the chao khao discourse since the 1970s. With the arrival of NGOs and Children's Homes in Chiang Rai the discourse was extended by a stereotype representing mountain ethnic minority parents as HIV positive drug smugglers and abusers with no interest in their children. According to common story one could hear in Chiang Rai, Christian organizations arrived to save high-risk situation children from mountain villages. In such scenarios, mountain parents turn into evil monsters selling their own children to support their drug habits.

"It is horrible that hilltribe parents sell their children into prostitution", told me John while we sat in front of New Life's dining hall, observing children eating their dinner. As usually, the dinner was composed of Thai style stir fried vegetable, curry and rice. "Really?", I asked while watching dozens of pairs of children's shoes lying on the ground in front of the dining

hall. "It's all because of their religion. Only the Karen are the exception. They do not sell their children", explained John while pointing to the fact that most of the Karen people in Thailand accepted Christianity longtime ago with a little effort from missionaries. Akha, on the other side, resisted Christianity until quite recently (Kammerer 1990). "What role does poverty play in this scenario?", I was curious about John's explanation. "Poverty is just a trigger. The reason is religion", he made the point.

Since children, poverty, HIV/AIDS, drugs, human trafficking and education represent top interests of development aid and because the media pick up on these humanitarian topics, sponsors are willing to support projects that seem to fit this over-all image. By confirming and supporting these stereotypical views through the marketing of projects, missionaries become the main creators of knowledge about mountain people, their lives and problems for their donors, media and sometimes for governmental and international organisations.

Contrary to the public discourse, anthropological research has shown highly distinct data: "After five years of research, supported by the United Nations (through UNESCO), Feingold concluded that there was little truth in this scenario," writes Silverman for the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State (Silverman 2003; <http://www.america.gov/st/washfile-english/2003/September/20030911115501namrevlisv0.2781031.html>; 12/20/11).

In a study *The Hell of Good Intentions* Feingold writes: "The mythic narrative of narcotics and sexual degradation (and like many mythic narratives, it embodies elements of 'reality') can be read in newspapers, quoted from NGO reports, or seen on TV: "Miba, innocent and simple hill tribe girl from the 'colorful' Akha tribe is rescued from a brothel (often by the BBC, CH-4, ABC,

or "60 Minutes" film crew.) She has been sold by her father, who is an unrepentant heroin addict. Desperate for money to feed his vile habit, but not, the implication goes, desperate enough to work for it; he supposedly sees his daughters as a crop to be harvested when they are ripe." There frequently follows a learned interview that calls for the reform of patriarchal societies and explains that "Asian Cultures" (all of them!) have always devalued daughters, which was why Miba was sold in the first place. The piece generally closes with hope for a new life for Miba, thanks to the sewing skills that she has been taught -- preferably, for a Western TV audience, by nuns, missionaries, or fresh-faced NGOs. Lest we become complacent, however, a sober male or compassionate female voice reminds us -- over shots of happy girl children -- of "...all the other Mibas....." awaiting the sweaty embraces of panting pedophiles from Peterborough or their American equivalents" (1997: 1).

Mosse, based on his research of the 'flagship' project of a British aid program in rural India in the 1990s, argues that the success of a project depends upon establishing a compelling interpretation of events, sustaining this as a key representation and enrolling a wider network of supporters and their agendas (2004: 158). Even though the reality does not match the discourse surrounding life in the mountains, dozens of projects were developed to rescue mountain children from non-existent threats and situations while separating them from their own families and communities.

According to Ferguson, "'development' institutions generate their own form of discourse, and this discourse simultaneously constructs [...] a particular kind of object of knowledge, and creates a structure of knowledge around that object. Interventions are then organized on the basis of this structure of knowledge, which, while 'failing' on their own terms, nonetheless have regular effects, which include the expansion and entrenchment of bureaucratic state

power..." (1994: xiv-xv). While Christian NGOs seek to implement their projects and operate orphanages, they rationalize and encourage the chao khao discourse originally created by the state. In fact the image of Akha as drug addicts, HIV infected prostitutes and/or bad parents justifies projects and activities these NGOs present to global donors, government officials and wider Thai society. If there were no problems related to chao khao, no organizations would get engaged, some might believe. Since there are dozens of organizations working on the 'chao khao problem', the logic continues, the public is being repeatedly reassured about the serious state of affairs. Information being provided to donors and media by Christian NGOs thus endorse the discourse of 'chao khao problem'. This deepens the negative attitude towards the highlanders and assures their marginal position within the lowland society.

Invisible Knowledge Producers

Although the most prominent voice might belong to missionaries, it is not only they who hold the 'steering wheel' of the project. While producing 'knowledge' about the situations, lives and cultures of mountain people, missionaries become 'experts' of this knowledge. It is they who present information and data to their donors, the media and, in some cases, even to international organisations (e.g. UNESCO, UNICEF) and governments. These data are being accepted and spread accordingly. Knowledge about problems and needs of the mountain people of Northern Thailand is being created and reified. Primitive and 'evil' culture; poverty; drugs; education; children-at-risk. All these concepts fit well into the mobile stereotypes which are easily accepted by donors, the media and the wider public with little need or attempt to be problematized. However, these Christian aid workers usually have little understanding of the realities of mountain communities. They live in the city largely isolated from highland society and to some extent also from the lowland one, abstractly as well as virtually, by the high walls of their compounds. They visit mountain villages rarely if ever and

do not employ any true expert consultants. Those 'invisible' knowledge producers who provide missionaries with information are, in fact, members of their Akha staff.

The first Akha staff member of the New Life was Amue. Amue could not finish her high school education because the cost to keep her at a Christian Home in Chiang Rai became, for her parents, financially unbearable²². However, since her mother was a village women pastor, she was given the chance to live and study at a Bible college. After two years, in her mid-teens, Amue graduated from the Bible college and started to work as a missionary fieldworker in Akha villages for an American Christian organisation.

Since Amue was Akha, a Bible College graduate with practice in missionary fieldwork, spoke the language and knew the milieu, she was offered, about a year later, participation in a new orphanage for mountain children. John had an idea to open a home for children; however, without children, the project had no basis or foundation. That was why Amue was asked to find some children to start the project.

Amue: I was afraid. I was very young and was not sure if I could do a good job. I knew John from the organisation where I worked before. I thought that he did not like me. When he came to our village and asked me for help I was surprised. I thought it was a great chance for some children to receive an education.

The first children Amue brought in were her two younger brothers, a cousin, another boy from her village and one more from a neighboring village. Only the last one could be considered,

²² Parents often pay for their children to stay at a Christian Home in the city. The cost differs among Homes in Chiang Rai. Some do not charge anything for a child to live in their institution while others require as much as 10,000 THB per year plus allowances. Although all these children are presented as 'children in need', most Akha families are not able to afford such a high fee.

according to Amue, as a bit complicated case, since his father was using opium which, however, in Akha communities represented a rather standard family environment. That is how New Life was founded. Amue provided her brothers, relatives and friends with an opportunity for "better lives" through an education in a city and close contact with the foreign Christian community.

For John these five Akha children represented children in high-risk situations. Without any scruples or second-guessing, these children were successively presented to Thai government officials and global donors as needing to be "saved by the project". The discourse of rescuing children from poverty, abuse and trafficking was thus created. The New Life project has been founded. It was the year 1995.

Since then the several hundred predominantly mountain children who have lived in this development institution came to be defined as "high-risk-situation children". Although New Life presented some of the girls in its care as rescued from prostitution, none of them in reality ever left the family environment neither they had any experience with prostitution. According to this logic, any mountain child was in a danger and needed to be saved. And that is what many Homes strived to accomplish.

Mountain children were discursively packaged for donors and sponsors to conform to their imaginaries of suffering and the children's need for assistance. As Mosse points out, a development project's success "is not merely a question of measures of performance; it is also about how particular interpretations are made and sustained socially" (2004: 158), and I add materially. If the images surrounding New Life operation were for the government officials created through concept of school education and chao khao assimilation, for missionaries

through concepts of spiritual warfare, for Amue through images of social mobility of children via education in state operated schools and close contact with the foreign Christian community, international donors built their imagination on the monolithic categories of children, poverty and suffering.

Global Money, Global Child

New Life was financed for most of its existence by donations from overseas individuals, schools, churches and Christian organisations. These were enforced by missionary visits of these institutions in the countries of their origin as well as by overseas church groups and Christian teams travelling to Thailand to visit New Life and the 'poor children'. Years ago, some donors arranged a trip for which several Akha girls were selected to participate in a church-tour across Europe. My informants, Bele and Amue were among these girls. Their memories capture the excitement of going abroad, to the 'far-away', overseas world of *farangs* (foreigners).

Although this trip to Europe was an exciting and terrifying experience²³, the main purpose was not a vacation but rather work. These girls were taken abroad by missionaries to represent the poverty and suffering, the 'lens' through which the West perceived these very Akha girls who were singing and dancing in traditional dresses in churches and schools as part of a fundraising campaign. Amue was the daughter of a women's pastor and a respected, rather wealthy father, who in actuality represented not a poor abandoned child but rather a member of village elite. She was the first child from her village who, thanks to a close relationship

²³ According to Amue's narrative she was crying most of the time, could not eat the local food and missed her family.

between her pastor mother and missionaries, went to a Christian Home in Chiang Rai and studied in a city school.

However, much more common were trips made in the opposite direction - through church group visits to Thailand. These groups, referred to by New Life's staff and the director as 'Christian teams', visited the Home frequently. Since New Life did not offer a direct means of child sponsorship as was the case for World Vision (Bornstein 2005) and many other faith-based organisations - sponsors did not contribute to one individual child but to the project itself. According to missionaries, the cost of one child was about four times higher than the advertised amount so in reality each child would have at least several sponsors. Contrary to some reported cases (Bornstein 2005) New Life sponsors did not come to visit "their children" but to visit "needy children" and the project in general.

These visitors, or rather the experience they took with them back to their home countries to share with fellow members of their churches, were crucial for the Home's existence. Maybe I should be more explicit; the economic inequalities between the West and the rest is what allows for the New Life operation. However, such inequalities and economic development of world powers is slowly and quietly, yet with a certainty, turning into a disfavour for the old super-powers. Visitors, these hearty people with compassion and responsibility for Children's suffering, together with material opportunities and images their Western middle class background offered, provided a significant portion of the Home's financial resources.

When Christian teams arrived, it was Amue who usually took a good care of all their wishes and desires. She also served as a tourist guide during their stay, showing the guests some of the popular tourist attractions in the area. If asked, Amue would even organize a trip to Akha

villages to provide the precious guests with an authentic image of the sorry state mountain children live in. This experience, supported by the information Amue provided about New Life children, together with conceptions these visitors brought with them from their homes countries, boosted the images through which this experience was being perceived.

The term children's home or orphanage in the Western context is a heavily loaded term evoking an institution caring for orphans and unwanted children. In spite of some cases of real orphans or neglected children, within the context of homes for mountain children its function equals rather that of "western" boarding houses. Quite frequently the missionaries and staff of the home use the term "orphanage" despite the fact that most children do have parents. Burr (2006) emphasizes the different perception of the term "orphanage". Based on her research in Vietnam, she argues that within the local context, even a child who has lost one of its parents is considered an orphan. In Thailand, or rather for the Akha, an orphan is a child who has lost both parents. Identifying the homes for mountain children in Northern Thailand as "children's homes" or "orphanages" goes hand in hand with the concept of "child" whose social and economic value is different in Akha communities than in the communities most donors come from (Aries 1965, Zelizer 1994) and may motivate donors to closer cooperation.

In November 2009 a group of twelve church members from Texas visited the Home. Since Amue spoke fluent English, she served as their host and guide. As usual, she described several stories of the children in care.

Amue: Mai is ten. We accepted her here about three years ago. She was born in Thailand, but her family is Burmese. Like many other Akha people, they are refugees from Burma. We found her in a village and were asked by her grandmother who begged us to take care of her

granddaughter and protect her. Mai's mother is an HIV positive prostitute in Bangkok and her father is a violent drug addict who decided to sell his daughter in order to get more money to buy drugs. He was going to sell Mai to a Thai trafficking dealer. We saved her at the very last moment. Since then she is here with us. She is now safe and enjoys going to school and having enough to eat.

Sponsor [an older woman]: That is just horrible. [tears running down her face ruined her makeup] No child deserves such a tragic fate. What can we do to help? [her face twisted by emotional pain] We need to make sure the Lord provides these children with a good education. Education is their future. [pressing Amue's hand tenderly]

This ethnographic moment can well serve as an example of the information donors are being provided with. It also demonstrates how sponsors can be deeply affected by the discourse surrounding the project. Such stories are the driving force behind the conceptualization of knowledge and imagination of the Home and its children. Though in reality only a few of the New Life children came from so-called high-risk situations, international donors' imaginaries, created through their experiences with similar stories, projected a discourse of abuse, suffering and poverty on all of the Home's children.

Several scholars (Ariese, Zelizer 1985; Malkki 1995, 1997) have pointed out the significance of the social and historical processes behind the construction of the child as a concept. Until the 18th century in England and Europe, argues Zelizer (1985), the death of a child constituted a fairly insignificant incident often followed by a mix of indifference and resignation. Montaigne states: "I lost two or three children. Not without sorrow but without a great suffering." In some parts of France, Aries (1965) writes, the body of a child which died early was buried in a backyard similarly to the way a dog or cat is buried. In her book Pricing

the Priceless Child, Zelizer tackles a formidable and important subject of the shifting economic and social value of western children. The birth of a child in 18th century rural America was, in sharp contrast to our contemporary understanding, welcomed primarily as future labor and security for parents when they aged. The construct of an economically 'immune' or 'inviolable' child was created largely by the North American middle class in the 19th century; the interest shifted to education as the determinant of the future market value of the child. In the 19th century came also a dramatic revolution in the grieving process over the death of a child. Among families of the middle and upper-middle classes in England, Europe and the United States the death of a child came to be seen as the most painful and most unacceptable of all deaths. In the first three decades of the 20th century the model of the 'economically viable child' became a numerical as well as a cultural exception. As soon as children ceased to be profitable, birth-rates decreased and children became "expenses-until-earners". Their changing price determined their new value. The generally accepted understanding of the inherent value of an educated child came to outweigh the immediate benefits of their contribution to a family budget. With these changes in the 20th century began the shift of sentiment towards children that seems so natural to westerners today. It is this contemporary discourse surrounding the imagined value of a child which directly contributes to donors' imagination of the project and ensures persistent financial flow from western donors to homes for children from the Thai mountains.

On this foundation Malkki (1997) examines the discourse surrounding the concept of child in the international community. She argues that children serve the international humanitarian community as an embodiment of fundamental goodness and as a symbol of world harmony; as ardent-victims, visionaries of truth, ambassadors of peace or as blessed incarnations of the future. Such means of 'humanitarian marketing' encourage the consumption of "good" or

humanitarian ideals, while children become the subject of this consumption. Such representations of a child through the lens of humanitarian discourse is not always 'translatable' nor comprehensible in local conditions, though local people could be and often are dependent upon such representations.

The other important moment from the above mentioned ethnographic example is the brief link between a suffering child and education as means to a 'bright future' of social and economic mobility. Theoretical approaches towards school education can be divided into two main, fundamentally contradictory camps according to the stance of the author in relation to the basic nature and meaning of the educational institution - the school. On one side is 'liberal' thinking, with its roots in eighteenth century's post-revolutionary period concepts, which conceives of the school as a tool to create an enlightened and egalitarian society which contrives to offer an opportunity to all its members. From this side most likely come also contemporary efforts to establish schools which attempt to eliminate economic, political and social inequalities. Against this stance rose a critique coming from Marxist thoughts which argues against the idea of school as an actual or potential means of fostering or producing democratic aims. These scholars do not consider school education as a tool constructing social equality but rather they see it as a tool of reproduction of the working classes in class-based societies. Many recent studies (e.g. Bourgois 2002, Foley 2010; Fordham 1996; Giroux 2005; Hall 2002; MacLeod 2008), while tackling the ageless structure/agency debate and representing the historical character of social change and order, provide us with "more complex portraits both of how schools willfully and inadvertently reproduce class, race, and gender inequalities and of how groups and individuals consciously and strategically produce autonomy from institutional constraints." (Foley 2010:223).

The fact that donors, sponsors and other supporters are themselves a part of global dynamics obscures some tensions and problems which follow the existence of New Life. It could be demonstrated by a rather extreme example from 2007. The director's longtime sexual relationship with one of the girls in his care was revealed by a volunteer worker from Scandinavia. Shortly afterwards the Home experienced a reduction of donor money from Scandinavia; however this scandal had no impact outside of this north European region.

New Life Children's Home constitutes an opportunity for sponsors to support children through its project. However, it should be understood that while financial funding goes from western donors to those "less developed", gratification is not so limited. It is not only the children who might gain through this process but also the sponsors. The Bible instructs over and over again to remember the poor (e.g. Galatians 2:10), and to not turn away those in need (e.g. Matthew 25:35-45). Jesus placed such an emphasis on giving to the poor that he went so far as to call those who refused to help the poor 'unbelievers'. Through the act of sponsoring and their imaginations of poor mountain children, international sponsors satisfy both their spiritual and emotional needs. These images provide New Life with its success and funding. Neither the reality of mountain people's lives or the accuracy of donors' perspectives, nor efficacy of their involvement is what matters in the process of creating a successful project in terms of the imaginations, needs and expectations of those involved.

The Facets Of The Educational Dream

The sun was falling behind the surrounding hills while we sat on the terrace of an Akha house made of wood, bamboo and thatched roof where Amue was born thirty-two years before. This house was built in the centre of the village, revealing the significance of the residents' social position within this village community. Amue's father was a wealthy man and his wife,

Amue's mom, the women's pastor. They gave birth to four children. Amue, like her two younger brothers, grew up in a Christian Home in Chiang Rai.

I was drinking hot green tea from a slant-cut bamboo cup, the leaves of which I was straining between my teeth while watching the valley below us. Tin roofs of village houses inhabited by lowland Thais glared up at us from below. One of the roofs belonged to the school for people from the surrounding area. Amue's youngest brother Aso just finished the last grade of his elementary education. That day I spoke with Amue and her mother (whose face and entire body were worn-down from a lifetime of hard work in mountain fields and the ever present sun) once again about the younger generation of Akha and the role of education:

Mother: Aso must go to Christian School. Good education is very important.

Tomas: What makes you think education is important?

Mother: Before Akha did not have to go to school. Parents thought it was not important, especially for girls. Parents said: "One time you get married and you leave. Why would you go to school?" Today, everything is different. If you do not have an education you cannot get a good job. I want my children to have better lives than me and my husband had.

Amue: Before people could grow their own food, they did not need money. Today it is different.

Tomas: What changed, what is different?

Mother: Government brought us development. They gave us things which we did not even know we needed. Like those solar panels. We did not even want them but they gave them to us for free. Since then we need things which we never needed before - televisions, refrigerators, these electrical machines to cook rice with [pointing towards the kitchen]. One

family had it and all had to follow. But we do not live any better than we did before. Suddenly we have got the feeling that we are short of something. We need more things...

Amue: People do not have enough land to grow their food on. They need money and have to acquire work.

Tomas: What does this have to do with a school education? Most of the people in the village work on their farms. The rest works in Mae Chan.

Amue: Yes, they have got jobs but not good jobs.

Tomas: What does good job mean? Do you know anybody who finished high school and has got a good job? No Akha I know have good jobs.

Amue: [Thinking] I do not know what to tell you. Your questions make me tired. [slightly irritated] The times have changed. People want to live like Thais. They do not want to be poor and stupid anymore.

I did not want to deepen the tension of the moment so I intentionally decided not to remind Amue of her two younger brothers who used to live in New Life. One of them was working at a gas station in Bangkok where he was also spending nights because of the low salary he was paid. The other of Amue's brothers graduated from a Bible College and was working as a labourer at a factory in Korea. Neither of their lives match-up with the imaginaries of the positive essence of school education as a path towards social mobility. Amue's mother was unaware of the reality their children lived in. She was honestly proud that their children left the imaginary border of a village and became part of the 'modern urban world'²⁴. These imaginations of a modern, city life accompanied by affluence, 'progress' and success were associated with the education her children had acquired. These imaginations stood in direct

²⁴ The cultural construct of urban modernity which Thais mark modern life with is called thansamai. Akhas translate Thai term samai as "rich", in the meaning "rich person", not "modern". There is no term for "modern life" in Akha language. In such a meaning they use mi cu ma, which means that somebody is not like an Akha but rather as a Thai.

contrast to life in the mountain village. Such a life was defined by constantly diminishing sources of livelihood. Her daughter's visits, during which Amue always brought some presents, food and money, actively encouraged such imaginations. Dressed in clean, un-torn clothes, with soft hands and white skin which was not exposed to the sun during work in mountain fields; in the context of cosmopolitan knowledge, through which Amue always astonished villagers, she produced 'pictures' and 'images'. These pictures deepened villagers' imaginations about the dream-life in a city and being seen with myself, a white westerner, as her escort, such imaginations were only validated. Amue's friends from childhood, who are nowadays mothers of two, three or more children, and are already physically-aged by the hard mountain life, always look up to Amue, eager to hear some news from the amazing life in the city. These young women performed their roles of wives and mothers. Amue, on the other hand, constituted in their eyes independence, freedom, social status and an influence through contact with institutions of power and education based in urban centres. All the visits of city-based Akhas in their home villages constituted in the minds of villagers their imaginations of 'action' and 'style' which Akha constructed from fragments of TV programming and other media, visits from Thai government officials, missionaries and occasional trips to the nearest town full of cars, motorbikes, people, stores, advertisements and 'life-as-it-should-be'.

