

In The Shadow of Great History: A Research of The Lost Villages in Northern Thailand

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Abstract: This historical essay depicts the origins and current status of a northern Thai region known as Lost Villages. After the Chinese Civil War in the twentieth century, a remnant unit of the Kuomintang (KMT) rolled over from mainland China to Thailand and flourished here. However, caught between the competing political parties, their legal identity has always been in question. At the same time, they are in dire need of economic, educational, and policy support. After a literature review and field research, the author attempts to unravel the mystery of their identity and to make them more fully known by the outside world in order to establish sustained international assistance.

Keywords: Chinese Civil War, Competing political parties, Economic support, Educational support, Identity mystery, International assistance, Kuomintang (KMT), Legal identity, Policy support, Political identity, Remnant unit, Thailand.

1. Introduction

After nearly 3 hours of driving up into Thailand's northern mountains, I finally met him on campus, a middle-aged man with a t-shirt and slippers, standing straight up, greeting us. Though with a rather pallid and wrinkled face, his eyes were filled with passion and hope. Short-haired, a little hunchback, the man's skin seemed to be severely tanned to a dark color, yet none of these characteristics would weaken his hopeful passion reflected in his slightly dilated pupils. Li, whose occupation can hardly be recognized directly from his appearance, worked as the headmaster of the Hualiang Village School. It is a private institution that was not legally approved by the Thai government, where students here usually call him Li Xiaozhang (Headmaster Li) in Chinese, or to be more precise, the Minnan dialect of southern China.

Like millions of people in his generation and thereafter, Li was born right here in Santikhiri — also known as Mae Salong or the “Lost Village”, the name that was popular among netizens around the globe — in extremely harsh conditions without a real nationality. What they got was merely the “refugee identity”. Even worse with his lack of citizenship, Li was living in an age when the Thai government had illicit the education of Chinese and its culture. People who wholeheartedly believed in their Chinese origin, such as Li, had to secretly learn while keeping an eye out for the Thai police who were actively looking for the unlawful. Therefore, Li was unable to receive the typical Chinese education children get when learning on China's Mainland. Still, with his limited knowledge, Li ultimately became a Chinese teacher — eventually the headmaster — to pass on his belief and his ancestor's culture. And it was this passion that supported Li to go on with his dream: to germinate the sapling of Chinese culture in those children's hearts.

While being completely immersed in the story of Li's generation, I was struck by an abrupt flashback in my mind along with a sip of nostalgia for my earlier years of studying abroad in Thailand.

I was studying in Chiang Mai, Thailand when I was in Grade 7. Back then the sole reason for traveling was to expand my vision and enhance my knowledge. Notably, I didn't

relinquish my original culture. With the strong encouragement of “Cultural Confidence” by the China government from an early age, my passion for maintaining traditional Chinese celebrations in my family provided me the chance to continue having delicious Chinese desserts; and this preservation of tradition led to my acknowledgment of this Village. About four years ago before the pandemic, once during the Mid-Autumn Festival, my parents brought me some mooncakes. After trying it, I found that not only did the taste win my heart, the traditional Chinese craftsmanship was very delicate and the subtly carved texture reflected their superb inherited dexterity. That led me to wonder why people with such handiness are capable of producing delicate mooncakes with such quality. Surprisingly, the people living on the mountain, according to my research and inquiries with local people, were actually descendants of Chinese soldiers who were lost and eventually roamed into the region. After some more in-depth investigations, I also learned that they were even stateless people — holding neither Chinese nor Thai nationality — so they had no choice but to be trapped within these specially issued regions that their descendants are now living in, and were limited in financial income.

Years ago when I was in Grade 8 I discovered their extreme level of poverty, and afterward, I began to devise methods to support their life. Gathering donations was the bulk of my work: hosting a seminar about this topic by explaining its historical origin and methods to donate, setting up an online group and inviting others with advertisements sent to many social media platforms, and posting an invitation to request for remote teachers since lack of tutors was a major problem up on the mountain. In the end, with a lot of members' great support, I was able to gather enough tuition for students in extreme poverty, not to mention many additional supplies donated by many of the kind ones in the group. Disappointingly, with tons of supplies we had brought up for them, they were only capable of supporting a portion of the poor ones, and teachers were still a highly scarce human resource.

