

Changes within the Karen Tradition of Marriage and of the Ohe Ritual

-The Case of Mae Sapok Village-

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1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of the Study

In this research, we will examine the marriage and Ohe rituals of the Karen people of Northern Thailand and also how the villagers perceive these traditions. From the present status of the traditions, we attempt to identify the problems related to continuing these traditions. As a result, the Karen people will understand if there were changes within their traditions. Thus, the Karen may start reflecting on them.

1.2 Research Question

We realized that the Karen people, especially the Sgaw Karen in Northern Thailand, have changed some traditions. From the literature we decided to focus our research on their traditional wedding ceremony and the rituals that make their identity and customs and to determine how they are changing. We tried to learn about the Karen's spiritual space, society and life with nature through this research. We also tried to figure out why and how their traditions change or have to change. Thus, the following are our two main research questions:

- (1) What kind of view do the Karen people have regarding marriage?
- (2) How do Karen people think of the Ohe ritual?

1.2.1 Sub Research Question 1

According to research by Hayami (1992: 12) the wedding ceremony of the Karen usually takes 3 days and is complicated. The Karen wedding consists of small rites. Each step is held in a particular place and with different meanings. Therefore, we asked the villagers in Mae Sapok village, "What type of rite is the most important in the wedding?" We think that the rites which Karens consider important in the wedding suggest significant meanings. Also, we questioned them about simplification of the wedding ceremony. We are interested in changes in perception towards marriage. In addition, we inquired about what age is the ideal age to get married in order to investigate the changes in ways of thinking about marriage.

Thus, we have two sub-research questions about marriage:

- (1) What type of rite is the most important in the wedding ceremony of the Karen?
- (2) How does the ideal age for marriage differ?

From these questions, we expected two conclusions.

- (1) The most important rite for women is to change clothes from a white dress to a red skirt in Karen's wedding.
- (2) The parental ideal age to get married is earlier than the ideal age.

1.2.2 Sub Research Question 2

The Ohe ritual is one of the most important traditions for Karen people because it is passed on from generation to generation and it means it forms their way of thinking and their life style, which they have perpetuated for a long time. In order to research how the Ohe ritual is changing, we thought it was logical to

explore according to generational perception. In addition according to research by Hayami (1992: 112), the wife and husband can perform the Ohe ritual, which use chickens and pigs. However in our research we observed that mostly women are practicing this rite and as a result, women's empowerment comes from the Ohe ritual. If there is any difficulty as to the preservation of the Ohe ritual, we thought it might be connected with the power balance between women and men. Therefore we would like to compare the ways of thinking between men and women. From these views, we made two sub-research questions.

- (1) How do the views of Ohe ritual differ between generations?
- (2) How do the views of Ohe ritual differ between men and women?

From these questions, we will expect two conclusions.

- (1) As generations get younger, people tend to reject the Ohe ritual.
- (2) Men don't want to practice Ohe ritual but women are carrying on the tradition.

1.3 Definition of Tradition in the Karen tribe

Tradition in the Karen tribe is a belief, custom or way of doing something that has existed for a long time among the Karen people and follows methods and ideas that differ from the urban area in Chiang Mai.

1.4 Research Methodology

1.4.1 Research Site

In order to conduct overseas fieldwork research, Group 4, which had to undertake research on a minority community of Thailand, selected Mae Sapok Village of hill tribes of Chiang Mai Province, Thailand. Chiang Mai is the second largest province of Thailand and is situated some 700 km away from Bangkok in the north on the Mae Ping river basin and some 300m above sea level (Google search). Mae Sapok Village is comprised of five main communities including the communities of Mae Sapok Tai consisting of 45 households, Huay Takhray consisting of 30 households (Huay Takhray is a mixed village of Northern Thai people and Karen), Mae Sapok Nua consisting of 42 households, Phamon consisting of 15 households and Mae Sapok Klang consisting of 6 households. However, since the Karen tribe was the main focus of this research work, the group members visited the Mae Sapok Thai and Mae Sapok Nua areas and conducted interviews with the villagers from September 21, 2009 to October 1, 2009.