The Akha's 'imagined world' relates not only to materialistic aims but also links with a specific kind of personal identity and dominant cultural discourse about Thai modernity and progress. Pictures of urban wealth and commercial progress which permeate Thai popular culture represent examples of consumption and social status which, however difficult they are to acquire, are impossible to ignore. As with education, possession of new technologies and consumption goods (such as the TV which Amue's mother mentioned in the interview above,

together with a fridge which was usually full of everything but food and disconnected from electricity) is increasingly valued as symbolic of modern success and social status.

For Amue's parents, similar to other Akha parents, the opportunity to ensure membership in a city school for their children was closely tied to their imagination of chances inside the dominant lowland Thai society and with a desire for increased personal autonomy and status. Although Amue could not really satisfy her fellow Akha's imagined worlds on the material and financial level, since Thai society discriminates against mountain ethnic minorities, the upward social mobility she has achieved was clearly visible during every visit to an Akha village. For her parents and village neighbours, Amue symbolized the dreamed-of success that education represented to most Akha parents and became in turn what they wished for their own children; moreover, it was the imagined success story of a girl villagers knew since her childhood which further reinforced, together with the media and the governments' and missionaries' propaganda, their imaginations of the 'better lives' Christian Homes could offer their children.

The images related to better lives were also actively supported by government projects to promote school education in the mountains. Government officials organized meetings with village chieftains where education was presented as a panacea for all the social and economic problems poor mountaineers had to face. These village leaders consequently explained to the inhabitants of their villages that a school education could secure better future lives for their children. Headmen as well as village people, most of whom had no experience of their own with school, interpreted the verbal presentation by the officials through the images of their imagined worlds (Appadurai 1996). In a setting defined by increasingly insufficient resources for survival combined with increasing demands, desires and expectations, the prospect of

school education offered a new hope. People in the most remote areas of the country accepted that education would help their children achieve similar living standards they watched daily on TV screens which presented images of “better modern lives”. Their new found belief was intensively supported by the advertisements of private schools and universities that promised lucrative careers to their graduates in the over-saturated job market. Occasional visits to towns in the lowlands offered the mountain peoples images full of cars, motorbikes, people, and more importantly, shops, advertisements, colors and “life” were also included in the mixture of images that Appadurai calls imagined worlds.

The increasingly ever-difficult conditions in the mountains, together with the imaginations created by media and state propaganda, directly supported by Christian missionaries, about the chances and possibilities resulting from education, have effectively convinced mountain parents of the necessity and promise of school education. Christian Aid workers who similarly to government officials, always arrived in big SUVs, well dressed, represented the better, successful life villagers wished their children could live. If the way to such a lifestyle was through a Christian Home and school education in a city, the mountain parents would do much to provide this chance to their children. As Amue's mother stated in her interview, to place a child into one of the Christian Homes became an attractive opportunity for a 'better life'. Many Akha parents even go as far as to pay the Homes to make sure their child is accepted. “It is remarkable the sacrifices that families are willing to endure to ensure their children get as good an education as possible. Families are divided, land sold or pawned, and other investments curtailed,” writes Rigg (2003: 204). As should be clear by now, most of the New Life's children were not orphans or ‘high-risk’ children; in truth many of them represented the mountain elite.

The Thai Dream

One spring evening I was sitting outside of New Life's dining hall while children and staff were eating their dinner. 17-year-old Midu, a senior attending high school in Chiang Rai, sat next to me. While I was interested in her plans for the future she was haunted by her imaginations of the good, modern life people in the West were supposed to live and of which I was a 'representative'.

Midu: You are so cool. I would love to talk to you the whole night.

Tomas: What makes you think I am cool?

Midu: Your clothes are modern. You just look 'thansamai' (modern).

Tomas: [laughing] The other day you told me you need to study to have a good job.

Midu: Also because of Thai people. They look down on us because we are from mountains. I would like to have an education so they would respect me.

Tomas: What does 'a good job' mean for you?

Midu: I would like to make enough money to send some to my parents and to buy nice things.

Tomas: Can you find a good job in a village?

Midu: [laughing over my stupid question] No!

Tomas: Where would you rather live - in a village or in a city?

Midu: In the city. It is much more cool, more fashionable.

Tomas: You want to be cool?

Midu: [laughing] Yes, I would like to.

Tomas: What does it mean for you 'thansamai'?

Midu: Fashion.

Tomas: What kind of fashion. What is 'thansamai' fashion?

Midu: In villages people wear very simple clothes. In the city they are 'thansamai'.

Tomas: How do you know that? Where did you see this ‘thansamai’?

Midu: In the city. On TV.

Tomas: I think you are ‘thansamai’.

Midu: [very serious look] That is because I am in the city. If I was living in a village I would not be ‘thansamai’.

The reason I began this chapter with a dialogue I had with one of the Home's girls is because her opinions well represent the imaginations which encourage young Akhas in their desire for better, modern lives closely related to the consumption of goods they recognize from television and short visits to the city. Since they have been inculcated with the idea that a school education will provide them with the social mobility needed to taste this desired lifestyle, most of New Life's children were very happy to have a chance to attend a school in a city. Though the ‘taste’ and desires of the children were constructed over time by their families, the state school and the Home, in the end it was the media that played the crucial role in constructing their imaginaries of the 'good life'.

Until the 1970s, most of the mountain communities lived relatively isolated lives, nominally independent of the Thai state and its lowland society; during the forty years since then, Thai state-led development has brought roads to the mountain villages as a means to gain more control over a remote border area of their outlying region. These roads enabled mountaineers easier access into the world of the lowland Thai population (e.g. markets, shops, festivities, government offices, etc.) and simultaneously increased the frequency of visits of Thai traders, government officials and development workers. However, the most popular and gradually the most widespread channel between the borders of the mountain village and the outside world has become the television and other media; the TV screen as an instrument of cultural

production cloaked urban life in alluring language such as 'progress', 'modern style', 'The Best Life has to Offer'. Let us have a look at one of the TV commercials which was being broadcast in November 2009 by Thai media:

A Young man in his early twenties walks on the sidewalk surrounded by the traffic noise of the metropolis; congestion full of Bangkok's taxis, trucks and cars. A City bus drives in the opposite direction. The sidewalk is lined by shop windows full of advertisements and street vendors. The young man looks insecure in the busy environment, almost lost. Two young, highly attractive girls holding each other's hands in convivial conversation with the haughty smiles of Bangkok's upper class walk by our young man. One of the girls is dressed in a black tunic which shows her shoulders, skinny jeans tightly outlining her legs which glide confidently on high heels; the other, with curled hair, is wearing a mini-skirt, exposing her long white legs, and over a low-cut singlet exposing her arms, shoulders and neckline hangs a Louis Vuitton handbag. A dynamic pop song drowns out their conversation as well as the city traffic. The Young man is struck by the casually brazen sexuality of these young women walking towards him and tries to attract them with a short look. However, they ignore him. The Young man is obviously disappointed at the failure. [Cut visual] The soundtrack comes on: 'There is a solution for any modern man.' Now the screen is being filled with an image of colourful containers of a hair gel which the suddenly reappeared young man rubs into his black hair. [Cut to music] The inspiring music gives us a feeling of success, victory. The Young man whose hair is now embellished with the gel is back on the hustle of street life and the two girls are turning their necks with unconcealed interest. Now, our entirely self-confident hero of this TV commercial enters a university campus where he is the centre of interest of female students. Cut to scene in a university classroom where students are taking a test. Our hero in a moment with no problems fills out the test and, followed by astonished

looks of female students, hands his test to a professor. Cut. Our now near legendary superhero tortures his perfectly defined body in a gym. Half naked with a self-confident expression and firmly gelled hair he enjoys the open interest of women in the gym as he reaches into a pocket to show us (with a smile revealing the high quality of Thai dentists), the magical formula which transforms a frog into an irresistible 'Prince' who takes life firmly in his hands.

This direct, sophisticated package of Thai media sends viewers quite clear messages: Only modern man making use of contemporary products can be successful. Erotically seductive bodies are common images which TV commercials, films and series, magazines or street billboards create as the predominant source of visual imagination. As in the above described advertisement, Thai media celebrate and praise 'up-to-date' styles and 'independence'. Education, in the advertisement represented by the university environment is implied again as a key part of a 'successful life'. Stylishly well-tended young people present their 'charms' in the world of occupation, school as well as leisure. Although 'modern man' and 'modern woman' can be associated with urban environments, television and other media together with personal experience with educated, middle-class residents of nearby towns, government officials, Christian missionaries and former villagers like Amue, all combine to construct fantasies of modern life ever-more familiar to people living in the distant mountain villages. Images constructed in this way abide unfulfilled in the mountains and thus drive the younger generations imaginations concerning the superiority of living in the modern world of consumption and affluence in urban centres. The Christian Home environment with its buildings, shortly cut grass lawn, cars and westerners added to the children's imaginaries. They all, with few exceptions, believe that education in urban schools, which they could not reach without the bridge provided by Christian Homes, will help them on this journey to 'A Better Life For You and Your Family.'

However, the Home came to constitute a barrier to children's imagination of modern life which stood in direct contradiction to New Life's rules based on the fundamental Christian beliefs. Aspects of modern life in Thai society are in sharp contrast to the values of the Christian community upon which the Home's rules are founded: chaste modesty, virgin beauty and most of all, submissiveness, obedience and humility. The highly sexual images of cool people known to the mountaineers from TV commercials and soap operas are reinforced in the urban setting by numerous commercial enterprises – hairdressers or massage parlors, shops and shopping malls, night clubs and discos or even the modern wellness centers. In the perspective of the New Life management, these are associated with the idea of immorality and lack of a bond to the Lord, leading young people astray to the path of sin.

7. Neoliberal Journey Towards The Maximization Of The Self

Learning To Be Chao Khao

Amue was the first child from Meu Nga village who received the opportunity to set out on a journey to fulfill mountain people's imaginations of the city world associated with life in one of the Christian homes and to study at school in Chiang Rai. For Amue's parents, school in the city combined with the chance to enter the Christian community through the children's home represented the supreme idea of parental care; the image of dreamt-of worlds of affluence, progress, success, modernity and satisfaction which in the haze of modern life, thansamai was represented by the urban world environment which their daughter was entering

through the Christian home and school. Christianity, a new, modern religion ²⁵ of the wealthy and carefree world of ‘farangs’ (foreigners) also fit neatly into the stereotypes that villagers created based on fragments of images produced by exposure to media, city-visits, and rumor from other sources.

The world she was leaving was accompanied by social as well as economic deprivation coupled with strong desires for the social and economic growth that mountain villagers associated with the wealthy city-life of Bangkok they knew from television. It was such experiences that informed the dispositions that Amue brought with her into the world of urban school. In a similar sense, Bourdieu wrote of habitus that he described as an internalized, incarnate disposition toward the external world. Habitus is formed by “inculcation” from early childhood, not an intentional process of formal schooling and learning but rather an actual participation in a particular socio-cultural environment of family, household, and community. Not only do people internalize through listening and observing the “correct” view of life, mannerisms, etc. but through the process of inculcation, people acquire dispositions that directly affect their lives. Bourdieu applied this concept to the traditional society of the Kabyles where the value of honor and loyalty to family was inculcated as part of the habitus with different socialization for girls and boys (Bourdieu 1977: 88-89). The experiences people gain in childhood in the setting of their own family and community represent significant generative dimensions of habitus. Experiences from childhood haunt us or benefit us even if our lives have fundamentally changed and taken a completely different course (Bourgois & Schonberg 2009).

²⁵ Ong (2003) notes similar pattern with Cambodian immigrants in California.

Amue's parents, people who perceived the world beyond the mountain village mostly mediated by the television screen, short visits to the town of Mae Chan in the lowlands and especially through their imaginations, passed on to their daughter knowledge and skills that taught her to survive in the rough mountain environment. Okely (1983) differentiates between schooling and education where schooling represents formal school education within state-founded institutions, while education is what children receive in the family or community environment. In Akha villages, children primarily receive education in the family and community. In contrast to the state school where a teacher works with dozens of students in a class, in Akha communities knowledge is passed on in an environment where mainly parents and grandparents attend to the child. Children also learn from their neighbors and other adults within the community by direct example and by mastering practical skills. Education takes place in the environment where they will continue to live in their adulthood. The system of education and later economic activity are part of the family's world. As I come to demonstrate below, the cultural capital gained in this way has little value in a Thai school and to the contrary constitutes a significant share in the social marginalization of Akha schoolchildren.

One spring afternoon in 2003 after the children finished school for the day, Aso, Amue and I sat down under the comforting shade of a pergola next to the playground. The other children were playing games, stayed in their rooms or were hanging around in small groups. It was then when the New Life student Aso confided in me his problems which, as I was later made to find out, accompany the experience of most mountain children in Thai schools. Perhaps Amue did not consider it important or perhaps she was too ashamed to tell me of similar memories; in any case, on that day I heard them speak for the first time about the ridicule and insults mountain children suffer from their Thai teachers and classmates. As I listened to those stories, I could see in the faces of my Akha informants the burden that mountain people carry,

akin to prisoners dragging a ball and chain, which repeatedly reminds them of their inferiority in the environment of the dominant Thai society. That burden was their membership in the Akha minority ethnic group and a religious belief that was likewise marginal in the Thai society. In the same way as Amue, Aso was also repeatedly reminded in school by teachers and fellow students who he was, where he belonged, and what his place was in Thai society: They were ‘chao khao’; and to complicate matters further, they came from an environment whose alternate discourse was formed by a minority religion - from Christian children’s home.

Aso: Today we played soccer at school and the teacher did not even once send me to the playing field. You know how I like soccer. I’m a good player. I had to sit there the whole time and just watch. That’s not fair...

Tomas: Didn’t you do something bad? Perhaps the teacher meant to punish you?

Aso: [irritable] They often do this to us. Ask someone else. We are chao khao, classmates ridicule us that we live like animals.

Tomas: Did they ridicule you, too?

Amue: [remains silent for a long time] Children ridiculed me often. Like, they called me Iko²⁶.

Aso: Or they mock us for Christianity.

Amue: Yeah, for example they said that Jesus ate a fish head.

Aso: They say that to all of us or they laugh at us that Jesus had no father, and that Buddha was born rich, but Jesus was born poor in a stable.

Tomas: What do you do when classmates ridicule you?

Aso: Teachers ridicule us, too.

²⁶ Iko, similarly as Ikor, is a defamatory, pejorative appellation of the members of the minority Akha ethnic used by the Thais.

Tomas: And what do you do then?

Aso: I used to get into fights, now I do nothing. I got used to it.

Amue: What can you do? You have to get used to it, there's nothing left to do.

It was then that I started to piece together the mosaic which the complex relationships between the family, the Christian home, and the school together constitute, and which were crucial for construction and assertion of the socio-cultural marginalization experienced by the young generation of Akha within Thai society. Step by step, I gathered the memories of the closest members of my social network as well as other children from New Life and other Homes, in an effort to understand their relationship with the majority society. One of the key elements of this mosaic remains that of the environment of the institution that ensures early socialization of young Akha with members of the Thai lowland society – the state school.

Although many inhabitants of Bangkok have little knowledge of or interest in the world of mountain ethnic minorities in the North of the country, Thai teachers and classmates of the Akha students have been encountering groups since childhood that suggested at first sight they do not belong in the urban environment. Women wearing headdresses adorned with silver coins, plates and sheets, colored beads and monkey fur, carrying large bamboo baskets or a baby wrapped in rags on their shoulders do not fit into the common image of city life. Black lips, teeth and gums of the Akha men and women, sun-tanned dark skin, dirty hands roughened by hard work on mountain fields together with their small height, strange language and different physical mannerisms has only reinforced a sense of otherness and impropriety for Thai children and their parents. The negative image of the mountain people in the eyes of the dominant society has been actively upheld by the leading state representatives and media.

The exclusive power of cultural capital is apparent in nearly every contact between the mountaineers with members of the lowland society. Nevertheless, it was the school defined by the Thai middle class, or rather the respective cultural capital that clearly demonstrated to Amue who she was and where she belonged. The school that defines the “correct cultural capital” trampled Amue’s personhood in essentially the same way it continues to trample the basic human dignity of other children of mountain farmers today.

Thus, from the early moments of their school life, Akha children are troubled with the issue of the ethnicity and “class” of their parents. It is a moment when they have to start dealing with people who will be in a position of authority over them in the following years; and while they have a deep respect for their parents, they also need to identify with the dominant culture of the lowland population, within whose rules the institutionalized education works.

Amue: When I came to the Home, I didn’t speak Thai and I didn’t understand anyone. The teacher at school was a Thai. I was constantly afraid that he would ask me something; that he would speak to me. I stared to the ground so that he wouldn’t notice me. When he did ask me something, I wouldn’t even look at him. I was terribly scared and didn’t say a word.

Not knowing the language of the majority population in which classes are held is the first signal for the Akha child that he or she is different. Hymes’ (1974) model of culture as a “speech community” considered language as the key cultural dissimilarity that creates perceivable differences. Ignorance of language and appropriate forms of cultural expressions – the foundation of symbolic capital’s structuring power – imprints students from the mountains with an often deeply traumatic experience in their first contact with the school institution when attempting to acquaint themselves with the public education system. What

could the Thai teacher possibly think of the student who was hiding from him and did not respond to his questions? Bourne found that classifying students by teachers creates indices of binary adjective couples that include and exclude certain students based on their effort, attention, intelligence, behavior, etc. On this basis the teacher constructs the 'ideal pedagogical subject' according to which he or she assesses and evaluates the children and wishes that the students would subject to these requirements (Bourne 1992). Without any chance to influence the situation, the mountaineers automatically fall into the category of a “problematic student”. Amue was too far from the “ideal pedagogical subject” from the beginning and it was thus beyond her power to even come close to it. She joined the ranks of “problematic students”. Amue’s behavior in the classroom inspired the teacher’s symbolic judgment which on the societal level unites class and economic inequality.

State school is a place where not only language and phonetic differences in speech are reconfirmed, appropriate manners valued and deviations or abnormalities suppressed. The symbolic violence children are exposed to at school makes them accept the social hierarchy. Bourdieu (1992) believed that the “incarnation” of unconscious structures leads to maintaining the dominant structures of behavior with the dominated ones then accepting their own position as the “correct” one.

Amue: Every time the teacher read the children’s names in class, he paused at my name. He kept reading it over and over again, mispronouncing it differently. All the children in class were laughing. Soon he gave me a new name, a Thai name. Since then I have been Amue.

The practice of teachers or government officials changing the names of Akha to Thai names is a common phenomenon. When I discussed this issue with Amue’s mother and other parents of

my informants, I was surprised by the matter-of-fact, casual attitude with which they accepted this fact.

Tomas: What does it feel like for a mother when her child gets a new name from their teacher?

Mother: Like nothing.

Tomas: Nothing? Is it not important for the Akha what names their children have?

Mother: It is important for us. We even have a ritual in which the child gets an egg.

Tomas: Did it not bother you that your child was renamed by a stranger?

Mother: It didn't. Nowadays all youngsters have Thai names.

Tomas: [to Amue] Did it not bother you that some strange guy changed your name?

Amue: It didn't, it's normal.

Tomas: Really?

Amue: How I am supposed to know? I was little then, I don't recall.

Others replied in a similar way to my question: "They change names of all of us. It is normal."

Bourdieu conceived of symbolic capital as any kind of capital perceived through socially instilled classification schemes. If the holder of symbolic capital with a greater delegated value tries to change the behavior of the one who holds symbolic capital of lesser value, he or she then exercises a kind of symbolic violence (1992: 119). An example of symbolic violence toward Akha children in connection with their given names goes hand in hand with Bourdieu's idea that "the specificity of symbolic violence resides precisely in the fact that it requires of the person who undergoes it an attitude which defies the ordinary alternative between freedom and constraint" (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992: 168). The symbolic violence

Amue was exposed to was slowly but irrevocably being engraved into the imaginary indices of experiences constituting her habitus. Though the Akha children were once taught by their parents and the community of the mountain village, those roles were taken over by the state school; an environment where the Akha students are the target of symbolic violence from both teachers and classmates. School education brings forth its fruit. Young mountaineers start to learn what their place is in the larger Thai society. They learn to conform to their roles as ‘chao khao’.

In the first years of Thai schooling, the students are explained the basic requirements of social life. It includes a black-and-white view of the behavior of “good citizens” and “good families” functioning in contrast to that of the “bad ones”. Stories in elementary school textbooks clearly illustrate to students that family happiness stems from moral behavior. As soon as bad parental habits such as gambling, alcohol or other drugs are overcome, poverty changes into relative affluence, organization and happiness (Mulder 1998). “In other words,” Mulder interprets the content of Thai elementary school textbooks, “the reason for being poor is with the poor themselves: they do not work, are not diligent and perseverant, and have bad habits.” (Ibid: 33).

Amue: The more I understood Thai language, the more I knew that we, Akha, are not good. The teacher made fun of the mountain people. He told the students we live like wild animals. He said that we are dirty. He said that Chao Khao are poor because they use drugs and are too lazy to work. I was always very sad when the teacher spoke of us this way.

The mountain children are instilled with the mantra - if you try hard, you will succeed. Success and wealth are a question of morale and discipline. Failure in contrast means low

moral quality and lack of effort. At school, the socially and economically unsuccessful mountain children, or rather the environment they come from, are considered morally low. In other words, chao khao represent an example of “bad citizens” and “bad families”. Thus, the school becomes an environment that develops the mountaineers’ awareness of their position within Thai society and solidifies the stereotypes of Thai classmates about “good and bad citizens”. Delineating the symbolic parameters of social power is an unconscious process for all those involved. The set rules of social interaction and their own inexperience with the dominant culture did not allow Akha students to see the connection between their own gradually changing identity and school power. Amue was learning that Akha means being poor, incapable, stupid, bad. She was spending her days in an environment where the most important people in her life until then, Dad and Mom, were becoming the target of ridicule and shame. For the mountain children, their closest relatives become a model for images of bad citizens and threats to a healthy society.