The more knowledge I gained, the greater the nebulous mysteries rose up deep from my heart: many commentaries and records on this place were very controversial and

polarized — some claimed the people here to be war heroes while others believed that they were drug dealers; there is even a fuzzy facade covering their actual desired future, that is, stay or leave.

Mr. Li was still standing there; his passionate eyes seemed more pitiful. I sighed softly, recognizing what I did for them now was far from enough. Apart from my curiosity about their indefinite and controversial background, I was dedicated to helping them due to the conspicuous poverty I saw face-to-face during my visit, and I will propel this charity work forward, no matter physically or mentally.

2. Literature Review

History is like a great cruise constantly sailing forward. It is understandable that people overlook the “Lost Villages” of Northern Thailand, which in general comes from the inertia of the perception of history. Usually, whether it is our textbooks or history non-fiction, they try their hardest to depict the significant events and figures in history, such as the change of dynasties, the victories and defeats of wars, emperors and great generals. Therefore, when we study history, we naturally tend to focus on the “significant” so much. However, after those so-called significant events have taken place, their lasting effects, especially on the common people, may even outweigh the events themselves. For example, an enthusiast of World War II will be well-versed in the major battles, but unfamiliar with the shadow of the war — such as the Jews’ difficult path to restoration thereafter. Considering such a shadow not to be overlooked, in the following literature review, I hope to concentrate not only on the significant events themselves, but also to approach to the epilogue of the events, to capture the blurry rhythm of this ending song.

2.1. The Origin of the Villages and Refugee

Back in the days of the five-year-long Chinese Civil War (1945 – 1949) when the Communist Party was fighting the Nationalist Party, or the Kuomintang (KMT), the balance of the war had slowly tipped in the Communist’s favor. Ultimately, the leader of KMT, Chiang Kai-shek, declared to retreat their troops to the island of Taiwan since the Communist Party was gaining back the majority of the territories[1], which is Mainland China. Therefore, when confronted with such a tendency, many troops and their generals of KMT began to think about how they were going to end up.

2.1.1. The first-step Life in Burma: drug dealer

While most of the regimes had successfully retreated, two Infantry Regiments, which refused to surrender, continued to roam in China and later were forced South to Burma. These soldiers believed that they had never surrendered and retreated; instead, they were only entering a temporary armistice, meaning that once they gained power again, they wanted revenge for what they had lost. With such a strong ambition, their “lost soldiers” started their journey to farm resources — that was, the opium trade.

The lost soldiers from the KMT first controlled a region named the Shan by force, devising a makeshift region for cultivating opium. The KMT recruited the local villagers by pure force, confiscated their valuable belongings including food and money, and exacted a heavy tax on the opium farmers, forcing them to increase their production. The result of these harsh actions was indeed phenomenal: the annual

production increased twenty-fold from 30 tons at the time of Burmese independence to 600 tons in the mid-1950s[2].

The majority of the opium was exported to Thailand, in exchange for arms and supplies for the KMT’s vengeance. Despite that, as the backup of KMT, the Americans secretly supported them by airdropping heavy weapons including bazookas and mortars. After ganging up some native people in, the total number of the revenge army reached around 12,000. However, when some 2,100 troops attempted to reconquer Yunnan after a whole year of buildup, the Communist Party forced them back to Burma[3].

At the end of the invasion, Burma had turned up to the United Nations (UN) for KMT’s “unprovoked aggression”, claiming that the KMT had always been a disturbance in the country but now had become an actual threat. The Burmese, to prove their concerns, provided evidence including photos, documents, and testimonies, and eventually the United States had become an embarrassment due to the KMT’s issue. Ultimately, after the commission held by four parties — Burma, the US, the Republic of China, and Thailand — the Lost Soldiers were finally to withdraw again; at this moment, however, they weren’t welcomed by any of these parties[4].