The group members, in addition to the individual households, also visited some important places like the local church of the Christian community, the temple of the Buddhist community, the house of the village head and the nursery. The Mae Sapok health care center was also visited in order to get the latest important data about the village people.

1.4.2 Interviewees

In order to get complete information and reliable data for the research work, members of Group 4 visited individuals, male, female, married and unmarried people, the village head, the community leader, the local Buddhist monk, two staff of the church, as well as officials from the health care center and the nursery. In total 61 people were interviewed in the village including 30 females, 31 males, one monk, two church representatives, one village head, two community leaders, and one traditional leader. The details are here:

Table 1.1: Interviewee Villagers

sex	community	Age group					total
		20s—	30s—	40s—	50s—	over 60s	
Men	Mae Sapok Tai	5	2	3	1		
	Huay Takhray			1			
	Mae Sapok Nua	5	1	4	3	4	
	Phamon						
	Mae Sapok Klang	1				1	
Men total		6	6	7	6	6	31
Women	Mae Sapok Tai	1	3	4	4	1	
	Huay Thakray		1	2	1	2	
	Mae Sapok Nua	3	1			2	
	Phamon		1				
	Mae Sapok Klang	2			1	1	
Women total		6	6	6	6	6	30
Grand total		12	12	13	12	12	61

Source: Author



Photo1

2. Literature Review

2.1 Karen

The Karen ethnic group is the largest group of the hill-dwellers in Thailand today whose population is about 430,000 people (Hayami2009: 56). This report will examine a sub-group, the Sgaw Karen, who live in Northern

hills of Thailand. They have been making their living from subsistence agriculture, paddy rice cultivation, livestock and handicrafts. They also cultivate cash crops, utilize forest products or work as wage laborers. The Karen society is a matri-lineal, which means that after the couples are married, they live with the wife's family for about one year after which they build their house near the wife's family's house. However, the youngest daughter will continue to live with her parents in order to take care of them. While inheritance is equal among all children, land is usually inherited by the daughters. Division of labor according to gender is ambiguous. Daily work around the household, such as preparing food, washing, working in the fields, and collecting water, is not expressly divided according to gender, wife or husband. They are a monogamous society and rarely get divorced. (Hayami 1999: 98)

What differs between women and men are spheres of activities which are supported by Karen social norms. The women are believed to have weaker souls compared to men, and for that reason if women go into the forest alone, they are exposing themselves to the dangers. When women go out of the village, someone should go with her. In fact, there are only two reasons for which they can go out of village by themselves, either to attend school or to work in urban areas. On the other hand, men are free to go out of village as they please. When a Karen man becomes 15 years old, he goes out of village with his friends in order to make networks with people living outside the village to enhance his position within and outside his community. (Hayami1999: 110)

2.2 Wedding

2.2.1 The Traditional Proposal of the Karen People

The Karen people decide marriage on an individual basis (Iijima1971: 61). Even parents cannot prevent an agreement between a couple. If parents don't approve of the marriage some couples will elope. However, in the case that children don't expect to be able to marry easily, parents may find a suitable marriage partner. According to the research by Iijima, a young man of the Karen tribe continues to visit the village of the woman who he is courting almost every night for several months to a year before the marriage. The man performs serenades for the woman near her house, usually with a stringed instrument. Then, he visits her house to talk together with her parents and family members. After a while, they force the couple to be alone on the veranda where they will typically talk late into the night. However, the relationship between the couple, traditionally, will not move past conversation because in the Karen tradition, premarital affairs are believed to make the god of the house angry. The man proposes to the woman officially after he has convinced her. There is no engagement gift before wedding.

2.2.2 The Wedding and the Change to the Red Skirt

The Karen wedding ceremony is held in bride's village for 3 days (Hayami2009: 186) and is composed of various small rites. Participation in the marriage ceremony is called "going to have a feast" because much food is provided for the attendants. For instance, pork served at a wedding has particular kinds of preparation. The dinner at the first night of wedding should be the pig that the bride has raised. In addition, the head of the pig will be tied to the threshold in the fireplace room of bride's house as the symbolic wedding pig. During this time the bridegroom gradually moves from his village to the fireplace room of the bride's house undergoing many small rites.