The symbolic violence that Akha students are exposed to at school irrevocably creates and deepens their consent to and acceptance of their own social position on the margins of Thai society. They are fated to perpetually live always in an environment of illiterate, worthless ‘dummies’, ‘addicts’, ‘drug-dealers’, criminals responsible for deforestation and state security threats, all of whom are responsible for their own poverty and position within the greater society. Imagined worlds filled the TV screen magazines, and the advertisements touting success, happiness, consumerist goods, and a modern life style that was otherwise unattainable. It was only then that the need was starting to emerge in Akha students to turn their backs to the world of their parents and accept that defined by the urban elite and Thai middle class; to get rid of the “wicked” label and try to gain a better place in the lowland

society they have become part of by their departure from the mountain village. However, that journey inevitably becomes blocked by the rules of the Christian Home they lived in.

The Shelter

The world of the Christian children's home had offered Amue, like other mountain children, an environment that protected her from humiliation, insults and the frankly inequitable habitus of the dominant society as represented by the state school.

Amue: I soon felt at home in the children's home. Everyone was so nice and supportive of me. I enjoyed all the Christian activities we did. Most of all, I enjoyed playing guitar and singing. I learned how to play from one of the staff. [...] Soon I became a member of the Home's musical band. Each Sunday we played Christian songs. It was a wonderful time. I could feel God in my heart. You know, I felt important then [laughs shyly]. In those moments I forgot about the world surrounding me, about school. I know it sounds silly.

Tomas: No, it doesn't sound silly. Go on.

Amue: You see, we played our instruments and sang Christian songs. [looks happy] All the other children, staff, missionaries and everybody who was visiting the Home at that time, they all sang with us. People danced. Everybody had a good time. I felt at home there. I knew since then that I was part of the Christian community. They accepted me the way I was. The Christian community became my family.

Behind the children's home walls, in an environment dominated by fundamentalist Christian discourse, Amue had found a shelter from the hostile world of the lowland Thai society that

the school institution imposed on her. Her active participation and acceptance in the Christian activities of their Home was contrasted with the humiliation the mountaineers were exposed to from Thai teachers and classmates. When Amue could not achieve appreciation and respect from her teachers, she sought these instead from the Christian home's staff and other missionaries. The way to her longed-for appreciation was the study of the Bible together with Christian activities that she was enthusiastic to take part in. The appreciation from the missionaries created a strong bond in Amue with the environment of the Christian community in Chiang Rai.

The children's home represents a shelter from ridicule, attacks and subjection to a harmful hierarchy by which the dominant society marginalizes minorities. While the environment of the children's home allows Akha children to regain their dignity and represents a creative response to social exclusion that the children are exposed to at school, it also results, as I will argue in following pages, in their deeper marginalization in the overwhelmingly Thai Buddhist society²⁷ with the requirement of actively accepting Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, of actively studying the Bible and participating in Christian activities.

Not long after Aso's departure from New Life, the Home's director and I were going to Chiang Rai together. During that trip, I had the opportunity to hear the view of the organizational structure overseeing the management of the time, thoughts, movements and social relationships of children, constructed by the rules of the Children's Home:

Director: We try to instill in children self-discipline which is firmly rooted in the Word, so that the love of Jesus directs their behavior. We were all born with a sin into the world full of

²⁷ Buddhists 94.6%, Moslems 4.6%, Christians 0.7%, other 0.1% (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/th.html#>).

temptation. The children we take care of are only beginning to know the Lord; they need rules so that they don't slip away. Everybody is tempted, you and me included. Children need to experience the right behavior, the right way of thinking. We set the rules and children must conform to them. It doesn't matter if they agree with the rules or if they understand them. If they want God's blessing, they must conform. Criticism or defiance means paganism. If they want to live like pagans, they don't belong here. Then they cannot expect the Lord to be on their side.²⁸ ... Someone might think that the rules are too strict but believe me, those who criticize them have no clue that they are also controlled by many rules. Look at what influence TV commercials have on people. The same people who criticize us have a TV at home that manipulates their thinking, and their children's thinking. I think that we are only sincere. All we strive for is that children act according to God's wishes.

Obedience and acting "according to God's wishes" are represented as the main essence of being a Christian. In the director's eyes, the foundation of the Home, selection of staff, acceptance of children and the structure of control through the rules, were all God's wish; just as the house he lived in, and the car in which he was driving us to town were also 'God's wish'. It was obvious that all the decisions made in New Life are accompanied by God's consent.

Disciplining the Disciples

The case can be made that Christian aid workers are not so different from their secular counterparts. The fact is that the label 'secular aid worker' is somewhat misleading, since it implies an absence of any religious faith or patronage on the part of an individual, but for the

²⁸ Evildoers foster rebellion against God; the messenger of death will be sent against them (Proverbs 17: 11). For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the LORD, he has rejected you as king. (1 Samuel 15: 23) Whoever rebels against your word and does not obey it, whatever you may command them, will be put to death (Joshua 1: 18).

purposes of this discussion I use this inexcusable simplification intentionally; the reason I employ such a term at this point in the thesis is not because I wish to suggest the global world of humanitarianism is solely constituted by the projects of atheists or nonbelievers on one side and projects of believers and faith-based worshippers on the other and I in no way dare to imply that people of religion do not patronize or engage with the projects of secular organizations. What I wish to impart is simply that there is little difference distinguishing the impetus for Christian aid and that which I have so brazenly tagged as 'secular'. Despite ancient admonishments as 'loving your enemy' or 'turning the other cheek', some argue that humanitarianism is secular in origin (Ong, class lecture, UC Berkeley, 04/2012). As I will shortly demonstrate, in the case of New Life, such an assumption could not be further from the reality and its intricate practice. Ultimately, both 'secular' and 'non-secular' aid-projects are driven by a desire to help those in need.

To understand my assertion that the motives behind Christian aid differ little from those of the 'secular' in relation to aid, it is necessary to comprehend what 'development' actually means. The concept of development, as Ferguson aptly clarified, drawing on a scholarly literature, carries two distinct meanings: He writes, "On the one hand 'development' is used to mean the process of transition or transformation toward a modern, capitalist, industrial economy – 'modernization', 'capitalist development', the 're-development forces of production', etc. The second meaning, much in vogue from the mid 1970s onward", continues Ferguson, "defines itself in terms of 'quality of life' and 'standard of living', and refers to the reduction or eradication of poverty and material want. The directionality implied in the word 'development' is no longer a movement in history, but an activity, a social program, a war on poverty on a global scale. Liberals and 'development' bureaucrats regularly conflate these two

meanings, implicitly equating 'modernization' with the elimination or alleviation of poverty" (1994: 15).

If not both of the above mentioned approaches at least the latter endeavors to improve the lives of aid-recipients, yet what separates a Christian-based approach from the secular is the understanding of the roots of the problems they both seek to improve. As I have already mentioned in the previous text, the world seen through a Christian framing conceives of 'poverty', a low 'quality of life', an 'indigent standard of living' as the direct result of a limited access to "the transforming power of the Gospel" (10/40 Window). Such conceptions deeply inform the discourse surrounding the functioning of nearly all Children's Homes in Chiang Rai, with New Life being no exception.

Bornstein argues that the notion of Christian development, or better, the notions of those who seek to engage in such designs, is based on the premise that there are only two categories of people, Christians and heathens (2005: 46). The former category is represented by those who have been evangelized, the later group by those who have not been blessed by the gospel being preached to them yet, the uninitiated. These two categories mirror a world divided into developed and undeveloped groups of people. As the logic of such an approach follows, people who have been evangelized, those identified as Christians, represent the category of 'developed' while the 'ignorant', the unevangelized, are construed as the 'yet-to-be-developed'. Be it a development based on Christian faith or not, both of the mentioned approaches seek to 'make the world a better place'. The endeavour to improve the 'quality of life' for the recipients of aid constitutes the primary motive behind either of the approaches to development, be they Christian or 'secular'. What differs is the understanding of the reasons behind the social and economic inequalities and the appropriate means to its remedy.

The Bible is the 'Word of God'. To all my Christian informants His Word (God's) constitutes the 'Truth'. As the story of the Bible goes, poverty began at the beginning of beginnings. Genesis 3 records for us Eve's taking of the forbidden fruit and offering it to Adam, which he accepted. So God says to Eve: "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." To Adam he said, 'Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' 'Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life... By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return.'" (Genesis 3: 16-17, 19). Since 'poverty' has been understood as the result of a disobedience and lack of faith, it is the Word of God together with a strict discipline what saves the needy. Provided that the meaning of New Life's existence was to save the children, it was the Home's technologies of government, enforced through the rules and regulations, what was meant to provide earthly, as well as eternal salvation.

Demands John placed on his staff were, in most part, comprised of a steady and consistent religious influence that was meant to be directed towards the children. Children were subsequently required to obey to the structure of control enacted through fixed regulations and rules. John's demands required a good knowledge of Bible and Jesus teachings, a strong Christian faith and obedience on the part of the staff. Such qualities constituted habitual dispositions and, as such, had to be developed. It would be highly unlikely to acquire such dramatic, unquestioning traits outside of the 'total institution' (Goffman 1961) which the Christian Homes' in Chiang Rai represent.

Similar to 'Jape', an Akha woman in her early thirties, all staff members were Bible College graduates with the only exception being Bele, the former New Life's child and one of the closest members of my social network among the Akha. Education-wise, among the five members of New Life's staff, Amue was a shining exception. Although she seldom mentioned this achievement, everyone was well aware she was accomplished, apart from the Bible College education, having a bachelor degree in social work and development at the Chiang Rai University. This did not make her an exception only among the staff members and 'graduates' of New Life; at the time of my research, the number of Akha university graduates was highly insignificant. Yet such qualities, considered admirable and often rewarded in many societies and cultures, had little value at New Life; John, who once confided to me he never concluded a secondary education, had little appreciation for the truly unique accomplishment his employee had achieved.

While New Life students live in an environment defined by strictly enforced regulations structuring the Christian faith, the Home's staff members are not totally 'left behind'. Whereas the technologies influence the cosmos of children, it has a direct impact on the practice of the personnel as well. Because the children's lives are being governed in accordance with 'God's teaching', it is imperative the staff members are the mediators of the technologies; the foremost quality John required of his staff was a deep and dedicated Christian faith.

"That's not what we need now", John answered, when I wondered aloud why it was that New Life does not consider employing someone with an education and practice in child care and pedagogy. "We need a good, strong Christian with a deep faith. Someone we can trust. Lately, we have offered the chance to stay and work here to some of our former children. I think it is a great opportunity for them. You know, like Bele," John remarked. "Bele is an apt and skillful

young woman but she has no training in child care," I opined. "Since she has lived here she is familiar with the Home, she knows the children and we know her. We know what we can expect of her. It is important that our children are being supervised by good, born-again, Christians," John summarily explained the conditions and requirements for New Life personnel.

If the most desired quality for employment in New Life was a dedicated Christian faith, the primary motivating factor the staff members gave, when I repeatedly inquired, stood squarely in accordance with Christian religious doctrine. Indeed, all of them believed that it was God directly who called them to perform this work. New Life's employees identified with Isaiah, the prophet, who "heard the voice of the Lord saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me" (Isaiah 6: 8).

"I remember, shortly after I finished Bible College, I was not quite sure what plan has the Lord prepared for me. I was praying a lot about what I should do. One day I felt the Lord was calling me to a service at a Children's Home. I was not quite sure if that was what the Lord was really asking me to do. So I prayed more in the upcoming days. I got up at the church I went to at that time, gave my testimony and shared what the Lord was calling me to do. Soon I accepted the Lord was showing me the way and received a peace about my decision to work in a children's Home. Then a pastor of the church I used to go told me about a Home looking for a staff member. Since then I am here", narrated Mipa of her motives for seeking employment at New Life, in accordance with other staff members; It was 'God's calling' that had determined the decision of all who worked at a Children's Home.

Dzela, similarly to Bele, spent most of his life behind New Life's gates. Before Dzela could conclude his formal education, John sent him to study at a Bible College. As there was a lack of properly trained pastors in the mountain villages, many Homes were supplying some of the children in their care to these institutions. Many mountain children, influenced by the management of the Homes they lived in, consider a Bible College diploma as a manifestation of an obligation to serve God on one hand and a good chance for a professional career on the other. Since John knew Dzela for most of his life and was aware of his technical skills, after he graduated, he was offered to work at New Life as a maintenance man.

Although Bele had not attended a Bible College, according to John, she was a “good, obedient Christian”. During the years she lived at New Life as one of it’s children, “she has proven,” John told me, “her close relationship to the Lord and a good will for hard work”. That was not all. As I have mentioned earlier, for New Life's sponsors, Bele's story represented a shining example of the horrible conditions mountain children face in their families and the need for the Home to exist. For that, together with her pleasant physical appearance, friendly character and exceptional command of English relative to her peers, she was often at the center of interest among the Christian groups which visited New Life to contribute financially. Even though Bele's school results were quite poor and in spite of the fact she had not received Bible College training, after she left school, John offered her the chance to stay on as one of the members of New Life’s staff.

The fact that New Life, similar to other Christian organizations in Chiang Rai, was hiring children raised in one of the Christian-based development institutions clearly (and rather cleverly) fulfilled the objectives of the evangelizing efforts to train "agents for positive change in the community, which furthers the vision to reach all the Akha with the Gospel of Jesus

Christ" (Christian Camp, Chiang Rai 2009) while simultaneously, as I will explain later, producing a cheap, manageable labor force along the way.

Technologies of Eternal Salvation

The total number of children who were raised by New Life during its seventeen years of existence was estimated at five hundred. The current number of children living at New Life during the time I observed this Christian-based aid institution was around eighty, with girls constituting a larger part of the ratio. However, this number was usually in flux as some of the children left and others were being processed in. By far the largest ethnic group was represented by the Akha, followed by a few members from other highland ethnic minorities - Hmong, Lahu and Lisu. During the years I studied the world of New Life Foundation, there were also a few Thai children and one little boy from Burma living in the Home, so that the approximately eighty children living at New Life at any given time were being taken care of by an all-Akha staff, comprised of four women and one man: Amue, Bele, Mipa, Jape and Dzela.

The logistics of food supply, technical maintenance, transportation of children to schools and back, medical care, and any other interactions with representatives of the schools which New Life's children attended, were just some of the duties staff members were responsible for. Yet, as the Home's regulations maintaining its daily regime evince, the main obligation of the staff was to focus on oversight of the children's observance of the daily order being enacted in the required manner; technologies were applied to the production of loyal and obedient Christians, re-enforced by the Home's rules and regulations.

The irritating ringing of a bell starts each morning exactly at 5:00 in the boys and girls dormitories. Everyone is made to wake up, make their beds and prepare for a new day. The sun is slowly rising behind the peaks of the hills while children compete for their place at the common bathroom located at the first floor of each of the two dormitories where children wash their faces and brush their teeth. At 5:10 the older children go to the meeting hall to engage in morning praise and worship. It is one of the teenage girls who usually leads the worship time. A short devotion that follows is usually led by Amue or another staff member. Early morning praise and worship helps everyone wake up completely and also helps focus children's thoughts on God as the day begins. Younger children stay in their rooms in the meanwhile. It is a time for other members of New Life's staff to lead the little ones in 'time with the Lord' through various songs, games and stories.

About half an hour later, daily morning chores begin. As with most of the New Life activities, the mandatory chores are regimented and specified to last exactly from 5:45 to 6:15. During this half an hour time, each child is responsible for their specific morning chores. After all the cleaning is accomplished it is a time for a breakfast. At 6:15, everyone lines up in front of the dining hall. Before everyone eats, there is a daily reading from Bible. Those responsible for reading are selected each Sunday evening when a schedule for the upcoming week is being prepared. This way each of the children has their turn excepting the young ones. Breakfast, as with dinner, is usually made of stir-fried vegetables and rice which is served on large tin platters by a staff member. It is required that children do not speak during eating. Once the breakfast is finished, children wash their own dishes, return to their rooms to change into school uniforms and line up before they leave for school. There are two trucks taking children to their schools each day. One car drives them into the elementary school, the other transports older ones to the highschool.

After children return from school, each of them is responsible for a specific job. It takes them about thirty minutes to complete their duties. At this time dinner is being prepared by some of the staff members, be it Amue, Bele, Mipa or Jape. Dzela, the only New Life's male staffer, was spared of this particular obligation. Before dinner, everyone lines up in front of the dinning hall. It is exactly 5:30 pm. As soon as they finish their dinner and wash the dishes, children are allowed 45 minutes to rest or play a number of different sports, be it soccer, badminton, table tennis, volleyball or 'takraw'²⁹. Members of the Home's band often spend the time practicing their instruments while some other girls practice special dances which they perform whenever important guests come for a visit.

At sunset, the children head towards the meeting hall after a quick shower. The daily Bible studies begin at 7:00 and are usually opened with a short performance by the Home's music band. This is the moment most children enjoy joining the singers and dancing around. Evening Bible studies are followed by worship, Bible reading and praying. Older children perform these activities individually, younger ones are 'assisted' by the staff members. Refreshed by their spiritual meditation, children are obliged to do their homework. The younger ones study in the dining hall under the surveillance of some of the staff, the older ones stay in their rooms. This takes us to the end of the day. Lights go out at 9:30 and everyone is required to be in bed at this time. By 10:00, silence settles in New Life and everyone falls asleep, anticipating a new day to come. A day that will be organized around the same absolute structure.

²⁹ 'Sepak takraw' is a sport being played with a bamboo ball similar to volleyball but allowing players to use only their feet, knee, chest and head to touch the ball.

The meaning or 'mission' of New Life's incarnation was stated to be in order to save the children from "extreme circumstances that deny them hope for the future" as declared in its promotional leaflets, and provide them with an opportunity for a 'good life'. In other words, the alleged objective of this development institution was to assist the recipient of its aiding attaining a sustainable state of socio-economic upward-mobility. This incredible generality of goals implies a simple question: What kind of person does the project seek to develop? Or more precisely: What child's personal qualities shall be developed to equip it for a world defined and influenced by aggressive forms of capitalist market economy, together with a self-interested individualism shaped by ever present neoliberal discourse? What faculties does an Akha need to succeed in the wider Thai society? As it will become obvious on the following pages, there is no uncertainty on the part of the New Life Children's Home about the qualities a child 'needs' to acquire the desired success in their future lives.

New Life's structure of control begins with the dawn. Morning praise and worship followed by a reading from the Bible ensures that the Word of God is fresh in the children's minds to lead them through activities awaiting them during the day. With the sunset, the Word of God sounds at New Life again. Regular evening Bible studies and controlled Christian devotions are designed to promote Christian conduct and dispositions. As we can see, the social life behind the walls of New Life is defined by a specific set of technologies to govern its children. These technologies forming New Life's structure of control are well developed to aptly accentuate its Christian foundation and as John, the director, makes sure all are taken quite seriously.

"Each of us has been born with a burden of sin. Not only our children. All of us, you and me, no exception, live in a world crammed with temptations. Some of us are stronger, some are

weaker. You might be strong enough to resist these temptations. Only God knows how good or bad we are. It is not up to me to say who is a good Christian and who's not. Only God can judge," John told me over a cup of coffee at a Black Canyon Coffee outlet in the Big C department store. "However", he continued, "we are here for our children. They are still young, they do not know what is right and what is not. They are new to Christ. It is our duty to set up an order and control their actions. What we do here is to train the children to learn what it really means to be a Christian. That is just the first step. The more important part is to instill Jesus into their brains so they act and live as Christians even without our rules. If we are able to accomplish this task we are not just saving souls. The Lord has promised to bless the obedient believer with all heavenly and earthly blessings. 'Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you'", concluded John citing from Matthew (7:7) before he took a sip of his orange flavored cappuccino.

John's approach is explicit in the whole structure of New Life operations. It begins with the imperative of obedience. Obedience, a required character of a good Christian, is being enforced through the Home's rules and regulations which purport to protect the Home's order; rules impose a structure which directly controls children's Christian conduct. Christian conduct and dispositions are encouraged by the intensive Christian training. Every aspect from their time to their mobility, sleep and diet patterns, exposure to media and society, the children's lives are completely controlled, much more so than if they were raised in traditional nuclear families. The way Children's Homes in Chiang Rai are built is meant to isolate their residents, to distinctly separate them from the outside world and its many influences. The children's contact with the outside world is limited to the time they spend in school outside the Home, to short visits to town or to a media; the vast majority of their time, children occupy New Life's inner world being governed by its technologies and the Holy Spirit.

Despite the fact that the prime subject of the rules and regulations governing the structure of control are the children, it directly impacts New Life's staff members as well. While the established rules are meant to regulate the children's conduct through technologies of control, the staff members' duty is to fulfill the role of regulators exercising control over the children. The order that results from the structure of control intends to promote Christian conduct and character. This is being enacted in the regular practice of the staff members, in their routinely manifested emphasis on normative means to ensure maximal control over the children. These intricate forms of symbolic violence are in place to instill the children with Christian values.

Holy Spirit and the Structure of Control

"Here is your bed and I will see you around six in a dining hall", says Amue to an 8-year-old boy named Ado. His little body is standing still, staring at the floor. The three of us are in one of the bedrooms of the New Life's boys dormitory. Each of the rooms is equipped with three metal bunk beds and six lockers. The walls in the room are painted in plain white, no pictures on the walls, no decoration. This is the bed Ado will sleep in for the rest of his childhood. It is a significant moment in his life. He will not see his parents and friends from home for a long time. It is hard to say what is going on inside the boy's head at the moment. He keeps quiet, stands still, continues looking at the same spot on the floor. What I detected in his demeanor was pride, dignity and defiance; attributes so particular to the Akha. Despite that I am sure this little boy is really scared, insecure and confused. This is the first time he is alone, without his family and friends. This is also the first time he is in the city. But he does not allow us to see any possible sign of weakness. He is an Akha. He does not bow his head. He was raised to be brave and valiant as an Akha man has to be. Ado keeps quiet. "Are you hungry?" asks Amue in Akha with a hearty smile on her face. No answer, no movement on the boy's side.