2.1.2. The second-step life in Thailand: isolated

The Lost Soldiers eventually arrived in Northern Thailand by traveling over the mountain ranges that acted as the borderline between Thailand and Burma. The Thai government, acknowledging their arrival, claimed to provide them citizenship only if they would help the government to fight the internal threat of the Thai communist party. These Chinese soldiers, eager to find a permanent stay, accepted the deal and fought another 5-year-long battle for Thailand. In the end, however, despite the skyrocketing casualties, the promise for these Chinese “mercenaries” was overlooked by the Thai government: they had only received a permanent residence specifically in the area of Northern Thailand; in other words, they were “isolated” in a small area up on the mountain with literally nothing[5]. They put away their guns and started a life of farming; they named this place Mae Salong, or Santikhiri, meaning “hill of peace”. However, for decades, their life was no better than refugees: they got no clean water, no electricity, and very limited income sources — selling cultivated crops, especially opium.

For a significant portion of the military, the cultivation of illicit crops was a temporary means of last resort for survival; many of the soldiers were still centered on their ultimate goal: to retaliate. “Necessity knows no law. That is why we deal with opium. We have to continue to fight the evil of communism. To fight, you must have an army. An army must have guns. To buy guns, you must have money. And in these mountains? The only money is opium.” Said Gen Tuan Shiwen, commander-in-chief of the Northern Thai People’s Armed Self-Defense Force (NTPASDF)[6], suggesting that he and his fellow comrades were still passionate about reinvading the mainland, though in the end they never got a chance to do so.

2.2. Current Situation

Though it is undeniable the descendants of these lost Chinese soldiers are living a relatively better life now in contrast with their ancestors, at least there was a complete system of social functioning that has been developed, and their quality of life is still incomparable with typical citizens of Thailand. The majority of the veterans from the KMT had been granted official Thai citizenship since their aid to the

Thai government[7]. However, the problem of citizenship still exists within the later generations not belonging to the descendants of the KMT; there are thousands of them not having any nationalities[8].

2.2.1. Finance

In recent years, when the villages of Northern Thailand (especially policing and transportation) have reached a relatively complete stage of development, tourism provides them with a big portion of their income. What makes this isolated village a popular place is the people's distinctive cultural background and, undoubtedly, the fact that the majority of the tourists are Chinese. On top of that, the Chinese government and the Taiwan government also started their donation work toward this group of people. Specifically, the donations vary from small-sized writing utensils and classroom equipment such as desks and chairs to larger-scaled building constructions, not even mentioning donations of tuition fees and charity on daily supplies to students in extreme poverty.

Plus, opium, due to law regulations and other concerns, are no longer planted. As replacements, people now cultivate tea trees. Fortunately, the climate here is perfect for planting and drying leaves for sale, and most of the time, the income collected from the tea leaves can support the normal life for families here, considering the lower price level in the area.

On the other hand, the Thai government, despite providing them with financial support, remains strict in terms of policies toward these people: they are not allowed to legally own land properties or bank accounts, and their poor education and healthcare resources limited their development progress dramatically.

2.2.2. Education

Educational resources were lacking. Due to their location, the village had very few connections with the outside. Therefore, methods of obtaining resources — especially for education — are very limited. For example, there were very few schools in the entire area of Mae Salong, especially in the woods — there is only one secondary school holding over 900 students[9]. Though the Chinese and Thai governments are willing to make donations toward the kids' better education, it is not enough due to the numerous number of students there and the considerable proportion of families in extreme poverty.

Apart from that, the stability of continuous education is uncertain. Since the majority of the income of local residents there comes from agriculture and tourism, sometimes a family's income could be precarious, not even considering the fact that members of a family might get caught an illness that could further worsen the problem. For instance, the climate could be a considerable factor contributing to the annual harvest; if farmers were to experience a drought or something similar, they wouldn't have a good harvest and therefore end up with abysmal earnings — and ultimately cannot afford their kids' tuition fee at school since affording their daily needs could already be harder than usual.

