

ab  
301.3  
Res

P/RE File Copy

Research Div  
July 1966

TIC/lu  
00599

Northeasterners in the Chiengrai Area

c-1

During its study of the impact of roads in North and Northeast Thailand, the Research Division of USOM became interested in the migration of Northeasterners into Changwad Chiengrai. This phenomena had previously come to the attention of others and reports have been made by both the Embassy Political Section and USIS during the past year. The Research Division is thus only adding supportative data in the report that follows. The RD report is divided into two sections, (1) a general statement regarding the situation, primarily gathered from interviews by two Thai assistants, Bantorn Ondam and Thavorn Koomalayavisai and (2) a study of a single Northeastern village by Davi Kunjara. Four general observations appear to be true.

- 1) The Northeasterners, in moving to the North, do not appear to be carrying the seeds of subversion, nor did they leave their Northeastern locale because of security problems.
- 2) The big picture is one of cultural conflict and accommodation. The Northeasterners carry their culture to the North, lock, stock, and barrel; and as a result are grudgingly admired for their industry but blamed for problems associated with the Northeasterners practice in agriculture, home-life, etc.
- 3) As newcomers, the Northeasterners appear to be fair game for chicanery on the part of local residents.
- 4) The move of people from the Northeast to the North appears to add to national product.

The number of Northeasterners in Amphur Chiengrai is approximately 20,000 with perhaps 11,000-12,000 in the three amphurs RD was surveying, Muang, Terng

(C.3)

and Chiengkong. Very few of these are in the last named Amphur (10 to 20 households) and most of these are school teachers and their families who have good relations with the rest of the population. The largest number are in Terng and are primarily located in six major villages in Tambol Vieng and Tambol Taa.

The villages are:

- 1) San Sai Ngarm, Tambol Vieng: approximately 450 households, about 2/3 of the households are Northerners. (N.E. Phuyaiban and head school teacher)
- 2) Ban Patung Ngarm, Tambol Taa: approximately 220 households, about 3/4 Northerners.
- 3) Ban San Sai Moon, Tambol Vieng, 3 Kms. off the main road: approximately 250 households almost all Northerners, with a N.E. head teacher and Village Development Committee and Farmers' Groups.
- 4-5) Ban Kai and Ban Rong-khun, Tambol Taa: approximately 40-50 households practically all N.E. immigrant (widely dispersed villages because of the topographical distribution of land in a mountain pass-like area).

Most of the Northerners have come in the past five to ten years as a result of better and cheaper land available in the area.

The Northerners are reputed to carry with them to the North the funds and the disposition to acquire land of the same area per family as they possessed in the Northeast. As a result, each Northerners family farms about twice the area that the Northern farmer does (20 rai compared to 11 rai). The Northerners reported that they moved because they could not adequately support their families on 20 rai in their former homes, but that they could do so on 5 to 10 rai in their new location, and market the balance. This

suggests the greater productivity of Northern soils, but, also emphasizes the net gain to national product of transposing a people and their pattern of cultivation to an area with greater land productivity.

The migrants in Terng began to arrive in bulk about five years ago, coming mostly in March to May of the year. Their method of travel was by bus, often two to four arriving at one time, usually coming from Kalasin, Udorn, Khonkaen, Mahasarakam, Korat, Roi Et and Ubol. Two kinds of people arrived: (1) those with money who bought land (at cheaper prices than in the N.E.), and (2) those without land who either squatted or sold their labor to other Northerners. The pattern of life established will be found in the accompanying report.

Relations between those from the Northeast and Northerner and officials have not been good and in the process a number of positive and negative attitudes have arisen regarding the Northerner.

Negative Attitudes:

- 1) They are cunning people
- 2) They gamble and have a higher crime rate
- 3) They are not religious and/or follow different religious customs
- 4) They complain and find fault with government officials
- 5) They only want their own Phuyaiban, teachers and priests
- 6) They eat everything including "unclean" foods
- 7) They have driven up the prices of land and construction
- 8) They do not conserve fish ponds, trees and other natural resources.

Positive Attitudes: (It should be noted that many of these "positive" attitudes are also causes of friction such as the fact that they are hard working.)

1) They have introduced new crops such as watermelon and kenaf, groundnuts, have breed new pigs and use fertilizer

- 2) They are hard working
- 3) They are better informed
- 4) They are alert to the market
- 5) They have an interest in government administration
- 6) They save
- 7) They have wider range of activities.