"You will have many friends here. More than you have at home", she adds trying to cheer the boy up. No response. "Well, if you need anything, ask some of the older children. They will help you", says Amue and heads towards the doors. Before we leave the room I turn back for a second. Ado stands at the same spot, in the same bodily position, his eyes staring at the same place as before.

From now on Ado is a part of the project. Although New Life often charges mountain parents 4,000 THB every six months, by entering the Home, Ado became a 'high-risk situation' child. A child that needs to be saved from an unhealthy family environment, poverty and suffering. That is what New Life does, that is the essence of the project. From now on, Ado will enter the path to salvation. Soon he will be saved.

After dinner, Ado joins other children on the way from the dining hall to a meeting hall in the center of the New Life compound that often serves as the Home's Church. That is where children listen and learn God's Words every evening. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God", stands in Romans 10:17. Since New Life is a Christian institution, it has the Bible as its center and children are taught its precepts through everyday lectures of Bible studies and a variety of other technologies.

The interior of the building was equipped rather simply. The dominant feature of the space was represented by a large wooden cross fastened on the front wall, facing the entrance. Plastic chairs were arranged in ten lines separated in the middle by a path leading to a table with a microphone at the front end of the hall. Boys always sit on the right side, girls on the left.³⁰ Behind the speaker's table there was a small elevated stage. This stage played an

³⁰ "And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left" (Matthew 25:33).

important role during Sunday services, and other religious trainings, as now lonely standing drums, bass, guitar and electronic keyboard suggested. Every Sunday a group of five or six children, who practiced during the week, form a band. Their musical performances represent an inseparable, and for many of the children the most exciting, part of the church service. It was also usually the case during the daily evening meetings. This evening Bible study session followed a different scenario.

"How are you tonight?" asked John of the children with his energetic voice. "Good!", "Fine!" answered some loudly in English. "Today we are going to talk about the meaning of our faith, about our relationship to the Lord", he continued in a friendly manner. Amue standing right next to table, holding a second microphone, translated all into Thai. As I could see in her facial expressions and body language as well as the confidence in which she carried out the translation, this activity was not new for her. In fact, interpreting for John and any English-speaking visitor constituted a standard routine for her. That is what she had been doing since New Life was founded.

"God tells us", started John, "if they obey and serve him, they shall spend their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasures", citing from Psalm 36:11. While Amue translated into Thai, older children followed the part directly in their Bibles. John stopped and took a long look across the area where children were sitting. The hall was settled by a total silence. None of the children even moved, their eyes gazed at the big, good looking, well dressed man - John, their father. As usually, I set at the right side with boys at the very back for the widest view possible of the situation. It also provided me with a feeling of detachment from the situation which I often sought. The silence seemed to be endless. "Matthew 21:22 says", continued John: "If you believe, you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer", John

breaks the silence while walking back and forth, still looking straight into the children's faces. "What is the Lord trying to tell us?", he stops in front of one of the teenage girls. "Lord loves us. If we open our hearts to him he will help us", she answered in broken English. "Hallelujah! Good Lord!", shouts John, walking energetically from one side to the other always keeping eye contact with the children, with Amue translating from behind the table. "Hallelujah!", exclaimed the children. "'If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you' says John 15:7", John recited loudly and the silence filled the room again. John slowly walks, step by step, towards a little boy sitting in the first line. "You are going to have an exam in school soon, right?", asked John. The boy obviously did not understand. After Amue finished the translation some children start to move, turn around to exchange a few words with friends. The silence and atmosphere was disturbed by the noise. John, who was bending towards the boy took a step back, straightened his body as a soldier and with a strict expression on his face said loudly: "Is there anything funny? What do you think is funny? Am I being funny to you? Do you think God's Words are funny?" He slowly walked back and forth between the grouped chairs, girls on his right side, boys on the left. "If you want to stay here you have to respect the rules. I am your teacher and you have to obey what I tell you. It starts right here with the rules of this Home. What I am asking of you is to please and glorify God. You do not ask any question. You do not speak unless you are asked to. The only thing you are required to do is to obey anything I tell you. Peter was jailed in prison for his conviction. He did not question authority, he went gladly for Christ's sake. You might think, "What if I am wrong?" That is pagan. God made it clear for us, your job is to obey and submit. Tonight, before you go to bed you pray to the Lord. You ask God to forgive you for your sins. You ask, "Lord, help me do what I am supposed to do". You show the Lord you love him deep inside your heart, you obey him. It is not just words. You have to live as the Bible teaches us to do. You have to prove you are good Christians", John

was slowly walking around the children. They watched him carefully with serious expressions on their faces. Amue stood behind the table translating. For a moment, I looked at Ado. It was the first Bible study session of his life. He was sitting quietly. The boy must have been confused with little idea what this was all about. He did not understand John, nor did he understand Amue's Thai translation. The language that surrounded his life in the mountains was Akha. Soon, much will change for Ado.

"What I teach you here is Christian. If you want to be a good Christian you need to be obedient. Maybe you think you can do things your way but then don't expect any help from the Lord. This bad attitude is pagan. And we do not want pagans in our Home!", explained John to children sitting still, totally quiet. "Do you want to be good Christians? Do you want the Lord to lead your way?", asked John whose face turned into a friendly smile. "Yes! Lord is good!", screamed all the children at once. "If you love and obey the Lord, he will provide you with anything you wish. Are you afraid of a school exam? You need to pray to God and you will receive his blessings. With God's love you can achieve anything. It is all up to you. God is here for you and now it is your decision." He stops again, looking at the children. "Amen?", asks John with a loud, friendly voice. "Amen!", shout the children while the young ones leaving their chairs to start to run around, boys and girls chasing each other. An atmosphere that initially seemed rather serious transforms amazingly into spontaneous joy, play and happiness. John calmly asks the kids to go back to their chairs. They obey his command with the help of staff members and without hesitation sit quietly back on their chairs. "Why do you think farangs have such good lives?" Everyone keeps quiet. "In the UK, in Europe and in the US all the people have good lives. Tell me why is it so?" No answer. "Do you know why? It's because they are Christians. They believe in God. They accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. If they stop believing in God all the prosperity is gone. Why is it that Korea has

such a great economy today compared to Thailand? Look at the people there. They are smart, they understand that there is the only one true religion. Christianity in Korea is on the rise, new churches are being planted each day and see, people have better lives now", concluded John enthusiastically.

Shortly after the Bible study session finished, Ado, with the assistance of an older boy, washed himself and brushed his teeth. Before he fell asleep he spent some time with the Lord through prayer. Ado, similarly to other younger children, was assisted by a staff member who lead them in their time with the Lord. It was the end of Ado's first day at New Life. As he would shortly learn, the days to come were not much different. In fact, regime, order and regulated control constituted the ordinary life of the world behind the Home's concrete walls. This life was being organized by New Life's technologies that oversee the children's conduct and shape their character. Similarly Ado's self will be transformed in a way determined by technologies employed and controlled by the Home of which he became a part. It will not take long and he will also shout 'hallelujah', jump up and down with many others in the church while pointing his arms towards the sky, distort his face while crying for the final love of Jesus Christ and feel the Lord inside his heart.

Complicity In Salvation

During my time at New Life, I often found myself complicit in these processes of the wider structure of control. While the director explained to the children the direct relationship between wealth, success and Christianity and one of the examples producing an image of a Christian paradise was Europe, it was I who constituted a model for this argument. Since the children's images of European lifestyle had been, in large part, created by media, they believed the world I came from was defined by wealth, easy life, magazine-like fashion and

high-tech gadgets widely accessible to anyone. All this supposedly as a result of faith in Jesus, the Son of God.

During Sunday services I was repeatedly invited up to the front of the meeting hall to contribute to the service ceremony. Often I was able to make an excuse. At other times I ended up, unwillingly, in front of the children, staff, directors of other Homes together with children in their care or anybody else who was visiting, be it missionaries, overseas Christian teams and sometimes even John's Thai friends, among them local politicians, high-ranking government officials and successful businessmen.³¹ In these moments, I was used as an example for children to learn that wealth, success and easy, modern life is the direct result of religious faith. John's manipulation, unwittingly or not, of the anthropologist to serve as a tool to enhance New Life's attempt to encourage children's relationships towards the Lord demonstrates that during the time I spent in the field I was a part of the global process of evangelizing the world.

In the beginning of my fieldwork at New Life, these moments were more than uncomfortable for me. I had been exposed to similar situations before, at the time I was meeting Matt and his missionary friends before I even got to know John and New Life. In spite of that, I never got used to it. Simply, I have always felt awkward playing such a role. Sure, I could paraphrase missionaries' commonplace phrases praising the Lord which have been repeated over and over. I could also raise my hands together with a loud exclamation of "Hallelujah", close my eyes and praise the unconditional love of Jesus Christ. I could jump up and down, run all over

³¹ Amue repeatedly complained about the presence of such guests. For her, Sunday service was a special moment, a deep internal interconnection with the Lord. "Some Thai people consider Christian Homes as a means to gain more power. I do not like John's relationships with these people. He does not understand Thai mentality. They are friends with him just because they want our money. They think it is cool to be among farangs (westerners). They are not here today because of God. They seek personal benefitts", said Amue with an upset voice.

the place, while highlighting the love, suffering and resurrection of God's only son, Jesus Christ. Since I was schooled by Catholic priests and nuns in Bishop Grammar School I had some knowledge and understanding of the Holy Book, the Bible. I was able to dig deeply into my hidden memories and make a narration and explanation of biblical moments the way I was taught by my Catholic teachers. That would work just fine. However, for a number of reasons, I abandoned such a scenario before I gave it a second thought. The problem was not technical to me but rather ethical or moral. I just did not want to be a part of the Home's evangelizing machine. It did not take long before I shared my concerns with John. Although John did not explicitly express any kind of displeasure or concern I could sense a disappointment on his side. However, since then I was not asked to perform at the Church service ever again. Yet, even my simple presence would make me complicit in New Life's technologies of government.

8. The Akha Revolt

Over the past 15 years, dozens of Christian children's homes have been founded, enabling Akha children and other mountain ethnic minority groups to live in an urban environment and to obtain education at state schools. A high percentage of young mountain dwellers living in these development institutions do not complete their education and drop out prematurely. Like other managers of Christian homes in which my closest informants lived and worked, John attributed the failure of the project to educate these children to the 'genetic dispositions' of their students.

If I left the understanding of education of the young Akha at the level of plain description, in relation to their school dropouts, the insights provided by Bourdieu's concept of habitus would not go much beyond the ethnography of a stereotype of 'stupid chao khao' or opposition culture of schoolchildren from an ethnic minority environment facing school hegemony as described in many ethnographies of education (e.g., Willis 1981, Bourgois 2006). In order to open the door to the mysteries of the habitus, and to better understand the daily behavior of social participants, it was necessary to look at the forces that generate it. Here I set out to explore the habitus of the Akha children sent out to live in Christian children's homes while attending Thai state schools in order to better understand these high drop-out rates. The three apexes of the triangle that play major roles in the habituation of the Akha are the Akha parents and village, the Christian children's home, and the state as represented by the school.

Christian homes provide lodging, upbringing and meals and allow children from the mountains to live in the vicinity of cities and to study at urban state schools. At first sight, the opportunity for socially marginalized children to obtain education seems like a suitable tool for development aid. However, during more than ten years of my ethnographic research of Christian development organizations, or more precisely, Children's Homes in the Northern Thai city of Chiang Rai, I observed a large number of Akha students from Christian Children's Homes who ended their education prematurely and dropped out of state schools. The Homes did not keep data on the professional assertion of their former inmates and thus did not allow access to any relevant statistics. The same applied for New Life. After I observed several New Life's children to drop out of school and leave the Home I started to wonder about its reasons. Sturgeon (1999) mentions that unfinished education is the result of a citizenship problem of mountain ethnic minorities. Without citizenship the students do not obtain a diploma for achieved education and therefore have a little interest in school

education. However, vast majority of New Life students, similarly to those I had the chance to observe in other Christian Homes, were Thai citizens.

Tomas: How well do mountain children do in school? Are they good students?

John: No, they are not good students. They are not much intelligent but they are obedient.

Tomas: Is this the reason some of your children left New Life recently?

John: You know, brother Tomas, we do our best to inculcate a discipline and love of God into their little brains. Sometimes we are successful sometimes not. We have a little means to keep them here if they decide to leave.

Tomas: Are you in touch with your children after they leave? Do you know what jobs they do and how they are doing in their lives?

John: Well, thirty of our kids are pastors [says proudly and looks at me]

Tomas: Are there enough job opportunities for pastors?

John: Yes, there is still a lack of pastors here in Thailand. Although their salaries are very low it is the best job these children can do.

Tomas: What about all the others?

John: [takes a deep breath] Well, you know, they do various jobs. Some work in Bangkok in factories, some of the girls married foreigners and live abroad. It is diverse. [John seems insecure. I am intentionally quiet and wait for him to say something.] Well, I am not quite sure.

Home directors and missionaries always responded in a similar way to my question about the professional assertion of their charges. With unveiled pleasure they gave me the exact numbers of children who study at Bible Colleges and the graduates that have taken the pastoral path. The phenomenon of school drop-outs remains hidden from the donors, visiting

foreign Christian teams, short-term missionaries as well as volunteer workers. I myself had no clue about the rampant school failures of young mountaineers for a long time. Amue, later explained to me that the dropouts of mountain students were due to their laziness and lack of self-discipline. The Home's director John added without adornment: "Hill tribes have a small brain. They are not smart enough." To my surprise, children homes did not keep any statistical records or lists of those who completed their educations, and therefore there is no data on the success rates of the various education projects of Christian organizations which lure and separate thousands of children from their families and communities with the promise of a better life. In line with the other staff of the Home, Amue believed that approximately ten children had completed their formal education. During the sixteen years of the Home's existence, more than three hundred of them had lived behind its gates.

In 2006, Aso also joined the drop-out numbers. I learned about Aso's departure in a month's delay, upon my return to the region from Europe. After leaving New Life he had nowhere to live and could not find a job, so he returned to his parents. Young Akha who lived and grew up in urban based children's homes, do not learn the traditional knowledge of farming methods or the art and skill of using farming instruments, and life in the village is wasted time for them. The image of a dreamt-of city life which they have learned to crave stands in stark opposition to the rural life in the mountains. The young Akha find the images of identity of modern urban life highly fascinating, and contrarily, the perspective of living in the mountains is dreary. Many of them expressed to me their feelings of boredom: "There's nothing to do in the village", is something I heard quite often. In contrast, city life which they see on TV screens and hear about from their friends and classmates, is the place "where it's at". Writing of the Akha village of Ban Mae Poen, Sanitsuda Ekachai comments that the effect of children receiving a Thai education is not just that they 'speak Thai fluently' but also that 'their dream

is to live like the people they see on television' (1990: 185–6). Perhaps even more importantly, the city offers a place where one can earn the money needed to actively taste the style and luxury of “modern identity”. Completely in line with other young Akha, Aso justified his departure for the city: “There is no money and nothing to do in the village. I wanted to have lots of money so I could send some to my parents, and also to buy new things.” After a few weeks he returned back to the city where he started working as a temporary hand in road repair.

Not long after my return to Chiang Rai, Amue and I invited Aso to a restaurant for a dinner. The place was largely filled with students in school uniforms and their loud talking irritated the dark-tanned Aso just as it did me. During the dinner I inquired among other things about the reasons why he left school.

Aso: Look at me, I've got a job and I earn some money. I can do whatever I like; I don't have to listen to anybody. If I were in New Life now, attending school, I could not buy anything. To me, those who stayed in New Life are like kids. They know nothing about life out there. While they are closed in the Home now, I'm gaining experience, making money. I'm ahead of them. There's no point in losing time.

For the first weeks of living in the city Aso was filled with undisguised excitement. He got the feeling that his ideas about modern city life, inseparably connected with consumerist goods, promoted by commercials from television, magazines, street billboards and other media, were starting to be fulfilled.

Knowledge of the world of high school students is dominated by studies describing the relationship between school as a hegemonic institution on one hand and students as defying players on the other. In research on members of the British working class (e.g. Willis 1981) or members of ethnic minorities in the USA (e.g. Ogbu 1978, Schwartz 1987, Bourgois 2006), we encounter portraits of students that are not far from movie characters of Hollywood blockbusters such as *Dangerous Minds* (dir. Smith 1995) that describe high school as a world of mutually hateful groups of defiant, arrogant, and vulgar students and idlers rebelling against school. The world of state schools in Chiang Rai resembled rather an army drill with uniforms, mass line-up in front of the school building, and the raising of the state flag. In a preface to the book on social reproduction in French society, culture and education written by Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), Tom Bottomore criticizes its authors for their lack of reflection on resistance: "The authors mention occasionally the pedagogic action of 'dominated classes', with which we could associate the notion of a 'counter-culture', and this aspect of their subject is doubtless one that will be developed more fully in the future, along with the theoretical discussion of class relations." (Bottomore 1990 in Bourdieu and Passeron 1977: xvii). What Bottomore does not consider is that the French system might not produce the same sort of counterculture as the British. In his article *Articulating School Countercultures* Kipnis (2001) argues against the generally accepted fact of oppositional culture. Schwartz (1987) shows in his study that even in U.S. high schools there is significant diversity of the extent and intensity of student oppositional cultures, whereas Ninnes & Burnett (2004) points out indisputable problems that the use of Western theories trying to decipher resistance within education creates in the setting of Japan. He warns that too much research in this field has been placed within subcultures and classes that do not correspond to the Japanese context. Ogbu (1978) transferred the concept of castes to the setting of the United States in order to explain the varying extent of success rate of students from different ethnic minorities. Based

on the extent of negative experience and oppression that accompanied assimilation experience of individual racial or ethnic groups, he developed a typology differentiating between “voluntary minorities” and “involuntary minorities”. Involuntary minorities among which Ogbu (1974, 1987, 1998) included African Americans, Mexican Americans or Native Americans, develop a folk theory of school success based on experience from previous generations which produces a pessimistic outlook on schooling and subsequent job opportunities.

As evidenced in the lives of my informants, Thai Akha from Christian homes quite often assert resistance during their study. However, in contrast to the above mentioned studies, their defiance is not aimed against the school. Although the Akha should, according to Ogbu’s theory, belong to the “involuntary minorities” category, they have not yet developed an opposition culture against education. On the contrary, they perceive education as an opportunity that paves the way to social mobility. This viewpoint, combined with the refusal of accepting a marginal social position within Thai society, leads to resistance toward one’s own ethnic identity and to an effort to become “the good citizen”. Premature drop-outs of Akha students were not assertions of resistance toward school; they were rather a defiance of the rules of Christian educational institutions. While children’s homes provide mountain children with the opportunity to study in urban schools, in their effort to spread Christian faith they often construct rules that stand in direct opposition to their efforts towards social advancement, as I will describe in following pages. Christian development organizations thus participate in the reproduction of social inequality and the exclusion of mountain children from Thai society.

I realized the meaning of the Home's rules for the first time when one of the girls got a mobile phone from her parents so that they could stay in better touch with her. At the time, the gift stirred much commotion and discussion in New Life. It was forbidden as many other things were within the Home. The lives of the children in the Home were bound by rules defined by school and those defined by New Life. Both institutions require of students a deep obedience and submission, and an uncritical respect of authorities, whether it is the teacher, the king, a Home's director, the pastor or God. Thai elementary school textbooks explain to students the necessity of subordination and obedience for example in this way: "the moral ways of the school lead to discipline, because a place where many people mingle together needs order, conventions, rules, and enforceable regulations. If everybody behaves according to these, the school will be a peaceful, hence a good place, as opposed to the chaos that results from everybody following his own inclinations. Disciplined people are morally good; they are considerate people loved by others and are welcome company, quite unlike the unruly types, who are shunned. Thus pupils had better respect the rules that are conducive to good order, thus creating feelings of responsibility and discipline." (Mulder 1998: 33-34). The children's home management found inspiration in the Bible itself: "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right" (Ephesians 6:1). "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you" (Hebrews 13: 17).

The rules and the children's observance of them were what made it possible for both the school and the Home to exist, yet it was the rules that made many students of New Life leave the Home and school prematurely³². In an effort to lead the children carefully along the path of conservative Christianity, the Home's students were literally isolated not only from the

³² Another reason for leaving the Home and school was the study at one of the many Bible Colleges in Chiang Rai.

surrounding world but especially from their imagined one. Contributing to this is the fact that all children have to return to the Home immediately after classes are over. New Life staff members come to pick children up successively both from elementary school and high school.

Pon (girl, 17 years): We can do absolutely nothing. Girls from my class tell me to come along after school. They go and have a meal together or just go downtown. I can never go anywhere with them.

Tomas: Is it possible to have friends at school if you can't be with them after classes?

Chali (girl, 16 years): It is possible to have friends but not close friends. I always stay aside because I don't know the connections. They experience something together, they say something to each other, and I don't know about it.

Tomas: So because of the rules of New Life you feel alone among your Thai classmates?

Chali: Yes.

Pon: Sure I do. Of course I feel pushed aside. When I can't go anywhere with them, I don't know what happened, what they did. And they don't talk to me then because we don't share the same experiences.

Similar to the rule for immediate return from school, other rules apply to the Home's children: a ban on participation in the celebration of Thai holidays, a ban on visiting the Big C department store where they can see with their own eyes the goods they know from advertisements in a mall setting and/or a ban on partnership relationships. All activities that are popular among their Thai peers and directly connected with the "modern life identity". "It's the Christian way!" said Amue every time I asked. The effort of the Home's management to protect children from the influence of "foreign" religions that defined a number of Thai holidays, or from the influence of consumerism that defined Thai society, only deepened their

marginalization. Every day I would meet groups of Thai students in uniforms meeting for lunch or dinner together, stopping by the popular ice-cream chain Swensen's or the KFC fast food restaurant, in shops, on benches by the river hiding the forbidden bottle of alcohol or just engaged in friendly conversations on the new bridge in Chiang Rai from where they were being tirelessly expelled by law enforcement officers. At that very moment, children from New Life had to be in the Home; isolated from their imagined worlds, excluded from the larger Thai society.