Despite that, the most crucial factor of educational resources lacking these days is caused by the high demand and low supply of teachers. The law of demand and supply suggests that a high demand along with a low supply will boost the price. This price is far above the overall earnings a school up at the mountain could make — since the tuition must be low so children's families can afford it.

2.3. Different Voices

In spite of these studies declaring the generally negative lifestyle of Northern Thailand villages, contradictions do exist. With a gradually greater amount of tourists visiting the Lost Village, some journalists and YouTube streamers began to pay attention to this exceptional place and its mysterious history thereof, resulting in interviews being held with many of the local citizens. In an article presented in Taipei Times, a descendant of the KMTs stated that the local residents so far "[prefer] living here" at Santikhiri[10], suggesting that although being a small isolated multicultural village, people's life varied based on their earnings and social status.

Moreover, though a major proportion of their income comes from Chinese tourists, some of the residents claimed that they disliked the Chinese and they were proud of their new Thai citizenship[11]. These people, native to this village, are Chinese learning and speaking Chinese. "We keep many traditions that have disappeared in China and Taiwan," one of the residents said with pride, seemingly enjoying Chinese culture wholeheartedly and disdainfully assuming that those Chinese tourists usually don't do that[12].

In terms of their history of surviving, another paradoxical debate comes about the opium trade. While many major Newspapers claimed their cultivation and trade of opium, some direct descendants from the KMT directly disproved this claim, stating that the KMT was only responsible for escorting and transporting the drugs coerced by the need for money for their survival. One of the elderly descendants of the KMT, during a face-to-face interview, stated that after a while from the UN's sanctions on the KMT, the supplies from Taiwan were somehow cut off, so they had to engage in the transport of drugs for their own life without any other choice — because Chiang Kai-shek had ordered this regime to wait for revenge, in other words, to fake their retreat. However, he also claimed that instead of agreeing with his Thai identity, he thought himself to be Yunnanese, a province in China, and that he was a follower of Confucianism[13], suggesting that not everyone who obtained Thai citizenship actually enjoyed being Thai; more importantly, traditional Chinese beliefs and cultures did not simply thrive within this village but also devised a magnificent blend of the entire multilingual and multicultural community.

2.4. Gap and Research Direction

Obviously, there exists a great deal of controversy, both about their history with opium and their assessment of the current state of their lives. This formed the underlying reason for the fieldwork that I did next — to get to the bottom of the facts in order to help them in a very focused way.

3. Research Method and Methodology

Field research and interview were primarily adopted during the research process. In early June 2023, I led a team of ten — along with founders of various charity organizations — up the mountainous region of Northern Thailand, into the "Lost Village". Within there, despite bringing up donations and supplies gathered for the villagers, we have also conducted field research and interviews. We went to three Chinese schools in the area and spoke with the headmasters and principals. Later, we had dinner at the head of the village's house and asked about the village's overall development. All conversations were audio-recorded with permission.

4. Research

Engaged with Li, the headmaster of one of the largest local Chinese schools, and Chaozheng He, the head of the villager, some of the information obtained was different than one can find in the public domain of the Internet. On top of that, as the direct descendants of the KMTs, the interviewees' words should be mostly credible, because the information they had access to was basically first-hand. We had the conversation entirely in Mandarin Chinese, but clearly, they possessed a Taiwanese accent. From the conversation we had, the true care they had toward other residents was clearly noticeable and they wholeheartedly wanted to help them live a better life.

4.1. History

The main controversy related to the KMT's soldiers was their issue of having true citizenship and whether they were allowed to move out of the village. However, despite receiving a promising response about the villagers' current situation, the head of the villager, He, has also provided another common misconception for outsiders — Mae Salong (or Santkihili) was, in fact, not the whole picture of "Lost Village"; it was only a part of it.

4.1.1. The True Scope of "Lost Villages"

According to He, when the KMT soldiers first arrived in Northern Thailand, they settled down at Da Gudi, a location not very far from Mae Salong. Da Gudi was actually the true origin of the entire "Lost Villages", and there are many other smaller villages, including Mae Salong, that were extended from the origin. Da Gudi, as claimed by He, was the primary place to "cultivate wheat", further suggesting that this place is the "capital" of the entire "Lost Villages".