The climax of the wedding is the change of clothes by the bride. Karen Women wear a white one-piece dress from the time they are small children to the time of their marriage while they sleep, work and eat. On the second night of the wedding, the bride takes off the white one-piece dress from her legs down, for the first time. This is

unusual because she would normally slip the dress off over her head. After which, the brides change clothes to a red skirt and a black shirt with the help of the matchmaker's wife. Married women never wear a white one-piece dress after this rite. Many rites, in addition to the changing of clothes, express the change of a woman's status. After the wedding rites, women get recognition for reproduction and the Ohe ritual.

2.3 Ohe Ritual

The Ohe ritual is a religious ritual of the Karen. It consists of ancestor worship after which they eat sacrifice an animal and eat together as a family. It is held when a family member is sick, when children are born, when a new house is built, etc. Only married men and women can perform this ritual. The parents of the one performing the ritual and the descendants of the female line have to attend. Also, the ritual held by women is much more important and strict so that the women have the power to decide the buying, selling and consuming of domestic animals in their daily life (Hayami 1998: 256). The Ohe ritual has a deep connection with religions such as Buddhism and Christianity. Many Karen people practice the Ohe ritual and also Buddhism. But in the case of Christianity, they have to quit practicing the Ohe ritual.

However the number of Karen people who perform the Ohe ritual is decreasing. The ritual is either being simplified or people giving up the practice entirely. One reason is that people are changing their religion to Buddhism or Christianity and both religions have a ceremony to help people to quit the Ohe ritual. In addition there are several difficulties for continuing it. First, there are regulations of norms, such as the restriction of mobility which make people not want to do Ohe. Second, there is an economic problem because they need many animals, pigs and chickens, to hold an Ohe ritual, and as a result they need a lot of money. Third, people want their children to get a higher education, a goal that may be in conflict with the money spent on the Ohe. Also, when they perform the Ohe ritual, all family members must get together, which means children have to absent from class for the duration of the ritual. Fourth, the number of children is decreasing and the youngest female child inherits the Ohe ritual. However, if there aren't any female children in the family they cannot continue it. Women that have large families can hold grand Ohe rituals and gain respect from the community, therefore, the declining number of children also affects their ability and motivation to practice the ritual. Finally, women gain power through the Ohe ritual so some men may not think highly about the practice. For these reasons, men and young people tend to reject the Ohe ritual these days.

3. Marriage

3.1 Proposal and Preparation for the Wedding

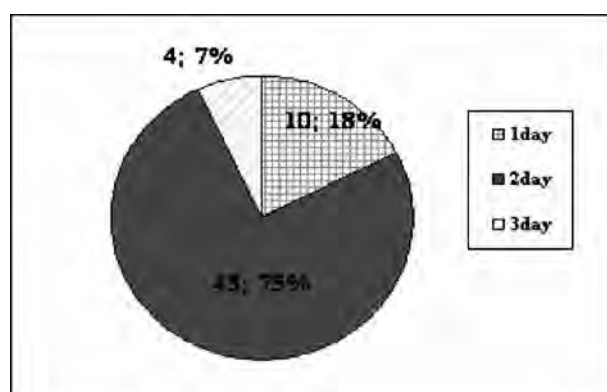
In the culture of Mae Sapok Village, only men can propose to women. Sometimes a Karen man visits another community to find a marriage partner using the traditional way to propose but it can be also observed that a man finds a marriage partner inside the community where he lives. After he finds a woman he likes, he goes to the front of her house and sings a song to express his love. He cannot enter her house at this time but

rather, walks to the front of her house at night after finishing his agricultural work. This is the traditional way of proposing; however this traditional way is declining recently because young people have many opportunities to find a boyfriend or girlfriend at school and at the workplace in a city.

The couple asks the bride's parents and the Zikho in the bride's community about the appropriate day for the wedding. The Zikho is a traditional leader that performs the religious rituals in the Karen community. The role of Zikho as a traditional leader is usually passed on from father to son. Together, the Zikho and the bride's parents decide the day of the wedding. It is said that Thursday is the most appropriate day for a wedding and also on the day of a full moon. Conversely the day of a new moon is considered not good for a wedding. In a Mae Sapok Village, the Zikho is a key person to make the arrangements for the wedding.