The world of city life-styles is more than seductive for young mountaineers. Visits to the night market or a shopping mall represent the modern life they construct based on images seeping from TV screens. Nonetheless, the aspects of modern life in Thai society are in sharp contrast to the values of Christian community upon which the Home's rules are founded: chaste modesty, virgin beauty and most of all, submissiveness, obedience and humility. The highly sexual images of cool people known to the mountaineers from TV commercials and soap operas are reinforced in the urban setting by numerous commercial enterprises – hairdressers or massage parlors, shops and shopping malls, night clubs and discos or even the modern wellness centers. In the perspective of the New Life management, these are associated with the idea of immorality and lack of a bond to the Lord, leading young people astray to the path of sin.

However, it was the very effort to protect children from the negative influences of the world behind the Christian home's walls and the resulting social exclusion that lead young mountaineers to develop their own counter-culture (Willis 1981). The world from which the Home protected its members was the very world the young Akha longed for, a world which the state school upheld and was consequently upheld by, the ideas of and desires for modern

life which influenced mountain children's constructions of "good taste" – they wished to live like Thais. They wished to be Thais.

"Government policy, coupled with commercial propaganda, has resulted in the reincarnation of the Akha youth in the clothes of Thai modernity. Apparently, the authorities do not just want the Akha, and the other hill peoples, to be Thai, but also to be T'ai.", writes Rigg about state institutional schooling and adds: "In other words, not just to gain Thai citizenship but also to embrace Tai-ness" (2003: 156). The strong desire for imagined worlds to which they sacrificed their lives by leaving their homes, lead the young Akha to try to live, speak, think, dress up or even eat as Thais do; to become part of their imagined worlds in the modern Thai society. However, spending time with peers, negotiating one's own position and trying to belong were blocked by the Home's rules, thereby deepening the children's marginal position. The rules prevented mountain children from participating in the world which the school and media taught them to consider as the only correct one, the only one worth following. If Aso wanted to be a "good student and citizen" and to fulfill his ideas of modern life which came within his reach with his departure from the mountains for the Christian home and school in Chiang Rai, he was forced to start breaking the Home's rules.

Aso: The Home was terribly boring. So I took the TV from the dining room and carried it to my room. When they found out, there was a lot of hassle. ... Later I started to leave.

Tomas: What does it mean that you started to leave?

Aso: You simply arrange for someone to wait for you a little ways from here. When it's dark and calm, you run away and you have someone to pick you up. Only boys from your room know about it but they run away, too.³³

Tomas: What did you do?

Aso: I used to hang around with friends. We had fun. Sometimes we went to the night market or the Big C.

Quite a few of the Home's youth resorted to a more radical form of resistance – leaving the Home and dropping out of school - as Aso did. The choice to leave was a strategic decision in order to fulfill the effort to achieve one's own goals. The Akha students are not powerless in the environment of the urban school or the Christian home. My informants were not passive, non-ambitious victims of the Christian-based development. On the contrary, their departure from school and the Home was a demonstration of resistance toward the rules that stood in the mountaineer's way to their imagined worlds.

By the end of the year in 2006 Aso assumed his first real financial debt by buying a motorbike. Low income and lack of jobs gradually plunged him into depression and he started using illicit drugs. In 2007 he was arrested and sentenced to 8 years in prison for a violent robbery. In the spring of 2010 he was released ahead of time for good behavior. Among stories of prison gangs and rough conditions in the Bangkok male jail he mentioned his wish to leave to study at a Bible College.

³³ Breaking the rules is a serious transgression that may result in forced departure of the child from the Home. Although runaways belong to the more serious misdemeanors, the Home's staff keeps them secret from the director.

The Banished

In the spring of 2009 a scandal seized a control over much of New Life's routine. While the staff members as well as some of the older children knew about relationship that has been developing between the only male staff member Dzela and one of the Home's older girls, Nalee, John has learned about it much later. I am not familiar with roots that lead John to his discovery, yet the tragedy that followed was almost unforeseeable. I was not there that day, so the following description of the events is a representation based on a number of narrations I was provided with by several New Life's staff members and some of the children. In any case, what is important is not the exact description of the events that took place but rather the message the incident provided. Nevertheless, since then, the social life in New Life was never the same.

John immediately called police after he found out about the relationship. When the police arrived to New Life, the couple was arrested and taken to a Chiang Rai police station for interrogation. When I heard the story for the first time (the very evening it took place) I could not believe police would waste time with two young adults for falling in love. Although I was aware of John's contacts and relationships with a number of local government representatives, successful business people and other significant social figures, it just seemed too outlandish. The narrations of the story I heard during the next days, were similar to each other as an egg to another egg, dismissed all my doubts. No matter Dzela, the Bible College Graduate, was reliable, hard working member of the staff and Nalee the most talented student out of all New Life children in its history, after they were brought back from the police station, their belongings were already prepared in bags. They both were made to leave New Life this very same day. Dzela thus lost his job and place to live since he was allowed to occupy one of the

Home's rooms. For Nalee this event meant the end of her dream to study and grow by attending university, the institution of higher learning.

New Life rules and regulations define the nature of the male-female relationship quite clearly. Any signs of affection between sexes were strongly forbidden, be it hand holding, kissing or even prolonged boy-girl walks within the Home's compound. While children were also taught the division of social roles men and women hold in marriage, one of the more immediate concerns to John was the nature of relationships to follow the right Christian conduct.

During Sunday services and evening Bible study lectures, John would occasionally remind children the roles of husband and wife as read in Ephesians 5: "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God. Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." However, more obvious example of different social roles according to sex was represented by the division of chores children were obliged to do. While girls were inscribed to cooking and other kitchen duties, taking care of younger children, flower watering or sewing, boys were obliged to conduct more strenuous maintenance and construction work on buildings and the compound's land to cultivate their craft skills.

It took me some time before I realized the wider reasons behind the strict rule which did not allow New Life children to spend time with their schoolmates outside of the classes. I am not sure anymore if I just did not keep enough attention before but the enlightenment came after one of John's regular Sunday sermon. As any other time, John was perfectly dressed in black

pants with well ironed creases, light blue long-sleeve shirt and black polished Oxford shoes. His haircut was faultless as usually and as usually, he also sparkled with wit and a good temper.

John: It is perfectly normal to have an interest in the opposite sex. It is absolutely natural that boys like girls and girls like boys. That is what God expects from you. It is part of the scheme Lord has prepared for us. [opened the Script on 2 Corinthians 6:14 and start to read] "Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?" The message Lord provides us with does not mean a young person should not date. Correct? Lord knows it is natural and he wants you to understand it as well. The Script tells us what sort of person a Christian should marry. [stops for several seconds and the room fills with silence. Then he comes close to Mibie, an eighteen years old girl.] What is it Lord is telling us? [Mibie looks at him just for a second and quietly lowers her head towards the floor.] God is good! He wants us to be happy. That's why he exhorts us to marry to whom? [raising voice while standing in front of Ado. Ado keeps quiet. John starts to laugh and continues with a benign smile on his face] God wants us to marry a Christian! Once you leave this Home and start dating, you better make sure, before you get involved in any kind of relationship, the person is a Christian. Some of you might be foolish and consumed by naiveté to think that such a person could be changed. Forget it! [stressing with a strong voice] It will be Satan communicating with you. Do you think fresh fruit heals the rotten one? [smiling again] No! The good ones don't set the bad ones right.

Since Thailand is predominantly a Buddhist country, all New Life children's schoolmates were Buddhists. By enforcing children to return to Home immediately after school was over,

any possible development of deeper relationships with non-Christians has been eliminated. Nevertheless, although children's hormones and libido were meant to be suppressed by virtue of Home's technologies, while being good and obedient Christians, the rules did not stop Nalee and Dzela from falling in love. The events that took place that day provided children with an evident example of the consequences of the Home's rules violation. This occurrence is also offered an excellent example of the values hold by Christian-based development. The emphasis John placed on the rules as technologies structuring the control of children demonstrated that Christian conduct and obedience represented superior values than school education. Although the operation and existence of Christian Homes in Chiang Rai have been rationalized as an opportunity for a good school education in city, the education that really mattered was not the formal one provided by the state.

From a busy street full of noise, smog and dust Amue and I enter a dark space that similarly to another twelve small units represents one of the cheapest apartment buildings in Chiang Rai. The Sisaimoon street in Rob Muang area where the building is situated has been nicknamed by some of my Akha friends as the Burmese street or Burmese centre by which they refer to the majority of population residing in this part of the city. Burmese immigrants who came to Thailand were far less influenced by political but rather the economic disaster that has left them with the lowest GDP in South East Asia. As such they represent the poorest segment of the local population in Chiang Rai and not always welcomed guests.

Small window together with the entrance doors take almost the whole range of one of the two little rooms of the apartment. The whole apartment's interior, not larger than 15 meters square, provides an idea that once, long time ago, somebody painted the walls white. A clothesline is fastened on one of the walls to serve as a wardrobe. The rest of the little amount of clothes,

perfectly folded in a pile, lies down on the floor right next to the entrance doors. About half a meter from this pile is an electric cooker with one hotplate on which stands a pan full of burned out oil from previous cooking. The other of the two little rooms looks even more dilapidated, decrepit and decayed than the first one. Most of the floor is covered by a bed with no linen of any kind. Odour of mould and fungus that covers the walls and plates with food leftovers together with standing, stuffy air is getting control over my mind, depriving me slowly of my senses. I am not able to think, feel or to speak. Four of us stay in the room squeezed in this little space. "We have to get a fan", noted Nalee with a shy smile on her face. Then nineteen year old former New Life child apparently noticed the cognitive condition I just found myself in. Nalee has rented the apartment together with her boyfriend Dzela. They pay 1,300 THB a month. Proud of their own flat they invited us to see how well and skillfully they can manage the life in Thai society, outside of the Home environment. What I was observing reminded rather than a success images of a slum poverty. I did not know how to pretend esteem for their effort, neither I was sure of what to say to not disappoint our hosts. In fact, I was horrified. I did not expect anything even close to this. I keep quiet, saying nothing. With a serious expression on my face I slowly nod my head in an attempt to look calm and contend as possible. Unfortunately, the environment of the apartment or more precisely its climate does not give me much chances. I can not breathe. Subsequently, I made every effort to open the entrance doors to get some fresh air. What I can feel in moment is the heat of July's sun together with an air full of exhaust fumes from the street. Yet, the huge Carbon Monoxide placed me in calm and sober feeling. I felt a relief. As soon as I opened the door I noticed a loud group of six guys with two bottles of cheap rice whiskey.

Tomas: Is it safe here?

Dzela: [looks at Nalee] The owners live over there [pointing towards a house across the street]. Before we moved in, they told us, they will look out for us.

Tomas: Why did you choose this area?

Dzela: It is close to the place I work now. And also the price was good.

Tomas: Where do you work now?

Dzela: I work as an ancillary in a school kitchen.

Tomas: Do you like the job? [Amui looks at Nalee and smiles bashfully]

Nalee: He does not like the job. Also, we have very little money. After we left New Life, we had no money so I had to take any job available. I started to work in a massage parlour but they wanted me to... [Nalee stops and I have the feeling that the smile on her face hides her guilt]

Amue: You should not work there.

Nalee: [staring on the ground] I quit after two weeks. I am looking for another job. It is just all too difficult. Since I dropped out of school I have no proof of my education. Everything is difficult here.

Tomas: What is difficult?

Nalee: The life outside of New Life is difficult. We got all we needed there. We did not have to think about money all the time. Nobody gives you anything for free here. Also, I feel so stupid here. I do not know so many things. I did not expect the life outside of Home to be so difficult.

Tomas: What do you mean?

Nalee: Anything. When we left, we had no idea how to rent a place to live, how to find a job, what to do to earn a living wage. Nobody taught us how to live outside of New Life.

Tomas: Do you want to finish your education?

Nalee: Yes, of course I do. [breaks into tears. Everyone stays still and quiet.]

Tomas: Since you do not have a job now what prevents you from finishing your education? You have just one more year ahead of you, right?

Nalee: [weeping and drying tears from her face] We have no money. I can not afford even the transportation to school and back everyday. And all the other things. [breaks into tears again. Dzela inconspicuously touches her arm for a second.]

Tomas: How much do you make in the kitchen?

Dzela: Five thousand baht. It is really not easy. We barely survive. But it's going to be ok. Nalee finds a job soon and we will be fine. [says rather proudly with no sign of a self-pity whatsoever.]

Both, Dzela and Nalee belonged among the more significant New Life's residents. Dzela graduated from a Bible college and was one of the Home's staff members. Nalee was a great student and popular among other children. Actually, she has been the most successful student in New Life's history and her school score placed her at the top of her class even among Thai schoolmates. Suddenly, I stood in a putrid and filthy apartment to see young Akha lucky enough to receive the opportunity to live in a Christian Home and attend a school in city. They both fulfilled the scenario that was supposed to lead them towards their imagined worlds of the modern city life. There I was, observing the pride with which Nalee and Dzela presented us with their new lives. Lives that they had to, for the first time, arrange by themselves. Despite the fact Nalee was selected among all the children to speak as a New Life representative during the government officials visit few months ago, now I was looking on a girl standing in front of me whose life was not much different from the poor Burmese immigrants.

The ethnographic example demonstrates another significant attribute of New Life regulations. By isolating children from the Buddhist society, they were not allowed to acquire the needed skills of socialization to orient themselves in Thai lowland society. What Christian Homes placed their emphasis on was oriented towards the end of the world, the return of Jesus Christ and eternity.

While Dzela and Nalee got one step closer to their dream of the modern life by getting a place to live in city, their low income and limited job opportunities did not allow them to participate on the consumer lifestyle they longed for. In September 2010 Dzela lost his job in the school canteen. Unable to find another employment opportunity, they moved to Bangkok. Dzela recently works at a gas station and Nalee in a factory in a distant outskirts of the Thai metropolis.

9. Development: Towards The End Of Cheap Labour

No Blessing For The Akha

During my observation of New Life, John spent most of his time outside meeting friends, some of whom were high-ranking local government representatives, strengthening relationships with other members of the Christian community in Chiang Rai or enjoying some international fare at the local upscale restaurants. From my central European point of view he was living an upper-class lifestyle. From the northern Thai perspective, John belonged among the wealthiest one percent of the local population.

Similar to my previous experience meeting Matt and his Christian friends, the world of a white god Christian community encompasses material comforts and possessions alike. There was no acknowledgement of Matthew 19:24: "And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God"; quite the contrary, one's value in places like New Life was measured according to the size and quality of one's possessions.

"Thanks the Lord!", I heard repeatedly when I spoke well about someone's luxuries, be it for instance a house, a car, a dinner at an expensive restaurant or an financial opportunity to keep one's own children at a local international school or an American university. As destitution did not signify a credit but rather a sign of an insufficient relationship with the Lord, renunciation was not appreciated as a virtue. "You know brother Tomas", said John after I made a critical comment in relation to a Mercedes one of the missionaries purchased, "there is nothing bad about pleasure. If Lord wants me to have a big house it is His will. We are not to judge God's will. Some might think that money or things are in a contradiction to our faith. Those who think like that do not understand the true meaning of God's words. 'And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes', said John (21:6). The Lord is our shepherd and He blesses His disciples: 'Blessed *are* all they that put their trust in him'. Amen?", John looked at me with a smile on his face. "It is not the money what is bad, it is the attitude. There is nothing wrong about enjoying a pleasure. The problem comes if money and possessions draw us away from God", he concluded. It was clear that asceticism indicates a lack of dedication and obedience on the side of a Christian more than a lack of his faith. As I have learned during the years, affluence and prosperity were considered to be God's blessings

and thus a sign of a good Christian. What was the case for missionaries did not hold for their local staff.

The practice of Christian development I was observing in Chiang Rai, the emphasis on material and spiritual growth, could be understood, in theoretical terms, as an inversion of Weber's ascetic religiosity (2002 [1920]). According to Weber, the Calvinists faced a psychological dilemma. They were anxious to know whether they would be eternally damned or not. Basically, they could not be sure if they would go to Heaven or Hell. This uncertainty, encouraged by Puritan leaders, led them in their endeavour to work hard to achieve a financial success. The idea was not motivated by the notion to earn themselves a place in Heaven but rather to convince themselves that they have been chosen to go. They believed, according to Weber, that once they began doing well financially in their enterprise, it would be an unofficial indication they had gained God's approval and belonged among the saved. The material success provided them with the feeling that they behaved as the elect. Only those chosen by God would be allowed to live a good life on earth. For Weber, this was the Protestant ethics, ethics of a hard work, that led to the development of capitalism. However, contrary to the Christian aid workers in Chiang Rai, the Protestants' ethics were based on asceticism which denied them of comfort and pleasure. They worked extremely hard to achieve success in their carriers to maintain a good relationship with God. Contrary to John's understanding, Protestants despised hedonism and laziness. Pleasures and luxuries were not a part of the "project" since profit was supposed to be, following the logic of capitalism, invested back into the business. Actually, this was what differentiated Protestants from other money makers who would spend the profit on a pleasure and luxuries. The spirit of capitalism, as Weber believed, is thus the value and attitude behind money making. Since the idea and motivation to make a profit represented the business way of life no less than the

religious one, for Weber, it was the religion that could cause economic change. Following this logic of the rational calculation of decision making in regards to a profit, according to Weber, Protestantism stood behind the creation of modern capitalism. However, while capitalism relies on formal rationality in its money making endeavour, religion is based on a different form of thinking. The hard work Protestants invest to achieve emotional and spiritual goals of happiness and eternal life relies on substantive rationality. As a result, the formal rationality that stood in contradiction to the faith in a supernatural power of religion, Weber argued, would undermine the religion itself and inevitably lead to secularisation.

As I have already mentioned, for much of the day, John was not present at New Life. I slowly realized the important role Amue played in the operation. In the meantime, when John was absent, it was she who was practically in charge of the Home, its children and even its staff. Although Amue was not officially in a position of power over the other staff members, it was naturally accepted that it was she who was often in charge, delegating tasks and making decisions.

For many Akha, Amue represented a success story and although some might have been envious of her achievements, she was honored by people in her village as well as by those who lived in the city. Actually, it was the very honor and dignity which Amue tried so hard to achieve. As stated earlier, she was the first child from her village who got the chance to live in a Christian Home operated by foreign missionaries. Because of economic reasons, after two years she returned back home to her village. Although her parents were quite well off compared to many other Akha, their financial situation did not allow them to keep their daughter at the Home any longer. It did not take long before she got an opportunity to continue her studies at a Bible College. Soon after she graduated, Amue was offered a job

with an American Christian organization. The content of her work consisted of visiting Akha villages to "spread the word of God, to the Akha people in Laos, China, and Vietnam", as was the objective of the Akha Churches of Thailand and other Christian organizations (<http://www.akhachristian.com/>; 04/07/2012). While in villages she would show the Jesus film to explain to villagers the meaning and benefits of the new, modern religion from the great world of farangs. A year later she met John with his offer to participate in a project to open a Home for children from the mountain regions. The then 17-year-old Amue, a Bible College graduate with an incomplete formal education gained trust, responsibility and power. During the first years of her work at New Life, she completed her secondary education through weekend schooling and soon found herself among Thai students at the Chiangrai Rajabhat University. It seemed the realization, the fulfillment of the 'life success' missionaries always promised to their absolvents.

Amue's story promoted the highlanders' images of success and of a good, modern life in the city, as being the result of Christian aid and a 'proper Christian' school education. In the need of children to fill the growing number of Homes, villagers' attitudes towards schooling were actively lobbied by village pastors, missionaries and other members of the Christian community. Akha villagers were tirelessly persuaded that Christian-based development institutions provide, with the assistance of city schools, the proper education and training to become a part of the modern Thai society. If it was the case in the early years that Homes hired local Christians familiar with mountain communities and languages to persuade villagers to let their children live in city-based Homes and be "developed" by strangers, things had apparently changed. Institutional child care as represented by Christian Homes in northern Thailand had gradually gained significant popularity not just among Thai government representatives but especially among a large number of Akha parents.

Visits made by urban-based Christian Homes' absolvers to their villages significantly contributed to the positive attitude villagers held towards the Homes and school education in the city. These Akha visitors would always purchase some presents to bring to their parents using the little money they had saved. The modern cloths these urban-based Akha wore and their overall appearance resembled villagers' images of what they saw on their TV screens. These very visits contributed to villagers' conviction that Christian Homes provided their children with the kind of life they dreamed about.

Amue also comprised an appropriate example to New Life's children. In fact, she has represented the values which Christian Homes worked so hard to inculcate into the children's minds. She was a prime specimen and representative of the close and direct relationship between devoted Christian faith, obedience and educational success. Similarly to Weber's (2002 [1920]) Calvinists, in the minds of many Akha, Amue was promoting the Protestant ideas of salvation, rationality, progress and the relationship between God and economic development. However, things are not always the way they seem to be.

In fact, the position Amue occupied within the social space of the Christian community in Chiang Rai, was quite different from the one villagers believed she did. The all-embracing power of chao khao discourse repeatedly materialized during New Life's organizational meetings. New Life held regular meetings with the staff members twice a month. Usually, it was only John and the five staff members who were present. Occasionally, since New Life was an officially registered foundation, members of the Home's administrative board were present too.

These meetings offered an understanding of how the Christian community in Chiang Rai evaluated human qualities. Despite the fact that it was Amue who was in charge of New Life for the better part of a day and who was familiar with the ordinary problems the institution, as well as its subjects, faced, her ideas, concerns and recommendations were often quickly dismissed by John, Thai members of New Life's administrative board or foreigner missionaries present at these meetings. It was no different for the other Akha staff who dared to express their thoughts and insights.