Apart from that, He also claimed that the KMT had once built their primary headquarters basement at Tangwoxinzhai, another village very close to Da Gudi. He suggested that people often have misconceptions about the names and sometimes even believe that the entire "Lost Villages" was small and made out of one single village.

The reason for emphasizing the definition of the entire region here is that it helps outsiders who intend to implement support get a fuller picture of this much-needed area, rather than just regarding it as the most famous Mae Salong town on the web. It clearly shows that the population in need of support is much larger due to their problematic, for example, citizenship status.

4.1.2. The Problem of Citizenship

As confirmed by He, not everyone in the village had a true Thai nationality; instead, these people had the so-called "Permit of Stay," or in He's words, a "Refugee's Permit", meaning that people holding this permit can only access the zone — the "Lost Villages" — and are not allowed to move out. These permits, according to He, have to be renewed every six months in order to keep their validity. "You have to apply for Thai citizenship from the Thai Government," said He. But the time of the application may vary from 5 to 10 years, depending on various reasons, "The law controls everything, [and] we didn't have much power," claimed He. Among these reasons for application, birth is the most promising one to pass the application successfully.

While it may be extremely hard, or nearly impossible, for a descendant of the KMT to directly apply for Thai citizenship, their children could. "If one of your kids is having an education here, they can then apply for a [Thai citizenship]," stated He.

From the information, it is plausible to speculate that the Thai government was trying to gradually absorb the KMT descendants by enticing them with identifiable citizenship to blend into Thai culture. If true, this also explains the question of why the Thai government only gives citizenship to newborns: they are easier to integrate into a new society since they are "blank slates" without any a priori knowledge of any culture. Older people may not accept the sense of worth in Thai culture.

4.1.3. Isolation

"[People] got no chance to go out [of the Village]," He noted. With only the "Permit of Stay," residents will not be able to pass the guard stations covering every entrance of the "Lost Villages". In order to go out, according to He, people, again, must apply for a permit. One of the main ways people got this permit was by applying for working outside.

"[The government] didn't forbid working outside," He pointed out, "but you must apply for a 'Working Permit'." These permits hold valid for 6 months so one must return to the Village by the expiration date. Another way people may go out is by invitations. This method usually only applies to people with a higher social status such as He, who was once invited back to Taiwan for a visit. "The Taiwan government was also benevolent to us." He said. With the invitation, claimed by He, the process of requesting a permit to leave is much easier and quicker. "Around August the first to the sixth, I got the invite [and the permit]."

However, though the policy was set clearly and severely, the actual action carried out by the soldiers guarding the entrances of the Villages is not completely the same. Sometimes, the soldiers would simply let those that looked like outsiders out directly without checking their identifications. When our team headed out of the village, for instance, the guards didn't even look at the passengers in our vehicles when letting us out. With this holds true, it is plausible to argue that residents within the village may still be able to communicate with the outside, unlike what is currently said on the Internet.

Despite all that, many local people still hold a positive opinion of the Thai government. "I think the Thai [government] is already good enough," said He.

4.2. Present

The "Lost Villages" to this day is still considered an enigmatic place with enigmatic mixed cultures and traditions, attracting many tourists visiting every year. Although outside the "Lost Villages", there is a general idea of their lack of income and that some families are in a state of extreme poverty, however, no accurate reliable quantitative data could be found in the public domain. Taiping Li, the headmaster of one of the most popular Chinese schools in Da Gudi, shared accurate information about his school, especially about kids from poorer families.

4.2.1. Students in Poverty

"150 Thai baht per month," Li revealed the amount of tuition fee for a student in his school (for ease of understanding - 100 Thai baht is approximately 3 USD). 150 Thai baht, equivalent to around 4.35 US dollars[14], is less than the amount for many people's lunch expenditures. However, within a total of 172 students, 30 of them are listed as extremely poor and requested financial aid; that is around 17.44% of the total students. While this amount of money may be affordable for the majority of the family — either with stable work or decent harvests — there are families that are in

horrible financial condition: perhaps the parents lost their job, or caught an illness and are unable to work.