3.2 The Procedure of the Wedding

Figure 3.1: Average of the Wedding Ceremony



Source: Author

During our research, it was found that the duration of a wedding, on average, was 1.89 days. Ten people had a wedding of one day. And 43 people had a wedding of two days. While four people held a wedding for three days. According to the village head, the wedding was traditionally held for two or three days, but recently, it has decreased to one.

A wedding is usually held in the bride's community and the groom's parents cannot participate. It is an important part of the ritual when a groom and his friends leave for the bride's community and several significant rites are performed before he leaves. At the entrance of the groom's community, the groom and his friends ask

the spirits for permission to leave the community. Halfway to the bride's community, there is an important rite where everybody puts their fingers into holy water and walks over the holy leaves that they brought from their community. They also ring a metal gong. The Zikho leaves the bride's community before the groom arrives and gives alcohol to the groom and his friends at the entrance of the bride's community. The groom and his friends drink alcohol to get permission to enter from the spirits.

After that, there is the rite of sacrificing a pig for the spirits of the bride's community. First, the Zikho carefully chooses a pig to use in the holy rite and the groom kills it. The head of the pig is hung on the top right corner of the gate of the bride's house for the spirit of the house. It is said that the spirit likes the gall bladder of a pig so if the gall bladder of the pig is too small, they must sacrifice one more pig. They usually choose a black pig that is two-three years old because black pigs have larger gall bladders. Women usually raise pigs for the wedding and if the bride uses the pigs that she raised, it doesn't cost so much to hold the wedding, though sometimes pigs are also purchased. The friends of the bridegroom will then return to the bridegroom's community with the head of the pig, after which the people in the community will eat the pig head. The groom stays on the terrace of the bride's house for the first night but during the second night, the groom stays with the bride in the same room. Before that time, the groom must not enter the bride's room; otherwise it violates the conventions of the house spirit.

On the morning of the first day of the marriage, the couple performs the rite called "tying cotton thread." Their wrists are tied together with a thread in hopes of having a happy and long life. Those who tie the thread

must be the bride's parents or elderly people in the community. It is a strict custom for the wedding and therefore, people carefully follow the way of tying the cotton thread. Tying the cotton thread has been practiced traditionally in Mae Sapok Village. After tying the cotton thread, the couple eats a male and a female chicken, which is considered an important rite because it is said that the couple can't break up after eating the chickens.

Several kinds of food are served at the wedding. A banquet usually includes chicken, pork, local food, beer, other alcohol, and fruits. However, they can't eat any dessert at the wedding. of the abundance of food is prepared for in part by the many people who attend the wedding. Attendants must be invited, however, and those who do not have a letter of invitation do not dare to go to the wedding. The couple can invite anybody to the wedding ceremony and often include their friends, the village head, government officers, teachers and doctors in the community.

Finally, the bride changes from a white one-piece dress to a red skirt and a black shirt on the second morning. From that point on the bride will never wear the white one-piece again.

3.3 Important Rites in a Wedding

We interviewed 58 married villagers and asked, "What is the most important rite in the wedding?" As Table 3.1 shows that all seven categories are related to the Karen style of marriage and 40 villagers mentioned these. Tying the cotton thread was regarded as the most important rite, followed by killing the chicken or pig, and finally feeding the spirits. However, what we focus on here is about the changing of clothes. Hayami (2009: 186) mentioned that the change from white one-piece to red skirt is the climax of the wedding steps and it can be said that changing clothes is one of the most important rite. However, only two villagers mentioned this rite and as a result, it does not appear to be the most important one for Karen people in the Mae Sapok Village.

We also asked why they thought the rites they mentioned were important (Table 3.2). Clearly, the top reason was tradition because they have to follow it. This result shows that many people still follow the tradition of the Karen wedding and even regard tradition as important. Second, six people said that they were just following their parents or the elderly people in the community and that they didn't know or think of the reason. This reason was particularly given by the younger generation; people in their 20s and 30s. Furthermore, five villagers told us that the rite was important because it was related to the spirits. For example, some said that it was good to follow because if they didn't do it the spirits would be angry. Also we got the following answers related to the spirits; "If cotton thread is used around wrist, the spirit would not go out of our body." "We have to prepare for the food to feed the spirit."