Since one could easily recognize a good Christian through his material possessions, it was the affluence and prosperity which provided one with a positive social position within the Christian community in Chiang Rai. Although, the symbolic value of ethnicity played its role, the honor and affluence several Akha missionaries³⁴ enjoy, no situation demonstrates this better than that within the lowland Thai society. The obvious lack of the Akha staff's experience was an evident sign of the value they hold. It was no less obvious, that their power was a direct result of the wage John paid to his employees. In a paradox of globalization, while the international donors, driven by the moral economy of humanitarianism, tried to help the needy, money they contributed encouraged the reproduction of social inequalities.

This continuous experience, together with the remuneration New Life appraised its staff with, demonstrates that not even the state of a white god was immune to chao khao technology. It also shows another form of the Homes' complicity in Thai state governmentality. It is not only the way Christian NGOs promote their projects and activities that endorse the chao khao discourse of mountain ethnic minorities' bad image. As the ethnographic example above demonstrates, they also take an active approach in the marginalization of their Akha

³⁴ Ajay, Luka, Yohan belong among the most successful Akha missionaries.

personnel. This embodied manifestation of the chao khao discourse on the part of foreign members of the local Christian community, as well as on the one of Thai board members, enforced the Akha staffers' sense of self as that of people of a lesser value. Such is the repercussion of symbolic violence.

One day I asked John about the wages. I did not want to spark any conflict or confrontation so I asked in what way does the remuneration reflect differences among the staff members education and experience. "It is a good question", said John and took a moment to think about his answer. "The salaries we pay to the staff are based on the salaries they would receive for another job. They would hardly find better conditions than what they have here. If they had a better opportunity, they would not stay. You know, Thai employers prefer Thai applicants. Thais look down on the Akha. They employ them only if there is no Thai willing to do the job. Also, see how many people from the neighboring countries are here. Much poorer countries like Burma and Laos. They are willing to work almost for nothing. If they do the same work for a hundred baht a day, nobody will pay more to Akha", explained John.

Although the Akha staff was aware of its social position within New Life as well as within the wider Chiang Rai Christian community no less than John and other missionaries, it would be wrong to consider Amue as a silent victim of this unequal power game. Nor were the other members of the staff. Despite the fact they liked John and provided him with respect, often I would observe subtle forms of their 'everyday practices of resistance' (Scott 1987), be it gossips, slanders or a collaboration in a concealment of older children's rules violation. Despite the fact they occupied a marginal social space in the lowlands, villagers provided the Akha who worked for foreigner NGOs with honor and respect. Although villagers had little idea of the social position they held in the lowlands, just the fact that they had a job that

provided close proximity to the Christian Community, supported the Akha images of a modern life and success. Since Christian Homes were considered as an important part of the modern world and Christian aid workers as wealthy and powerful, by becoming a part of this community, the Akha staff of New Life enjoyed a recognition and respect within the Akha community they did not otherwise receive.

You Can Be Anything You Want To Be

From the moment young Akha leave a Home and enter the labor market, job competition is already fierce among Thai applicants. The enormous interest of the Thai middle class in education transformed the labor market into a highly competitive environment. Universities, private and international schools, and a variety of colleges produce large numbers of highly educated, self-confident members of a middle-class who strive for prestigious positions and well paid jobs. Christian Homes raise Akha children towards submission, obedience and deep faith in a "minority" Christian God. Then the state schools taught the Akha subordination and inferiority, to adopt a position on the margin of Thai society; the discursive power of *chao khao* now struck mountain students with its full power.

As soon as the Akha enter the labour market, the competition is already in full swing. This environment where Thai graduates occupy the dominant positions does not offer the Akha much prospect to acquire a 'good job'. The limited opportunity Akha have, does not usually offer "middle class construct" options for a career or particular job but rather they commit themselves to a "future of generalized labor" (Willis 1981: 99). Once, Amue mentioned an Akha woman she had heard of who was supposed to have procured a 'good job'. Since I had rarely met an Akha with a 'good job', I was interested to meet her. I learned she was working for "the big company, Toshiba". For any of my other questions Amue had no answer, be it

about the job position or its content. What mattered was not the work itself, but the symbolic value of an affiliation to a significant supranational company.

After the Akha leave a Home, they usually perform manual, unskilled labor. Many work behind a bar, or as waitresses, gas station attendants, construction workers, salesmen of hard to sell products or services, as labourers in some of the factories that relocated to Southeast Asia, as masseuses in massage parlours, as housemaids in Thai households, as street-stall food-sellers, shop assistants in stores and the street markets or as an ancillary in restaurants and kitchens. Some girls marry foreigners and move to their countries, while many Akha live as immigrant workers, providing cheap labour abroad. The majority of jobs Akha perform require minimal education and offer low prestige, difficult conditions and bad remuneration. As a consequence, some step out of the labour market to enter the informal, illegal economy. A minority of Bible College graduates obtain a job within the Christian community. The rest remain unemployed. Adju is one who belongs among 'the rest'.

After I moved into the House in Chiang Rai shared by Amue, Bele, Adju and Aso, I soon found the everyday life of its inhabitants terribly boring. Amue and Bele spent much of their time in New Life and Aso worked as an ancillary labourer at a construction site. Daily he would leave in the early morning and come home late in the night. The days when I was tired, lazy or too bored to go to New Life with Amue and Bele, I would spend most of the time with Adju. Adju stayed home to look after his baby girl Pachain. It was only much later that I realized I had been observing an exquisite performance, a social drama, which only life can arrange. The time I spent in this shared household was, for the closest members of my social network, accompanied by harsh conflicts with reality of the social space they occupied behind the gates of Christian Homes. Shortly after I moved in, Adju lost his job in a bar.

Both of us, Adju and I, sat on the grass in front of 'our house'. Actually, the house belonged to a Japanese man who has married Adju's older sister. Before they moved to Japan, they have offered Adju and Bele to stay and live in the house. This very house protected the young family from falling on the very 'bottom' of an economic tragedy they would otherwise hit.

It was the day after Adju lost his job. At that moment, nobody knew about it. The night before, after Adju returned home, he said he did not feel good and went directly to a bedroom he shared with his wife Bele. Their baby girl Pachain was at his mom's house. It was in fact Adju's mother who spent most of the time raising Pachain so Bele and Adju could go to work. It was early morning but Amue, Bele and Aso were already gone. Although this sense is missing in my field notes as far as I can remember, I could feel some tension in the air. Adju, who was usually full of fun and energy, was quiet this morning.

Tomas: What's going on? [I land my hand on Adju's shoulder]

Adju: Hard life.

Tomas: No shit! What's up?

Adju: I do not know what to say. I feel so mad and embarrassed.

Tomas: [thinking for a while how to approach him at the moment] Do you want to talk about it? [a silence that seemed infinite. Adju stood up, went into the kitchen and brought us both a glass of water, sat down next to me and quietly stared into the grass]

Adju: My boss is a bad man. He dislikes me. [said slowly while looking at the ground]

Tomas: Not long ago you spoke well about him. Actually, you said he was cool when he let you use his car to pick up Pachain at your mom's.

Adju: Yeah, that is what I said. But I did not mention he was sneering at me because of my accent. He would make fun of me even in front of our customers. [I did not know what to reply and silence filled the space for a while once again] I know I am stupid, I do not have a good education but I was doing a good job behind the bar.

Tomas: What are you talking about? You have finished high school. You have a good education and I do not think you are stupid at all. Remember last week when we watched the soccer game? It was me who felt stupid. You knew all the players and teams... [Adju interrupted me]

Adju: That is worth nothing. Thai people look down at me anyway. You do not see that I am stupid because you are farang. Thais know it very well.

Tomas: So you are mad because your boss made a fun of you? Is that right?

Adju: He is not my boss anymore. I quit.

Tomas: You quit because he made fun of you?

Adju: No, that's not the reason. It does not matter where you work, Thais always scorn you. [he said with a calm and conciliatory voice]

Tomas: So what happened?

Adju: He wanted me to work on Sunday. [said angrily]

Tomas: What's the problem?

Adju: [looked at me baffled] I cannot work on Sunday!

Tomas: What the fuck are you talking about? He is your boss. He is giving you a job. Look at Aso! Would you rather work with him at a construction site?

Adju: You do not understand! I am a Christian, I can't work on Sunday. [said angrily]

This ethnographic moment not only shows my ignorance, it also demonstrates a social implication of Christian-based development. During the years Adju spent in a Christian

Home, he had internalized Christian conduct through the intensive psychological techniques of inculcation. The cultural capital he acquired was significantly influenced by the technologies of eternal salvation. Equipped with such cultural capital he has interpreted his boss's request as an effort to humiliate a Christian employee. It was then when he got stuck in a vicious cycle leading him from one paltry job to another. Finally, Adju gave up and stayed at home to look after his baby daughter. From that moment on, it was only Bele who contributed to the family budget. The social dynamics that shifted Adju and Bele into deeper poverty provided me with an opportunity to better understand how social marginalization is being legitimized even by its very victims.

I was constantly astonished by the intensive care Adju provided his daughter with. Not that I would consider Akha to be bad parents but the way Akha children are raised is simply different from the common European middle-class methods. Surprisingly, Adju's approach was even more "western" than that of my European friends. He basically dedicated all his time and energy to Pachain's mental and physical development. Besides that, he took care of all the household duties to take the burden off of Bele's shoulders. Adju was cleaning the house, washing dishes, cooking, doing laundry and all the house and garden maintenance. He worked hard, everyday, Sundays being no exception.

While I was writing field notes, sitting on a sofa in the living room, I was distracted by the elaborate fashion in which Adju read to Pachain from a children's book I bought a few days before. He would read a story and then slowly, with much patience, cue Pachain to identify the story's character by pointing her little finger at the pictures.

Tomas: How did you learn to play with a child this way? Did your parents do it like that?

Adju: [laughing] No! My parents cannot read.

Tomas: So where did you see anything like that? Honestly, I thought you would never make use of the book. I was going to tell you what to do with it. [laughing]

Adju: [laughing] You know how you always tell me to turn off the TV, right? I learned it from television. See, how good it is to watch TV.

That same day I bought some beer that Adju, Aso and I drank in the evening. Influenced by the alcohol, I was babbling about child care and repeatedly emphasized to Bele how good a father Adju is. I was enjoying myself. Then Adju exposed me to the dynamics of social inequalities once again.

Adju: You are smart, educated, you have a good life. I never understand what is wrong with you that you spend your time with people like us. You can do anything you want but you sit here with me now, you eat the same food as we do, you do things with us, you live like us. You are smart, why do you want to waste your time with stupid people like us?

Tomas: I explained that to you many times. You do not remember? [I briefly described the research I was working on as I had so many times before]

Adju: See, that is what I am talking about. I am stupid.

Tomas: Fuck that! I am sick to listen how stupid you are all the time. [I turned towards Bele and Amue who were talking about something else] Do you hear me? I am really sick always listening to your lamentation of how stupid you are. [everyone was quiet] All of you accomplished more than most of the other Akha. You have got your education. [then influenced by the alcohol I lost it] You are not stupid. Fuck that! No more of that shit! [I stood up and went to the bathroom]

Bele: [after I returned] Are you alright?

Tomas: Yes, I am good. Sorry. I just can't stand to see how you blame yourself for all the problems you face again and again.

Adju: What are you talking about? Look at me. I have a wife and daughter and I am not even able to take care of them. I have no job, no money. I can't provide security to my family. What a man am I? Tell me! I am ashamed of myself.

Tomas: You have a job. You work very hard every day. You take care of Pachain and of the household.

Adju: [thinks for a moment] You know, I do the best I can to assure Pachain has a good life. She is smart! Right? [he looks at me like he would ask for agreement, so I nod my head] We will make sure she gets the best education.

That evening, before I fell asleep I wrote the code of an audio recording file from that evening in my field notes and added just two simple words in capital letters: SYMBOLIC VIOLENCE. The enforcement of symbolic parameters of social power as an unconscious process for everyone involved poisoned the most intimate facets of the vulnerable population mountain ethnic minorities represent. The Akha were inculcated to equate a school education with socio-economic mobility, together with the neoliberal idea – ‘you can be anything you want to be’; Success is the direct result of one's effort and hard work. Consequently, Adju, similarly to my other Akha informants, accepted failure as a result of his low-quality, for which he alone was responsible. What he failed to achieve for himself, he was dedicated to arrange for his daughter. This attitude was quite common among the Akha as already demonstrated in the efforts Amue, and her mother, invested in the decision concerning her brother's education.

Living On The Surface

During the time I stayed with Bele and a few other members of my closest social network among the Akha in a house in Chiang Rai, I had a chance to get a better grasp of the social conditions under which mountain people make decisions related to their job possibilities. It also reminded me that the concept of 'free choice' is for many just an empty phrase which serves only to maintain the rusty gears of merciless neoliberal machinery. Maybe they lacked sufficient self-reflection, maybe they were embarrassed to acknowledge the situation mountain people in Thailand face when I inquired of the staff members about reasons behind their employment at New Life. Be it either way, the difficult situation Bele had to face has shown that, besides God's calling, there were also significant economical reasons behind the decision to work at New Life. I was reminded once again that information provided by informants often does not match the real state of affairs.

Adju and I were sitting on a tiled floor watching the evening news while Bele occupied a worn suede settee that was facing an old, darkish brown TV table while feeding their baby girl Pachain. I had a feeling there was something going on in Bele's life for some time already but I did not pay much attention. At that time Nale and Dzela were made to leave New Life and Amue did not work there anymore. Although I would meet Bele each evening, we did not talk much. My mind was entirely engrossed by the problems Nale and Dzela were going through and I paid little attention to those being faced by Bele alone. It was that evening when Bele finally shared her concerns with me.

After Dzela and Nale were expelled from New Life, John needed to find a replacement for Dzela's position. As a part of this personnel change, John cut the already low salaries he was paying the staff. Angered by John's decision, which subjected her to serious economic

pressure, Bele had spent the last several days searching for a new job. It was the first time she had ever considered such an option. For an Akha mother married to an unemployed Akha husband, the encounter with reality, of the possibilities the job market could offer a highlander, was devastating. The only job available apart from one at a massage parlor was as an ancillary at a nearby restaurant. The possibility of being a professional mistress was declined immediately, despite the fact that Adju, her husband, and I, jokingly offered a number of reasons why she should give this work a try; our efforts to cheer Bele up ended in vain.

Bele: Manager (of the restaurant) told me, If I work two shifts a day, I could make five thousand.

Tomas: How much do you make in New Life now?

Bele: I used to make five thousand but John reduced our salaries. From next month on I get only four thousand five hundred [explained angrily while putting a spoon into Pachain's little mouth]

Tomas: Well, that means that you would be better off working at the restaurant, right?

Bele: That's right. But it is a hard work. Also, the boss is Thai and all the other staff is Thai as well. [pointing to the advantage of working among the Akha at New Life]

Tomas: What do you mean?

Bele: You know what I mean. Thais always look down at us. I would be made to do the worst chores. I am not interested in being ridiculed all day, every day. [suddenly shouting in an upset voice when at the moment she accidentally turned the bowl, out of which she was feeding Pachain, spilling its contents onto her shirt] Shit!

Pachain broke into a cry and the conversation was over. A week later, after Bele decided to give the restaurant job a try, the position was no longer available. Bele surrendered and continued with her job at New Life under the new conditions.

A few months later she took all family savings together with money she borrowed to put herself on the board of a plane heading to South Korean; she had joined the ever growing number of Akha travelling abroad in search of employment to provide their children and families with better lives than the one they were assigned to live. Three months later, after police raided the dormitory of a factory she worked at, Bele spent several days in a prison before she was deported back to Thailand with no savings and with debts to pay.

Despite the ostensible objectives of the Christian aid, nearly all children trained under the surveillance of these developmental institutions earned salaries similar to their peers who were left behind to live with their families and study in local schools. Although the international Christian community in Chiang Rai offers employment almost exclusively to applicants trained in their institutions, the job offers are limited. Compared to the numbers of children residing in Homes, the offers are minimal. What is also minimal is the remuneration.

Vulnerable Being

While I spent much time observing my Akha informants in their efforts related to job search, the struggle to sustain a dignity and self-esteem was ever present. To be chao khao is not the role one would pick to live in the Thai society. Among an immense number of moments and situations I witnessed, I present the one that had the greatest impact on me. Amue and I arrived at the Bangkok international airport from Laos. At the moment she has presented documents and the immigration official noticed her Akha surname, he called his colleagues.

They, just for the sake of fun, sent her from one counter to another. Humiliated Amue, submissively rushed back and forth just for the entertainment of Thai authorities. During this demonstration of power, frightened Amue got entangled into the straps marking paths to each of the counters. As a frightened animal, under the orders Thai officials shout at her, she stumbled among entertained Thai passengers. The Akha imagined worlds are being confronted with the hideous practice that does not allow such images to be actively experienced. For young Akha the contact with reality is devastating.

In 2005, shortly after she graduated university, Amue attended an open competition for a job at a government office in Chiang Rai. Despite serious interest, the attempt did not fulfill her expectations and the job was offered to a Thai applicant. That evening we had dinner at a noodle stand. Amue, upset by her failure, spoke about the marginalization Akha have to face in the job market.

Amue: There is no way you could understand my situation! [shouted at me] You have no idea what it is like to be Akha here. You can do whatever you want", [her upset voice made me feel she was blaming me]

Tomas: Amue, I can't do anything I would like to. You'll get your luck next time. [I said in an effort to calm her down. Still upset, Amue, without a word, put a spoon full of red, dried chilli into her soup, added some fish sauce and sweetened the bouillon with a full spoon of a dampish granulated sugar.]

Tomas: Maybe there are similar offers by other government offices.

Amue: [not responding, vigorously stirring the soup with her chopsticks. While wrestling with noodles to get them into her mouth, she hissed] I am Akha. Nobody wants to hire a chao khao for a good job.

Tomas: How do they find out you are an Akha?

Amue: It's easy. They see I have different surname, an Akha surname. Besides that, Thais recognize my accent. They know immediately I am chao khao. [continued calmly with a bitter tone in her voice] Most government offices and companies do not hire people with a chao khao accent.

It took years before Amue applied for another job again after this unsuccessful, off-putting experience. She was too afraid to expose herself to a similar kind of threat to her self-worth. From this point on she continued working at New Life. With a university diploma she was paid a salary similar to a factory labourer, waitress or a construction worker; the same was true of the other members of my social network among the Akha, whether or not they acquired a higher education or even possessed a university diploma. Three years later, Amue left New Life and travelled to Sydney in search of a better life. As Amue was exceptional in the education she had acquired, similarly exceptional was the fact that she had to travel to Australia (Bauman 1998).

Knowledge Economy

The more I learned about the social effects of school education as a part of the development initiatives of mountain minorities in Thailand, the less I believed in the positive effects this universal development instrument and the stated UN Development Millennium Goals were meant to bring. Affected by the positive discourse surrounding the concept, it took me some time to admit that school education was not bringing the expected results. Encouraged by the anthropological understanding of the ethnic minority schoolfare together with the debate encompassing the interplay of poverty, marginalization, ethnic minorities, state school

education and the job market, I begin to challenge the unquestioned popular notions behind schooling.

As the seven of us were sharing a grill at a cheap Thai-style barbecue restaurant, a favorite place to eat among New Life staff members, things went slow. While pieces of pork, beef and chicken were broiling on the top of a white-hot grill and vegetables were steaming in water, there were too many hungry stomachs waiting for their share. While Bele, Mipa and Adju argued whose stupid idea it was to refuse the second grill that had been offered, the rest of us listened to Jape's husband. Thirty two year old Ahtu belonged among the few university educated Akha I had met. Despite the global development community's confidence in the positive effect of education as an instrument for social and economic mobility, the reality faced even by the Akha university-educated elite told a different story.

Ahtu: The price of a land is very favourable now. I saw some great offers in Mae Suai³⁵ recently. There is an up-front investment to purchase the land and seeds. If everything goes well as I expect it should pay off with the first harvest. [referring enthusiastically to a business idea to establish a pineapple farm in the mountains while picking a piece of a meat from the grill.]

With a degree in IT, Ahtu worked as a driver for a church in Chiang Rai. Similarly to Amue and two other Akha I knew with university degrees, Ahtu experienced repeated failure in his quest for gainful employment. After a while, he gave up his effort to get a job commensurate with his education and started to work as a sales person selling food supplements to drug stores. Later he tried a few other jobs. While I was continuously asking Amue to clarify the

³⁵ Mae Suai is a district in the western part of Chiang Rai province.

parts of Ahtu's talk I did not understand, I found his idea to establish a farm in the mountains remarkable.

Like so many others, Ahtu had spent most of his efforts in large part to escape the life of a mountain farmer. Now, I was watching a man in his early thirties who achieved so much to reach his imagined world in the city, seriously considering a return to the hills in order to become a farmer.

Ahtu: Pineapple can be harvested for ten years. The sale would be done through a Thai businessman. I have already discussed that. He sells it directly to a factory. There should be no problem with that. [enthusiastically]

Tomas: [interrupting his monologue] Many Akha dream about getting rid of farming and about a life in the city. Now you speak about buying a land to farm.

Ahtu: It's not possible to find a good job here. If I have my own farm I do not have to listen to any boss.

During our conversation, a snatch of Marx flashed in my mind: "Labor is not the source of all wealth. Nature is just as much a source of value as labor, which is itself only the manifestation of a force of nature, human labor power." Ahtu's exceptional business plan was also an example of his ability to adapt within the limits of spaces he could occupy. I have no answer to whether this skill was a result of his dispositions and life experience or a university education that allowed him to develop a strategy to enter the capitalist market economy in such a way; only time will show if his plan will become a reality. If it does, will Ahtu, who spent his life in a city, be able to be a capable farmer? Will he make a profit off the capitalist economy or will the market eat him alive? That is something we might learn in the next few

years to come. Until then I stay sceptical, trained by experience. As with many other groups, Akha enjoy talking things up. As most groups, Akha also enjoy drinking; I had witnessed great, convincing plans too many times from the Akha when they were drinking and sharing their hopes and dreams among one another. Without judging it was clear, until Ahtu's dreams materialized, his story represented the weak results of the proclaimed potential school education explicitly and implicitly carries.