“Transport is not convenient,” Li admitted and claimed that there are many more students in worse conditions willing to study, but living too deep in the forest — due to poverty — and are not able to even travel to school. “For those who really can’t come, we will send teachers to their homes.” Li suggested, “That means the route they must take to school is terrible.” However, there are simply too many students having conditions like this to send teachers to every one of them.

4.2.2. Schools Need

In order to solve the problem of remote students, nothing is better than a “school bus”, or as initially suggested by Li, a pickup truck would be sufficient to carry these students to school. Purchasing a new one would be too expensive, according to He, so it would be better to rent one. “Only 10,000 baht per month,” the headmaster said, “for all students in all schools.” However, money is not their only necessity.

“Most importantly I want teachers,” Li stressed. Without good teachers, especially higher-leveled ones, students will not be able to receive the diploma for better careers. “The military wouldn’t allow us to study [Chinese] when we were young,” said Li. When the KMT first withdrew to Tangwoxinzhai, Northern Thailand, for several generations the Thai government forbade Chinese learning and put very strict regulations and military on them in order to control them since the KMT troops were strong outsiders — one must secretly lean in the woods away from the Thai military’s inspection. Though nowadays the policies are mitigated, they still clearly remember their depressive past. “[So] now we need to try to bring these kids to learn [Chinese] if possible.”

4.2.3. Careers and Economy

Good harvests mean good income, as stated by He, the head of the villager, suggesting not only that the majority of the people here are peasants, but the income source is also very unstable, “[If] a drought [hit], we are screwed.” With such harsh career uncertainty, many younger local people saw another path they could take.

“[People] could be a tourist guide if they can speak Chinese,” He explained, “[who] earns much more than farmers.” The majority of the tourists, according to He, are Chinese, so the ability to speak Chinese is a great advantage compared with Thai- or English-speaking tourist guides. Apart from that, the local landscape is also very attractive to tourists, so local guides don’t even need to leave the village to have the job — therefore wouldn’t need to apply for a “Working Permit”. “We have [had] 100,000 cherry [trees] here, on the roads, for many years,” He introduced. Around November and December, the sakura season arrives, attracting so many tourists, He informed. A typical Chinese tourist guide, according to He, earns a total of twenty to thirty thousand baht during these popular seasons.

Luckily, as He mentioned, unemployment is not common because plenty of jobs, despite their earnings, are available and needed inside the “Lost Villages”. “Cement transporting, dish cleaning, restaurant waiting, and so on.” implied He. If one has a Thai identity or a “Work Permit”, they may go out to busy cities such as Bangkok, the capital of Thailand, or even other regions such as Japan and Taiwan.

“Salaries given in our Villages is at least 300 baht a day,” claimed He. Though it may not seem that much, for the majority of the local residents this is not a bad salary at all, regarding the petty amount for students’ tuition fees. Although the amount seemed insignificant compared with the

earnings of tourist guides in popular seasons, this amount is still enough for families’ basic needs.

4.3. Future

Though support, either financially or physically, is continuously needed for the “Lost Village”, residents should also put effort into their work to be valued and deserved this aid, as stated by the head of the village, He. “[Villagers] doing nothing is not acceptable,” He pointed out, “they can’t just stay in their house and wait for the rice to come.”

Having 398 families living in Da Gudi, the priority of donation must be set appropriately to achieve the best benefit to the greatest number. “If charities are willing to donate, make sure to donate first to the poorest ones living in the woods.” He emphasized.

5. Conclusion

Overall, the field research as well as the interviews were valuable in that they resolved most of the previous doubts through a fresh perspective and more detailed explanations in three main areas.

First, confirmed opinions. There is plenty of accurate information in the previous reports. In terms of occupations, the Internet says that most people in the “Lost Village” make their living mainly from agriculture and tourism, and interviews confirm this. In terms of occupations, the Internet says that most people in the “Lost Village” make their living mainly from agriculture and tourism, and interviews confirm this, adding that young Chinese-speaking people are more likely to work as Chinese tour guides because of the high wages, while relatively older adults may be engaged in other, less complicated jobs, such as farming.