Finally, there is suspicion among amphur officials that there are subversives among the Northerners. Among the reasons given are:

- 1) Some asked to register powerful weapons
- 2) There is a good deal of mail to and from them
- 3) They come to the area with a good deal of money
- 4) They travel to and from the Northeast
- 5) They threaten to submit matters to court if officials treat them wrongly
- 6) Now there is a man in this area who was former a teacher there but resigned. When he was a teacher, he was poor and in debt but now he has two tractors and all Northerners in Terng consult him. He goes back to his home town once or twice a month.

A statement of attitudes and grievances would not be complete without a listing of the complaints of the Northerners (most of which are true).

- 1) Northerners try to steal their produce and livestock
- 2) Northerners are lazy

- 3) Amphur officials don't like them because they want services the amphur is supposed to offer
- 4) They have been cheated in land and other dealings.

To add some depth to the above, the following report is provided:

The village observed by Davi Kunjara was Ban San Sai Moon, Tambol Vieng where almost the entire population is Northeasterner.

Approximately ten years ago, an itinerant worker and sometime village blow-hard that was given up for dead by family and village re-appeared in a village in Amphur Kong, Korat Province with tales of rich land to be had in Amphur Terng, Changwad Chiengrai. There, he said, the rice grew tall, the rains fell when it was supposed to, land was to be had and the land was rich; and the local people are gentle and easy-going. Because he was somewhat of a blow-hard, those who heard him were skeptical. However, since what he described sounded so full of promise and because the land that they occupied at the time was so unproductive, three men decided that they would investigate; and they came to Chiengrai, to Amphur Terng and found that for once the itinerant worker had been quite accurate in his description.

Confirmation of the availability of the land for homesteading came from a few school teachers, themselves ex-Northeasterners, who had been assigned to teach in Chiengrai by the Ministry of Education.

The exodus of Northeasterners started in earnest in 1960 and during 1964-1965 the migration reached its peak and became stabilized. At the present time there is no longer a migration as such, since free land is no longer available and immigrants must purchase land at an ever increasing price, or rent land from the local people or from Northeasterners who have been longer established in the area. It is well that the migration leveled off, for

practically one half of the total number of 250 households in San Sai Moon must rent land to cultivate; and land prices around the vicinity of the village have gone up so that it is comparable to good road-side farm land i.e. bahts 1,000-1,200 per rai.

The village itself looks like a Northeastern CD or ARD village. This is to say that it is a planned lay-out village with a main road through the center and cross roads intersecting the main road dividing the village into rectangular grids and home lots, fenced off in lots of approximately  $3/4$  of one rai each. The older settlers may occupy 3 or 4 of these lots. There are approximately 25% of these lots with open wells and about 10% of the homes have sanitary privies. The village lanes are lined on both sides with kapok trees and the general impression is that of a well planned, clean and pleasant village. The main road, not having any kind of prepared surface (the village hope to have the main road compacted and surfaced this year) has deteriorated and one more heavy rain will make it impassable to all motor vehicles with the exception of those having four wheel drive and motorcycles which run on a well trodden foot path. (There are about 7-8 motorcycles and 30 bicycles in the village and about 20 bullock carts.) There are 3 small general merchandise stores in the village and as soon as the weather closes off the road connecting to the main road; these stores will do a booming business in food stuffs, dry goods and farm supplies (plow-shares are imported from N.E., Udon, because of their proven superiority over local shares in cutting a wider furrow and in turning over the hods so that the grass roots become entirely exposed). These shops are well patronized by the villagers because they belong to Northeasterners and because credit purchasing can be arranged.

They have in stock the traditional general store stock, i.e. polished gelutinous rice, fermented fish, fish sauce, shrimp paste--onions and garlic, dried chili, some stationery, soap and detergents household utensels, kitchen utensels; some ready to wear clothing, some needles & threads and yard goods, some sugar-cane and palm, sugar, acacia-pod paste, the making for betel chewing, tobacco, cigarettes, and some sweets for the children. There is also in stock some cheap immitation leathers shoes and geta or rubber sandals. The fact that the price for any given article is a little bit cheaper in the market at Terng does not justify to the villagers the three kilometers walk from the village to Terng to make small purchases. If a large purchase is contemplated, the Northeast villager goes by bus to Chiengrai, where there is a wider variety to choose from at a substantially lower price and there he also has recreational facilities.