Tomas: You have got a university diploma, work as a driver and think about starting a farm. Tell me, is the education important then? [As soon as I finished my question all started to speak over each other].

Ahtu: The education is important. If you do not have an education Thai people look down at you.

Amue also believed that education leads to upward social mobility, as she had told me and to New Life's children so many times. Her belief had been repeatedly manifested through her younger brothers for whom she arranged the opportunity to live in Christian Homes and to study in city schools. However, as Amue had once narrated a story that stood behind her decision to study at university, it became clear that the very reason was, similarly to what Ahtu has just mentioned, directly related to the symbolic value of education.

While Amue was preparing a breakfast for herself, Adju and me, one morning in 2008 I steered our conversation toward the reasons that lead to her decision to apply to a university.

Tomas: Why did you decide to study at university? You told me before you did not like school and you hated to study. The only two subjects you have ever enjoyed at school were gardening and cooking. Is that right?

Amue: Yes, that's right. You know I am stupid. [said while pouring rice into an electric rice cooking machine.] I did not like the fact that normal people look down on us, that they despise us. I did not want to be a petty chao khao. [she continued while stirring a mix of vegetables in a big frying pan]

As she progressed with the preparation of our breakfast, the air filled with the strong smell of chilli pepper and other spices. The air became so suffocating that Amue started to cough and choke.

Tomas: Are you ok? [laughing]

Amue still choking nodded her head. I stood up to open the front door while Adju turned on a fan to air the fumes out. Soon the food was on the table.

Tomas: Mibie [addressing Amue by her Akha name] you know I like stories. Could you recall the time when you started to seriously consider entering a university?

Adju already left the table to fool around with little Pachain who was laying on quilt in the living room. "You always ask so many questions", resisted Amue. "It is interesting for me, you know?", I said as usual. "Everything is interesting for you", she retorted. "Come on", I said with a big smile on my face. Amue stood up and started to clean the table, pretending we never began this conversation. "Amue?", I said with a distorted voice. No answer. She continued cleaning the dishes from table. "Amue?", I said again with a low-pitched voice to tease her. She could not persist and ended up laughing.

Amue: At the time I studied at high school I was a member of a music band in a church in Chiang Rai [she recalled reluctantly].

Tomas: You were already working with John at New Life then, right?

Amue: Yeah, that's right. All the other members were Thais. We have always practiced on Saturday for our Sunday church service performance. We chose the song we would play. Sometimes I played guitar, sometimes I sang, at other times I would lead the service and explain a part of Bible. That's what we were always preparing for. After that we usually went to have a meal together. They always talked about school, about things they study and I did not understand them at all. I felt inferior. I thought they scorn me as a third-rate person. It was then that I told myself I need to have a university degree whatever it takes.

Shortly after she finished high school, Amue met a Christian woman from Europe who had been working as a missionary in Thailand during the 1980's. After the woman heard her story, she offered to help Amue with tuition fees as a part of an aid project her home church group provided in Thailand. Many years later it was the same good woman who assisted Amue in her endeavour to move to Sydney.

If I did not have the opportunity to observe Akha who have finished their secondary or even university education, I might interpret Aso's story as a result of his school drop out that have disabled the mobility from marginal social position. While an upward social and economic mobility is highly unlikely without a formal education, the life stories of my other informants clearly show that school education is not able to overcome the politically structured social suffering.

The story of Amue coupled with those of my other Akha informants lead me to envisage my friends as bodies into which value could be added, as to a bottle into which water is being poured. In this image, instead of water, it was the education which represented one of the essential ingredients in raising one's 'value'. Contrary to the optimistic conviction held by the international development sector, no matter how hard Amue tried, one's value was never high enough. In this scenario, written by life, the Akha body seemed to be too big to be filled by schooling alone.

Life's Good, For Some

The previous parts of the chapter could provide an impression that the life of the city-based Christian Akha was nothing but a suffering. Too often I observed situations that, from my central European middle-class perspective, seemed to be a constant struggle with various forms of social inequalities my Akha informants were made to face. In spite of that, how to explain the influx of Akha immigrants into urban areas then? As I describe in this chapter, economic reasons are a significant factor but as I was observing the social dynamic behind my friends' lives and practices as they experienced in the city of Chiang Rai, I have learned the economic reason was not the only motivator. These former Christian Homes' residents were doing their best to enjoy their lives to meet the dreams of consumerist lifestyle.

Despite the apparent failure to reach higher rungs on an imagined ladder of the upward social mobility, none of the members of my network among the Akha considered themselves to be a victim. Life and work in the city does not represent only the opportunity to make money needed to satisfy the basic needs of theirs and their families. It also allows participation on the modern culture urban space offers. Despite the lack of financial recourses to purchase all the new things market makes us to believe we need, my friends felt a relative freedom as a result

of the possibility to become a part of the modern world. Even though they were always short of money, visits to Big C department store, street markets, a simple walks along shop windows on the main street of Chiang Rai, trips to a favourite touristic spot or a cheap dinner at a night market's street stall, all these adventures into the culture of urban consumption represented, for the young Akha, a significant aspect on the way towards their imagined worlds. These activities, during which they often meet with other Akha fellows living in the city, belonged among the most important moments of their lives. Meetings at markets, department store, in cheap restaurants or at food street stalls offer recreation from the exhausting labor and imperfect reality. These meetings also offer young Akha an excellent opportunity to get closer to the dominant images of the modern life style. Both, young women as well as men prepare carefully for these meetings, pick the best pieces of cloth they have and tune up their 'style'.

Every month I would see shining faces of the female New Life staff members after they received their salaries. They would usually, and with an immense delight, I have to say, hurry together to downtown Chiang Rai and spend hours examining cheap cosmetics, clothes, shoes, jewels and anything else what the street market had on offer. Bele would usually take the role of the expert. Not only she provided the other young women with an explanation on the use and quality of a particular merchandise and label it as modern or out of fashion, she has also served as an adviser for consumer decisions other girls made as well as for their styles. Needless to say, all the things they purchased were cheap, low quality products manufactured for the most part in the nearby China. The participation in city mass-market commodity culture of the capital driven market economy represented one of the most valued features the life in city offers to the Akha. This might be viewed as a result of the immense power of technologies of representation, such as television and other mass media, and the

influence of neoliberalism, over the imagination of my Akha informants as well as the rest of Thai population. Although purchasing and showing modern commodities represents, among the Akha, a sign of modern identity and status, this effort attracts a little attention in the urban environment. In the centre of staggering consumption lifestyle of the Thai population, in which recognized brand names often play a major role, the low earnings Akha have at their disposal offer highly limited opportunity to enjoy the modern lifestyle as represented by media. Each moment another, newer goods to be purchased arrives and another places to see and meetings one must not miss appear. New fashion clothes, new cosmetic products, trips to Doi Tung popular among foreigner tourists or air-conditioned stores provide the Akha with a feeling of participation on these pleasant, modern activities. The limits Akha face allow them to enjoy the modern lifestyle only partially though.

The neoliberal discourse of 'choice' Akha adopted, central to the Western middle-class production of ideas of 'individuality', is what Strathern (1992) calls 'proscriptive individualism'. The capital driven market economy developed various forms of control that are being manifested in consumerist practices governed by technologies of the self. An individual defines himself, his individuality, while is being defined, by the 'innate' capacity of 'free choice'. Nevertheless, freedom of the individual's self to expresses its individuality through consumption, is in fact limited by unequal access to resources that are not accessible to all, especially not to minorities. As Cronin (2000) demonstrated via the example of consumerist imagery, the gender is used to restrict the access of women to their individuality, thus limiting individuality by inequality. The notion of a free choice often leads to presumption that those who cannot gain value by dominant symbolic techniques are immoral. While the Akha seek to participate in the middle-class taste culture, their unequal access is considered by the Thai society as a moral fault, a pathology, bad culture or a failure to try hard

to achieve. The Akha immorality is then perceived, on the level of consumerist taste and culture, as moral failure resulting from the relationship between people and objects. In this logic, it is the property of a person what represents the self. "We have a repetition of the seventeenth century possessive individual where the powerful and privileged, with access to knowledge and law, define themselves as a self against the mass who only present the immoral constitutive limit; the immoral cannot inhabit a proper personhood and therefore cannot accrue value to themselves. The working-class are not allowed access to the resources and technologies required for self-production. This is why self-making is class-making", argues Skeggs (2004: 91). Social inequalities are thus presented as a failure of the individual's self to know, do or think in the proper way.

On a Wednesday evening Bele asked me if I would like to visit a night club popular among the local university students community. Bele, together with other New Life staff members and their partners planned this form of entertainment in advance and she thought I would be happy to join them. When the Friday evening came, the house we lived at was taken over by an effort of each of its inhabitants to look as thansamai as possible. While I sat in a living room, writing a description of events and practices appearing in front of my eyes, I observed Bele, who similarly to Amue, spend nearly two hours over their limited collection of cosmetics, while Adju improved his look with a considerable amount of hair gel. These activities were followed by seemingly infinite debate about the right pieces of cloths among Amue and Bele of which Adju was not absent.

At the moment we were about to leave the house to meet the rest of our group in front of the club, Bele, who was dressed in tight light blue jeans, pink t-shirt with a picture of the Disney's Mickey Mouse and pink plastic flip-flops, looked at Amue in terror. After all the effort to look

as thansamai as possible, Amue, at the very last moment, changed into comfortable, black 'fisherman' pants. "Don't you rather want to wear something more modern? Look at yourself, you look like a village girl", said Bele in disgust. Amue immediately changed into dark blue jeans that were still wet from the afternoon washing.

The club was equipped with lights, huge speakers and tall tables surrounded by young people, all tidy and well dressed. The space was filled with a freezing air coming from wall mounted air-con units, no less than with a deafening sound of music coming from the huge speakers. It took few seconds and my senses were overwhelmed. A bottle of Jack Daniel's soon appeared on the table as a result of the decision made by Bele and Mipa. Although it was meant we split the price, I was given the largest part to pay. While everyone mixed the whiskey with a significant amount of sparkling water, I swallowed two straight shots as fast as I could in an effort to handle the horribly loud noise. Soon the alcohol reached my blood system, my senses became stupefied and I started to enjoy myself. My enthusiasm did not last for long.

As the only westerner present in the club, I was in the centre of interest not just of girls and ladyboys but also of the live band that performed that evening, playing a strange mix of Thai pop, rock and hiphop combined with the western hits from 60s and 70s. As soon as they finished a DJ became the master of that night ceremony. The leading singer was repeatedly informing the crowd about the presence of a farang. Soon the crowd convinced me to get on the stage as a go-go dancer. My diffidence has been suppressed by another shot of the whiskey and I have got right on. Simply, it was blast and to my surprise, I was enjoying myself. Suddenly, after I got back to our table I was mocked by this alcohol-encouraged crew before I realised Adju was not there. Since I wanted to have a shot with my friend, I went to search for him. He was gone. I searched even the toilets and asked security guards at the

entrance. Adju simply left. Since I did not want to interrupt the rest of the group from fun they had, I went to look for him myself. The street the club was on was lined with a number of other, smaller clubs and bars. It did not take long and I found Adju sitting behind a bar two doors from the club, with a Singha beer in front of him.

Tomas: What's up? Why did you leave?

Adju: You are a good man, Tomas. [said with a drunk voice]

Tomas: You are a good man too. [I waved on a waitress and order the same bottle of beer Adju had]

Adju: [taking a deep sip from the bottle] No, I am not. [he seemed desperate]

Tomas: What is going on?

Adju: You know, since my childhood I believed I will be somebody. My mom always told me that I will see the world. She had no idea but she always told me that I will live better life than my parents did. She told me I will live like Thais.

Tomas: Your mom is a smart woman. Look at yourself! You live in city, you don't have to work on farm, you even look like a Thai. [I took a sip from my bottle]

Adju: Bullshit! My life is worth a shit. My parents worked so hard, they sacrificed to allow me to become somebody. I really believed I could be a teacher or work for a government office. You know, I thought I would have some good job. Look at me now. I am a loser. Stupid fucking loser. [angrily]

Tomas: You know what, my friend, we should get back to the club. [I put an arm around his shoulders in an effort to move him from a stool he sat on]

Adju: [he kept sturdy, resisted my attempt and did not move] I am not going anywhere. I will drink here the whole night. [emptied the bottle] You are going to be here with me. [thinking] If we are together, Bele does not get mad.

It took me about half an hour to convince Adju to leave. At that moment I had already received a phone call from Amue that they were about to go home. On the way to a parking lot where Ahtu left his car, Adju repeatedly attempted to escape back to the bar. His condition influenced by alcohol did not allow the body to succeed over his mind.

There was another significant symbolic value the city life could provide the Akha with. The fact somebody was able to establish his or her living in a city and survive, lead people in villages perceive such a person as successful. No matter how bad the life in city could be, such a person would be esteemed. While the work in a city could be stereotypical and physically demanding no less than farming, Akha often perceive it as a contrast to the undesirable and old-fashioned work on mountain fields. Many city jobs, factory labour included, imply an attractive aura of modern society making use of impressive technologies, preferably inside, protected from sun and rain.

I have accompanied my closest Akha friends during their visits to their parents' villages many times. Although some often cursed about it, they have always brought money to their parents, to be used for themselves and/or for younger siblings if that was the case. On the way to mountains, they would stop at several markets to buy meat, cleaning agents, fruits, sweets and snacks, sometimes even clothes or shoes. While in the village, they would be considered as experts on any possible problem related to the world outside of village boundaries and as such treated with an esteem by all village generations. During these visits my urban-based Akha friends enjoyed a shield from the common disrespect they faced in the lowlands. It was the symbolic value of honour, Akha experience in villages as a result of their city life, what

provided another motivating factor for the urban migration. At the same time, it was the power of the very symbolic value what the Akha lacked in the city.

Since most of my informants were Christians, the following observation holds for the Akha who have lived in one of the Chiang Rai's Christian Homes. The affiliation to the Christian community and contact with its members, usually during Sunday services, provided young Akha with a feeling of belonging. Since they consider Christianity as a synonym for a modern, easy lifestyle people in the West are supposed to enjoy and since a large part of the community is constituted by foreigners, no matter they stay on its very margin, young Akha Christians felt to be a part of a modern and powerful segment of the urban society. International, English speaking Christian community, together with stores, malls, movies, nightclubs, restaurants, street billboards and huge LED panels, provided ideas that constructed the imagined worlds of the Akha.

It should be no surprise that the perspectives of the members of my social network among the Akha, towards their lives in city, were ambivalent. They appreciated the comfort and convenience of the city life (they have got used to in Childrens' Homes), be it an easy access to running water in kitchen and bathroom, permanent supply of electricity, convenient public transportation, markets and entertainment but also the opportunity to make some money. On the other side, the city lifestyle full of a smog, noise, traffic and a little respect for mountain ethnic minorities, provides the Akha with feelings of loneliness, estrangement, isolation, insecurity, illnesses and depressions. While joyfully enjoying the positive aspects of their life in city, Akha are being driven on the margin of Thai society. Constantly confronted with the dynamics of social inequalities quietly constructing feelings of legitimacy, the Akha blame themselves for a failure in their effort to reach the unreachable dream constructed and

inculcated by technologies infected by the neoliberal discourse. In spite of the fact my Akha friends have come close enough to be able to touch the world they wish to be a part of, their dreams are yet to be fulfilled.

10. The Value Of Honor

As I observed my Akha friends' lives and learned their stories I began to see the concept of chao khao in a new light. I have slowly come to realize it was not just a term to label ethnic minorities from the highlands; the term, often used in relation to the problems mountain people are accused of causing the nation, stood behind the inception of the 'chao khao practices'. These practices have gradually morphed into a discourse. The term 'chao khao' could no longer be seen to represent an ethnic classification; it became no less a type of technology of power employed by the state to govern the conduct of highlanders than the practice employed by members of the lowland society. Accordingly, two types of people have been created, differing from each other by their 'assigned' value. Suddenly, Thailand was populated by 'normal people' (to utilize the term Amue has used to explain the motivating factors behind her university education) represented by lowland middle-class Thais and those of a lesser value - the 'under people', represented by highlanders. The concept of chao khao thus encompasses the relationship between value and bodies.

This ethnographic project scrutinizing the Christian-based development of mountain ethnic minorities in northern Thailand offered me a picture of values materializing through the Akha body as a mirror of the Thai one. This picture was emerging with ever increasing clarity the longer I followed the lives of my Akha friends. In an effort to get a better grasp of these social

projections, some of which I have ethnographically described throughout this thesis, and to scrutinize them on the level of a theory, I have combined the theoretical concepts of three major social scholars - Foucault, Bourdieu and Marx.

While thinking about my ethnographic data through these scholars' concepts, I found the possibility of immersion into a child-like trance in which my mind would play a game with images, stories, places, scents, feelings and spaces, an exceptionally pleasurable state. I honestly enjoyed the luxury I had to fully engage creatively with something, with such an enthusiasm, that had little to do with the rationality of a capital-driven market economy; yet, what I sought was not irrational. While my mind was occupied by the images of poverty, marginalization and social suffering my Akha friends faced, I was allowed to rejoice in an activity that so many would find to be totally worthless.

In my small Berkeley apartment, modestly equipped with just a few pieces of furniture, surrounded by the peculiar energy of this university town, dogged by the excess pressure of its intellectual potential, I was allowed to indulge my mind with images that constituted a model of a world assembled from components of my informants' lifestories and the social space they inhabit. The model was supposed to represent the social dynamics of Christian Homes operations in northern Thailand. In the effort to build the model according to its reflective original, the theoretical concepts served much in the same way as scaffolding in building construction. Gradually I was constructing an imagined world that could exist nowhere but in my mind, of which I was simultaneously an audience and a director.

While I was working on this thesis and constantly meditating on the relationship between the Thai state, Christian-based development and the Akha as their subjects, the concept of value

soon appeared with significant frequency. Basically, what I was contemplating between the lines of my fieldnotes was oriented mostly around the concept of value. The Thai state attempted to raise the value of the mountain population; Christian Homes were active in augmenting the value of children in their care while the Akha were obsessed by the idea of increasing their own value. It was just a short step to perceive the social implications of *chao khao* through Marx's theory of surplus value, or rather through its poststructuralist reading. For Marx, surplus value was the difference between the worker's labor productivity and the necessary cost of his labor power, that which allowed a profit. While labor power is, according to Marx, the potential or ability of the worker, be it his physical strength, intelligence, skills or capacities, the labor stands for the actual activity producing value. I was particularly inspired by Anagnost's poststructuralist reading of Marx's concept of value as "a concept-metaphor that has no proper body of its own but can be expressed only in terms of a differential" (Anagnost 2004:191).

One of Foucault's significant theoretical contribution is his conceptualization of body, in which the body represents an essential part of power relations in modern society (1990, 1995). He has located the "meticulous ritual of power" or the "political technology of the body" to grasp a better understanding of where it arose, how it was shaped, the ways it gained its importance and so on (1990). From the beginning, Foucault was interested in the way scientists have investigated the body and in in power enacted through operations of specialized institutions, such as prison, school or hospital. In the course of time, he recognized the combination of knowledge and power that were localized in the body as a general mechanism of power to be highly significant in Western societies. As he writes, "the body is also directly involved in a political field; power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it, train it, torture it, force it to carry on tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs" (Foucault

1995: 25). We can see a direct connection to the economic system as the body is both useful and productive. The efficiency and productivity of men and women becomes possible only after they have been "caught up in a system of subjection (in which need is also political instrument meticulously prepared, calculated and used); the body becomes a useful force only if it is both a productive body and a subjected body" (Foucault 1995: 26). It is here that we could trace some elements connecting Foucault's disciplinary techniques and the technologies of self through a body, Bourdieu's concept of habitus and Marx's conceptualization of body as an instrument for production. The notion of Bourdieu's habitus is closely related to Foucault's concept of discipline. "Discipline, like habitus, is structure and power that have been impressed on the body, forming permanent dispositions", write Eriksen and Nielsen (2001: 130). However, Foucault, in contrast to Bourdieu, put particular emphasis on the violence through which modern regimes impress their (bio)power on bodies (Ibid.). Contrary to Marx and his followers, for Foucault, the political technology of the body (the interrelation of power, knowledge and the body) are not to be found in a particular institution of power - the state. Although the state and prison play important roles in the formation of power relations in modern societies, Foucault sought to separate specific technologies that articulate power on the body. He scrutinized the history of these political technologies of the body and described the interrelations of the technologies, state and specific institutions, yet the political technologies of the body, he writes, "cannot be localized in a particular type of institution or state apparatus. For they have recourse to it; they use, select or impose certain of its methods. But, in its mechanisms and its effects, it is situated at a quite different level. What the apparatuses and institutions operate is, in a sense, a micro-physics of power, whose field of validity is situated in a sense between these great functionings and the bodies themselves with their materiality and their forces" (1995: 26).

To understand how the value of a body is being assessed, it was necessary to scrutinize its very essence and production. Bourdieu's conceptualization of capital allowed me to comprehend value as a compound of its various forms. It also offered an explanation of the dynamics behind the assessment of a body's value on the labor market in Thai society as well as within the Christian community. In an attempt to get a better grasp of the means by which Thai state and Christian Homes control the Akha to increase their quality, how the Akha themselves provide their self with cognition of their value and to make some sense of the process through which the social marginalization of mountain ethnic minorities is being constructed and legitimized, I have combined Foucault's concept of governmentality with Bourdieu's symbolic violence, capital and habitus. Bourdieu's narrower orientation on a social actor extended Foucault's governmentality by the concept of symbolic violence that widens understanding of the dynamics of social inequalities on the level of ethnographic detail.