Second, new understanding. The biggest disagreement, however, lies in the misunderstanding of the scope of the true “Lost Village”: outsiders tend to think that there is only one favorite village in the entire area. The biggest disagreement, however, lies in the misunderstanding of the scope of the true “Lost Village”: outsiders tend to think that there is only one favorite village in the entire area, Mae Sarong, while in reality the scope of the “Lost Village” includes multiple villages. It is worth noting that the birthplace of the first KMT garrison was not in Mae Salong, as He claims, but in Da Gudi.

Third, the “middle ground”. As we all know, the evolution of history is a step-by-step process. For example, in previous literature reviews on international identity, most of the perspectives presented only a single answer, i.e. yes or no to having a legal nationality. However, from this interview, it can be concluded that there is a so-called “middle ground” between yes and no, i.e., some people do have legal citizenship, even though it is very costly for most of them to obtain it. As another example, attitudes about whether people want to stay in the Lost Village are in fact ambiguous, rather than one-sided, as some opinions on the Internet would suggest. In short, this type of middle ground is also consistent with the complexity of most historical research.

5.1. Limitation

First of all, due to the unique nature of these villages, there are no professional historians who have kept very formal records of their history; what any platform describes their history basically comes from word of mouth - which is somewhat of a first-hand account, but throws in a lot of subjective judgment involved, so its accuracy of this information may be questionable.

Secondly, due to the limited time available on this visit to Thailand, I was not able to conduct field research in every area of the villages, such as the more iconic local historical archives. At the same time, although He and Li are both very influential figures in the area, it is not certain that they are truly representative of the majority of the general population - perhaps a questionnaire survey of the population would be a more effective means of research in the future.

Last, the KMT's involvement in the opium trade has still remained uncertain. In the published interview with a descendant of the KMT, the elder claimed that the KMT was only responsible for the transportation of the drugs [7], but the credibility of the source — YouTube — is doubted. Unfortunately, though a question related to the KMT's opium trade was prepared before my own interview, the inquiry of it was denied by a person living in the Village who helped us to make this trip, and interviews, possible, implying that a greater secret could be hidden therein.

5.2. Implication

Since the “Lost Village” isn't yet extremely popular on the Internet, general readers, who typically do not have access to academic resources databases, because there are a limited number of high-quality content on the Internet about this topic. Professional scholars, especially those in related fields such as sociology and history, may find some interesting opinions on the research I conducted.

Moreover, as mentioned earlier, this article is intended to give outsiders, especially any organizations wishing to help the people of the area, a fuller understanding of what is really going on in the Lost Village so that help programs can be more targeted. A utilitarian believes that the best thing one can do is things that benefit the greatest number [9]. With the research, I hope more people are able to recognize these special isolated individuals who need society's support. Though my own influence may not be powerful enough, even if only a small percentage of our population decides to pass on their generosity to a smaller percentage of people who get to see my paper, the overall influence will be dramatically more significant than that of my own. To me, it is currently the best way to benefit the greatest number with all I can.

Despite this research, I would continue to put effort into supporting this small group of my compatriots. To me, though investigating deeply into historical gaps may also be interesting, it may not be as practical for the current situation of the kids. Since I've visited the mountain, I have a clearer view of the true living conditions people are experiencing up on the mountain. Therefore, if I were to conduct research again, I would focus more on the improvements in the population nowadays instead of diving down into their historical backgrounds.

In many aspects, this paper isn't completely integral, for that with merely my effort it would be difficult to take care of every possible point of view in such a vast area in the “Lost Villages”. With that in mind, further research is, frankly, required to have a more complete view of the whole problem since potential biases still could exist: even if my interviewees are authoritative members living within the region with great familiarity with the situations, there are many more villages being part of the “Lost Villages”, and that opinions of people in higher social status may not fully and nicely reflect the life of lower-status ones. However, this research could potentially be a good beginning to the deeper research of the problems within this nebulous “Lost Villages”.

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