The village is constituted to be of a part of Group VII Tambol Vieng and Amphur Terng and as such does not have a Kamnan or a Phuyaiban in the village. It does have a village development committee and this committee serves a dual function, acting as a CD committee as well as acting as a village governing body. Most disputes and altercations in the village are arbitrated and settled by this committee. It is predicted that at the time of the next election, a Northeasterner will become the Phuyaiban of San Sai Moon, (opinions of the amphur officials). This is because of the isolation and lack of social inter-course and integration between the Northeasterners and the local people (2 cases of N.E. girls marrying Northerners in the entire six years of the villages' history). It is also due to the fact that Northeasterners take a much more active role in local government.

This latter statement can be justified in reports of N.E. electioneering i.e. cattle and hogs are slaughtered for feasts whose main purposes are the acquisition of promises to vote. The demand/request for farm associations and farmers' groups illustrate the effectiveness of the promotion of these programs in the N.E. because these migrants are clamouring for the benefits that may be had through these programs. The village committee is very effective; comparatively speaking, the committee is probably more effective in this village without government aid/supervision than its counterpart in either the local villages or in the N.E. with government supervision.

Almost all of the rice grown by the San Sai Moon community is of the ~~g~~<sup>x</sup>elutinous variety; although non-~~g~~<sup>x</sup>elutinous paddy commands a higher price. This situation could be more readily understood if the villagers were not aware of the market's demand, but they are aware. They also know that the Rice Department introduced improved strains of rice such as the San Pha Tong, the Tomyai varieties (non-~~g~~<sup>x</sup>elutinous) and the Dor Nangnuan (~~g~~<sup>x</sup>elutinous), all of which are higher yielding and are more resistant to blights that hit the native ~~g~~<sup>x</sup>elutinous varieties, but they continue to plant native strains. On elevated land and on other land not particular suitable to rice the North-easterners have grown watermelon and kenaf to supplement their incomes. The advent of Charleston Grey watermelon in Chiengrai last year caused a not minor sensation as the local people have never seen such a large or an attractive melon. This year there will be considerably more watermelons grown. Most of those interviewed by the observer in the village are already aware of and are anticipating a market saturation point in watermelon within the next 2-3 years and are looking ahead to the growing of kenaf. There is no local market



(purchaser) of kenaf as such. After the completion of harvesting of rice in December/January there promises to be a coordinated concerted effort to grow kenaf. Two of the wealthier villagers have been talking this up and will either make arrangements to collect and market all that the village can produce on a commission basis or to buy the kenaf outright. This product will be put on the market at the nearest kenaf marketing center probably at Korat.

The local people admire the Northeasterners for their energy and initiative. It is agreed by government officials, the local merchants and local farmers that the Northeasterners are aggressive and advanced in farming practices. The Chiengrai Borikarn Company has given the observer the data that perhaps as much as one fourth to one third of the 250 tons of chemical fertilizer that they sold wholesale or retail in 1965 were destined for Northeasterners (this is an estimate because this company deals in ammonium sulfates-26% (for leaf crops) as well as the superphosphates-20% (for seed crops)). The animal husbandry practices of the Northeasterners, particularly the care and use of draft water buffaloes, is apparently quite superior to those of the local farmers. Blooded stock (hogs) is to be found in this village more than in Northern villages.

There is a debit side to the personality of the Northeasterner as well. It is generally admitted that people from a hard, poor soiled region, are also the poorest conservationists. This statement as applied to the Northeasterner in Chiengrai is undoubtedly true. When a Northerner finds a wild fruit-tree and if the fruit is ripe he will pick all that he needs and some for his relatives, friends, and neighbors. When a Northeasterner finds a

similar tree he will go home for his ax, chop the tree down, strip the tree bare and burn the trunk, and limbs for charcoal. When a Northerner finds a good fishing hole, he will use thrownets and fishing poles to take what he needs from the hole and leave the rest to propagate the species; the Northeasterner finding a similar hole will probably drain it dry or poison the hole with root drugs (rhetonone) and empty the entire pool of its aquatic inhabitants.

Needless to say these activities do not exactly endear the Northeasterners to the local population. Cases reported here may be repeated restatements of isolated cases and with the addition of a dash of envy and jealousy and this information must be taken with a grain of salt. However, the practices of the Northeasterners in their own native provinces seem to bear this out and the illustrations were cross checked in all three Amphurs before it is presented here.

It would be far fetched to make any claims that the improvement of the Chiengkong-Chiengrai road has had a direct impact on the immigration of the Northeasterners to the amphurs in Chiengrai serviced by this road, because the major portion of the migrants came to the region long before the completion of the road improvement. It can be said however that the process was considerably speeded up when the all weather surface was completed.