It is useful now to shortly return to the very substance of the chao khao discourse. The term 'chao khao' translates as 'hill people' and according to the official documents is used to mean 'hill tribes'. In this concluding chapter, I argue that as much as chao khao defines the mountain ethnic minorities, it also defines the members of the Thai middle-class. The chao

khao discourse³⁶, as I came to understand it through observing the facets of its social practice, constitutes a contrast; a contrast between two figures projected in the difference between mountains and lowlands, good and bad citizens, modern and backward, plenty and lack, developed and undeveloped, pagan and saved or chao khao and Thai. This contrast is represented by two bodies, the body of the member of the lowland urban Thai society on one side and the body of a member of mountain ethnic minorities on the other. As I have ethnographically demonstrated throughout the thesis, both of the bodies feed the engine of contrast by their rhetoric and practice.

The chao khao technology was meant to raise the quality of the mountain population. To achieve this development goal, it seemed to be necessary for the Thai state to acquire control of the mountainous regions of its borderlands and those populations residing there and to assimilate the mountain ethnic minorities into a culturally homogenous and nationally integrated single group - the Thais. As a consequence of the state technology disseminated by government representatives, development policies, media as well as non-governmental organizations, and ultimately even the global sponsors, chao khao became one of the key terms in the state's policy statements and directives. As the term circulated more broadly it

³⁶ I am concerned here with the Foucauldian notion of discourse (discursive practices), not formalist and empirical approaches stemming from Anglo-American linguistics, socio-linguistics, and sociology. Barad writes: "Discourse is not a synonym for language. Discourse does not refer to linguistic or signifying systems, grammars, speech acts, or conversations. To think of discourse as mere spoken or written words forming descriptive statements is to enact the mistake of representationalist thinking. Discourse is not what is said; it is that which constrains and enables what can be said. Discursive practices define what counts as meaningful statements. Statements are not the mere utterances of the originating consciousness of a unified subject; rather, statements and subjects emerge from a field of possibilities. This field of possibilities is not static or singular but rather is a dynamic and contingent multiplicity.

According to Foucault, discursive practices are the local sociohistorical material conditions that enable and constrain disciplinary knowledge practices such as speaking, writing, thinking, calculating, measuring, filtering, and concentrating. Discursive practices produce, rather than merely describe, the "subjects" and "objects" of knowledge practices. On Foucault's account these "conditions" are immanent and historical rather than transcendental or phenomenological. That is, they are not conditions in the sense of transcendental, ahistorical, cross-cultural, abstract laws defining the possibilities of experience (Kant), but rather they are actual historically situated social conditions" (2003:819).

also became a general explanation for some of the problems the Thai nation faced. For many, chao khao represented an obstacle in the effort to build a modern and prosperous country and achieve Thailand's rightful place in the global community. If we look beyond the upper layer of the discourse we can also see the need to cultivate a separated group that would carry out inferior jobs and serve as a rod for various problems.

At about the same time as the capital driven market economy was morphing into its ever more ruthless, aggressive and unscrupulous form and the state-led economic reforms increased, the discourse of chao khao had acquired an extended shape as a gauge of social distinction, changing the relationship between value and bodies. The sense of chao khao no longer stood solely for the primitivism, underdevelopment and backwardness defining the quality of the mountain ethnic minorities' 'backward way of life'. The State technology used to educate its population as a prerequisite to the knowledge-based economy, divided members of Thai society into two distinct types of bodies, one of which lacked value - the body of the Akha; the body of the Thai received value through an investment into the appropriate form of education.

To get a better sense of the chao khao implication on value and its essence, I applied Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital. Cultural capital as a set of knowledge, skills, education, and advantages that provide a social actor with higher status in society, constitutes, according to chao khao, the essence of a body's value. The required quality is based on the cultural capital of the urban middle-class Thai body. The labor of Thai children to meet all the requirements school and parents place on their shoulders and the labor and resources Thai parents invest into their children's success is what epitomizes the production of a body's value in contemporary Thailand. The life story of any of the members of my social network among

the Akha could be placed against Thai middle class families and the intensive practices they employ to educate their children as I have demonstrated in the example of the Thai family Amue's brother had married into.

The interplay between bodies and values becomes obvious as soon as the Akha body enters the labor market. As soon as the Akha begin their search for employment the implications of chao khao hit them with its full force. While the Thai body's value is being constantly increased by education and training, the surplus in the Akha body value is being extracted. The Thai body is added value through desired education and is rewarded by the labor market with better employment opportunities. The Akha body enters the capital driven economy as cheap labor, working second-rate jobs for low wages. In economic terms, the Akha body's low wage labor produces surplus value. As a social consequence of chao khao, it is not the body from which surplus value has been extracted that is valued but rather the body into which value has been added in a form of desired qualities.

To understand how value circulates from the Akha body labor that produces surplus into the Thai body, it was necessary to place the two bodies against each other. If it is the chao khao which provides the Akha body with its low value, it is also chao khao which confers the high value to the Thai body through the catalyst of desired education. It seems it is the investment put into education and training, which provides a body with value according to which its labor is evaluated as soon as the body enters job market competition. However, such an explanation does not provide sufficient understanding of the social dynamics through which an Akha body is being evaluated within the lowland Thai society. I will return to this significant moment that stands behind the social marginalization of the Akha shortly.

“Knowledge is like light. Weightless and intangible, it can easily travel the world, enlightening the lives of people everywhere. Yet billions still live in the darkness of poverty-unnecessarily”, claims the World Bank's World Development Report (1999). Since the nineties, most international development has been driven by the new global value: Knowledge. Many countries initiated reforms driven by a vision of the knowledge economy as a means to their development. Thailand was no exception. As a result of the discursive power of chao khao technology, Akha became the under-people. Their bodies, it was understood, were of a lesser value. It was a school education, the state believed, that was to provide the highlanders with more value to increase the quality of life for the population. As a result, mountain parents have been systematically persuaded about the positive benefits of schooling. During official meetings with the village representatives, Thai government officials presented school education as a kind of cure-all and provides a body with its value, which consequently leads to better lives. More precisely, villagers were being persuaded about the direct proportion between school education and one's upward socio-economic mobility. As a result, Akha parents began to seek a chance for their children to receive a school education.

Subjected to the state's governance, Akha subordinated their self to self-government in order to meet the kind of conduct and qualities desired by the state and to evaluate themselves in accordance with the political objectives of the chao khao (Rose 1996: 155). The self governing Akha body began to realize its inferiority and to perceive its own low quality as a result of insufficient education. The Akha body's self, similarly to the self of a lowland Thai, governed itself so as to arrange for its own higher value, in order to better itself (Rose 1996: 154). Consequently, the Akha body sought to maximize its value via school education and actively invested into its own future.

Although the Thai government put forth great effort to establish schools in the mountains to educate its population, it did not take long before local schools lost their charm. Those who received education at a local school usually remained in their villages to help parents with work on a farm or found a menial job in a nearby town from where they would return home each evening; the education provided by local schools did not offer any new opportunities as far as the Akha could see and the purported increase in value as a result of schooling did not materialize. Such experiences challenged the Akha's enthusiasm toward schooling. The increase of value by means of education in a local school neither matched the promises Akha were given, nor did it meet their expectations; it was not long before significant changes were to come.

While the state had attempted to develop and integrate mountain ethnic minorities into Thai lowland society, its role as a major social welfare provider was limited due to a lack of financial resources. However, the financial deficiency should not be understood simply as an objective fact but rather as a political decision influenced by the *chao khao* discourse. As a result, Thai government began to welcome western NGOs in order to educate highland children, in which organizations employing activities and practices built upon fundamental Christian faith have played a crucial role. Since the mid-1990s, the non-governmental development institutions increased in number with the rise of children's Homes for members of highland minorities. These faith-based development institutions took advantage of the *chao khao* technology the Thai state used to teach mountain people to be modern subjects. Similarly to the state, it was the Akha culture that Christian aid workers perceived as backwards, as a problem to be changed.

Foucault treats the problem of governance in relationship to the problem of the accumulation of capital: "If the economic take-off of the West began with the techniques that made possible the accumulation of capital, it might perhaps be said that the methods for administering the accumulation of men made possible a political take-off in relation to the traditional, ritual, costly, violent forms of power, which soon fell into disuse and were superseded by a subtle, calculated technology of subjection" (1995: 220-221). Capitalism, Foucault argues, contrary to the previous economic and political regime, needs to integrate bodies into the system in a disciplined position. Thus the purpose of governance is not only to produce docile bodies but also to maximize their utility.

When Homes began to emerge in ever-increasing numbers, shortly before the end of the second millennium, the pre-modern agrarian mountain societies' basis of political, economic and juridical model which they had been practicing for hundreds of years, was suddenly replaced by principles of the capital-driven market economy. Influenced by neoliberal discourse, the former collective spirit and responsibility materialized through various forms of reciprocity and mutual support among villagers has turned towards the emphasis on the body of an individual and the cultivation of its individual qualities. Akha, following in the footsteps of their de facto superiors, the long assimilated Thais, began to long for better, modern lives and technologies as they believed were to be found in the city. However, despite these newly developed desires and expectations, the possibility of reaching such dreams was greatly impeded by the low value conferred upon the Akha body in Thai society.

With the arrival of Christian Homes, villagers' attitude towards schooling has since been actively lobbied by village pastors, missionaries and other staff of Homes. The demand for children increased as the number of these Christian-based development institutions grew.

Villagers were tirelessly persuaded that the education and training a child receives at a Christian Home, together with the opportunity to attend a school in the city, constitutes the proper means to gain the necessary quality which, it was believed, they lacked. As a result of the discursive power of *chao khao* technology and the influence of Christian aid workers, Akha began to perceive their traditional knowledge and way of life to be inferior and backwards; soon they strove for the modern life they understood was to be found in a city. As they firmly believed, the path to their imagined worlds leads through an education provided by schools in a city. Consequently, Akha parents influenced by neoliberal discourse seek to place their children into one of the Christian-based development institutions, in order to maximize the value of their bodies; all the while Akha families are being separated in the course of this process. Much has been sacrificed in the name of these neoliberal dreams about maximizing the quality of an individual. It is not only Thais anymore who strive to provide their children with the 'proper qualities'. Whether Thai or Akha, it is the power of an all-embracing neoliberal framing which composes and supports dreams of a success that can be reached by maximizing qualities of the individual through an intensive effort in the process of school-borne education.

However, the effect of *chao khao* not only constitutes the difference in value, it also determines the unequal access to capital accumulation. Whereas structural limits provide the Akha with unequal conditions, they attempt to provide their children with the best possible opportunities, no less than do their Thai counterparts. While the Thai body is being equipped with the desired cultural capital and dispositions, to ensure its future success in school and employment, by its parents in a family environment, the Akha body is being trained and educated under the technologies of Christian Homes' government. Although conditions are

largely unequal, both of the bodies are willing to invest a significant part of their resources to make the dream come true.

If I have mentioned that chao khao encompasses the space within the borders of Thai state, the state of a white god is also included; Homes for mountain children represent one of the white god state's technologies to govern the conduct of the 'under-people'. Since the Thai government happily welcomed the assistance Homes have offered to administer the lives of mountain bodies, Christian groups and individuals received an opportunity to operate quite freely with little oversight of their activities and practices. While the Homes' governmentality is meant to meet the children's educational needs and regulate their conduct by various technologies, they make use of the chao khao technology the Thai state exercises. Since Akha are considered as backwards and in need of development aid, 'chao khao' helps to justify the Homes' existence and activities and attracts the necessary attention of global sponsors. The discursive power of chao khao constructing the 'under-people' thus enabled Christian Homes to exist and operate by providing rationalization of their operations. As a result, Christian Homes have endorsed the state's technology of chao khao in a significant way.

Both, the Homes as well as the Thai state exercise technologies to provide subjects with 'higher quality'. Similarly to the Thai state, Christian Home's politics to secure the needs of the target population are driven by an effort to arrange for its productivity and health. Nevertheless, what differs is the reasoning behind such an effort. While the Thai state seeks to increase the quality of the population via school education, Christian Homes' government is driven by the desire to provide 'spiritual health' to the population and "to reach all the Akha with the Gospel of Jesus Christ". Homes should thus not be viewed as a mere service or as

agencies but rather as political players defining specific agenda; as such the implications of their operations have significant influence on society.

The concept of 'under-people' as an effect of chao khao technology influenced members of the Christian community in Chiang Rai no less than the rest of Thai society as has been repeatedly manifested during New Life's meetings. Opinions and advices presented by New Life's staff members have usually been quickly dismissed by the Home management with little respect for its Akha employees. The contrast between the low value of Akha staff bodies and the conversely valuable bodies of foreign Christian aid workers was no less striking than the divide in value represented by the difference between the Thai and Akha bodies. Nevertheless, the very substance that provides a body with its value in Thai society, has been, in the state of a white god, modified.

While in Thai society it is a formal education, the appropriate cultural capital which is supposed to provide a body with its value, the Christian community in Chiang Rai considers Biblical training, Christian conduct and deep faith to be the desired qualities determining the value of a Christian body. To govern the proper conduct of their subjects, Christian Homes employ various technologies which I have termed as 'technologies of eternal salvation'. These technologies provide the Akha body with a 'spiritual capital' required by the Christian Community. However, as I have demonstrated in the example of Adju's loss of his job in a bar, 'technologies of eternal salvation' do not represent the appropriate qualities to increase one's chances within the predominantly Buddhist Thai society. The significant number of Akha students dropping out of school, as a result of the conflict of interests between the qualities required by chao khao and Home's rules, provides another example of the social implications of 'technologies of eternal salvation'. The spiritual capital Akha gain does not simply convert

into cultural and social capital as recognized by members of the lowland Thai society. Although the rhetorics of Christian Homes claim such a conversion is not only possible but essential and so to say mechanical, since Christian faith is supposed to directly lead to a better and successful life. As I have described throughout the thesis, this exchange rate of *chao khao* does rarely materialize and if so, the conditions are too often difficult and disadvantageous.

The way New Life evaluated a formal education in comparison with the Christian one, has been demonstrated by the ethnographic example of Nalee and Dzela's sacking from New Life. Despite the fact Nalee represented the most apt student in the Home's history and her school scores positioned her at the top of her class even among Thai schoolmates, John had expelled her from the Home for the contravention of rules New Life imposed to enforce and maintain the appropriate Christian conduct. Contrary to the school education as the state's criteria to evaluate the desired qualities of its population, Christian conduct, faith and obedience constitute the indicator injecting value into the Christian body.

The working conditions and salaries New Life provides its Akha staff when compared against the economic life of the body of a Christian missionary offers an apt example of the basis on which value is being evaluated within the Christian community in Chiang Rai. The value of a Christian body is determined by proper Christian conduct and the depth of its religious faith. Since these highly-valued qualities are supposed to be rewarded with abundance and prosperity, the contrast between John's affluence and the deprivation of the Akha staff clearly reflects the difference in value these two bodies contain. In a two-way process, duality between the two bodies is being stabilized while the Akha staff body is being assessed as of low value; the perception of a white foreigner by Thais offered Christian aid workers honor

and power. Despite the close proximity to wealth and power, the little social capital Akha staff members held was not much recognized outside of Akha villages.

The discursive power of the chao khao technology did not allow the cultural capital an Akha body gains through a school education to be recognized on the labor market. Chao khao also lead many Akha to resist New Life's rules and drop out of school. As shown through the ethnographic description of my Akha informants' struggles to find a job, school education as a development technology intended to result in upward social and economic mobility was an abject failure. The educated Akha body experienced little increase in its value and as such has been assigned to a position on the margin of the Thai society as well as of the Christian community.

As the chao khao determines a contrast between the valueless Akha body and the valuable body of the lowland Thai, so does the Akha body lack value when compared to the body of a Christian development aid worker; as the Akha body labor produces surplus value in Thai society, so it does in the Christian community. More than ten years of following the social life of one of the more respected Christian Homes in Chiang Rai, allowed me to observe how Akha bodies are being turned into a cheap and productive labor force while simultaneously trained to accomplish the aims of global evangelizing efforts. Nevertheless, since most of the Akha raised in Children's Homes found a job outside of the Christian community, it is no exaggeration to say that Christian Homes, with financial help from overseas churches and other sponsors, contribute to the production of a cheap labor force for the Thai economy. In an irony of globalization, the local employer enjoys the influx of a cheap and productive labor force, the Christian aid worker gains God's grace for spreading His name, the overseas donors

influenced by the discourse of global humanitarianism might just receive 'salvation', while the Akha remain on the margin of Thai society and the Christian community.

One question still remains to be answered. How is it that while school education provides a Thai body with an appropriate increase in value, it does not work the same way for the Akha? What prevents the qualities Akha gain through education to be transferred into value? How to understand the insignificant impact of education on value in the context of the greater Thai society even of the Akha who utilized nearly any opportunity to maximize the quality of their bodies?

Influenced by the discursive power of *chao khao* technology, criteria for value assessment have been set according to the 'appropriate' taste. *Chao khao*, accompanied by neoliberal discourse, led people to believe that it was investment into education that allows a body to meet the criteria;. This technology as well swayed the conduct of Akha in the foggy, neoliberal haze of a capital-driven market economy, to manoeuvre the body's life decisions and endeavour to maximize its value to attain the ideal 'modern life'. In spite of such investments on the part of the Akha, social manifestation of *chao khao* clearly indicates that the cultural capital of an educated Akha body does not provide the body with an appropriate value. As a consequence, *chao khao* discourse led the upland population, just as those residing in the lowlands, to perceive ethnic minorities from the mountains as inferior: social inequality has thus been legitimized.

As I have described through an ethnographic moment, in which the Chiang Rai international airport immigration officials, encouraged by entertained Thai passengers, humiliated Amue as soon as they found out she was an Akha, the qualities that prevent an Akha body from

occupying a social position worth the value of its education are prestige and honor. These qualities, representing a crucial source of value, are exactly what symbolic capital stands for. Conversely, these are the qualities the Akha body lacks. While Akha seek to maximize their qualities in a hope of better lives, it is not education that could provide them with upward social mobility within the lowland Thai society. As is apparent in the lives of my Akha friends, the investment in education has not been utilized. In spite of the common conviction so widely accepted by the Akha, it is not the value of cultural capital which here provides the Akha body with a higher social position within the Thai lowland society. Drawing on Bourdieu's conception of capital, it is the value of symbolic capital which offers a better understanding of the social marginalization and the insignificant effect of school education on the upward social mobility of the Akha in northern Thailand.

The effect of *chao khao* reproduces its power by everyday practices in various situations, be they formalized or not, enacted in the social space of Thai society. The influence of *chao khao* is present in the production of social inequalities, impacts the economic evaluation of body's labor, and also represents the political power that is being demonstrated, for example, in how the Thai state distinguishes between the good and bad citizens while the bodies recognized as of a low quality might not be granted citizenship as part of its civic rights. The *chao khao* manifestation in the production of social inequalities has no less significance than in an economic evaluation of labor. The perception of the Akha as the 'under-people' is the result of their symbolic capital of low value. The lack of symbolic capital is what justifies social differentiation in Thai society as well as the state's governance. If the low value of the under-people's labor produces surplus value for the state economy it works the same way in politics. While Akha are perceived to constitute a problem for the nation, it is actually their cheap labor which consequently contributes to the Thai economy.

To get a better grasp of the production and dynamics of social inequalities I make use here of Foucault's 'technologies of the self'. These technologies of self-government permit individuals to govern their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, through a certain number of operations by their own means or under the influence of others. As a consequence, the self of the self-governing individual is being transformed in order to acquire certain skills as well as certain attitudes. Although social actors govern their self freely, it should be associated with a certain type of domination resulting from the technologies of power they are subjected to. The self-government and technologies of self operate as a form of self-disciplining by which people control themselves in society or impose control upon the self that constrains their actions, be it within state, economic or religious systems of power.

By means of imposition of categories of thought and perception the dominated social actors consequently accept the social order to be just, argued Bourdieu. It is the incorporation of unconscious structures that tend to perpetuate the structures of action of the dominant actors. Symbolic violence is embedded in the very modes of action and structures of cognition of bodies, and imposes the sense of legitimacy of the given social order. When a social actor uses the power conferred by a symbolic capital he holds against an agent who holds less to alter his actions, symbolic violence is being exercised. As a result, bodies lacking value accept their position to be rightful. The fact that subjects accept a given social position as the right one while it might be on the periphery of a society is what allows social inequalities and marginalization to flourish. The discursive power of the *chao khao* technology thus allows the unequal relations of power to be concealed. As a sad paradox of the capital-driven market

economy, Akha bodies are blamed for problems Thai society faces while it is they who positively contribute to the economy by the surplus value directly resulting from their labor.

Thousands of Akha children in northern Thailand leave their families to live in Christian Homes. In search of a better life, they become orphans, 'pagans', 'undeveloped' and 'high-risk situation' children, while their parents sometimes invest more than they have to provide them with an opportunity. The opportunity, many Akha believe, is represented by a Christian Home and education in a city school. The ever billowing neoliberal spirit present in the state politics as well as in the politics of Christian Homes and all around, leads the Akha in their effort to maximize the quality of the individual. Members of the mountain ethnic minority have been convinced that success and affluence is a direct result of effort and as such accessible to anyone who tries hard enough. While State technologies bringing highlanders into social and economic marginalization have been endorsed by Christian Homes' operations and supported by the technologies of eternal salvation, a generation of Akha have been raised to consider their inability to reach a promoted, dreamt-of-success was the result of their own failures. In the name of development, thousands of such 'failures' have been produced; as these 'losers' persuade themselves that their failure is a result of their insufficiency, symbolic violence unleashes a symphony of social inequalities with full force: as the victims are blamed, so do they blame themselves.

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