From these reasons we were able to understand that the wedding ceremony of the Karen is deeply related to their traditions and the spirits. In the tradition of the Karen, even though they have a lot of complicated rites and steps related to weddings, the tradition remains in their life. Moreover, we felt strongly that they were living with the spirits. They feel the spirits protect them and in return they feed them or try not to make them angry. In other words, the spirits are supposed to be models of good behavior and living, and Karen people are warned not to deviate from their norms. They are protected by the spirits but on the other hand they are bound.

Table 3.1: Important Rite in the Wedding

Important rite	Total
tying cotton thread	16
killing chicken or pigs	8
to offer a sacrifice to the spirits	5
preparing for food	4
every step	3
changing the clothes	2
sending groom to the bride's house	2
others	5
n.a.	16
Total	61

Note: some villagers chose two rites so that total is not 58.

Source: Author

Table 3.2: Reason Why the Rite is Important

Reason	Total
tradition	12
just followed others	6
something to do with spirits	5
live together for along time	2
if not become unlucky	2
others	9
n.a.	22
Total	58

Source: Author

Table 3.3: Wedding Steps to be Simplified

Wedding steps to be simplified	Total
don't want to change	27
decrease the day of ceremony	5
make it shorter (didn't mention about which part)	5
use many livestock	2
tying cotton thread	1
Others	4
n.a.	14
Total	58

Source: Author

However, while many of them follow the traditional ways, some people feel those complicated rites need to be simplified. We asked villagers “Which part of the wedding would you like to simplify?” and Table 3.3 shows the results. We found that 47% of the villagers (27 of 58) didn’t want to change any steps of the wedding ceremony and it means that almost half of the interviewees wanted to keep the traditional way. On the other hand, 17 people said they wanted to change the steps. Five villagers mentioned that

they want to decrease the number of days of the ceremony and similarly. Five villagers wanted to simplify some steps to make it shorter. In the Mae Sapok Village, traditionally they needed two or three days for the ceremony of the wedding and actually 82% of the people took two or three days for the wedding (Figure 3.1). Our research showed that they felt the traditional way of performing the wedding took too much time and we suspect that the length of the wedding will become shorter in the future. At present, 18 % of the villagers spend only one day for the wedding (Figure 3.1) but this rate is likely to become bigger and bigger. Therefore, we found that 28% of the villagers (17 of 58) wanted to simplify the wedding steps but no one mentioned that they wanted to abolish the change of the clothes. So what does this result suggest?

During our fieldwork, we saw most of the married women wearing the red skirt. They were handmade by the women so that the color and design of each skirt was a little bit different and it took 10 to 13 days to make. We thought that most of the women felt an attachment to the red skirt. Traditionally, the skirt was simply just a big square shaped piece of fabric and women wind it around their hips; however, recently the fabric is sewn as a skirt and some women attach an elastic string on the waist.

From our interviews, 89% of the people (54 of 61) said it was important to change clothes from the white one-piece to the red skirt. Furthermore, 83 % of the women (25 of 30) said they desired to keep wearing the red skirt in daily life. Why do most of the Karen people think of the red skirt as being so important? Through the interviews conducted we came to realize that the red skirt signifies several things for the Karen people. First, the

red skirt is an indicator of marriage. Some villagers said they cannot marry if women don't change their clothes and if women wear the red skirt men would not ask them to go out. Since changing to the red skirt is related to marriage, this might be the main role of the red skirt. Second, it is also a source of cultural identification of the Karen. Of course the red skirt is used only by Karen people and other ethnic groups or people in Northern Thailand don't wear it. There is little physical difference between Karen and others so that it may help them to wear their traditional clothes in order to make it clear whether or not they are Karen. Third, wearing the red skirt is related to the spirits. Some villagers told us if they do not wear it the spirits would be angry or the angry spirit would come. As a result, women follow the Karen's traditions and are in a way obligated to follow the strict social norms of the Karen.

Therefore, we understand that the red skirt forms a part of the Karen's traditional culture and it is important for them to feel Karen. Though only a few villagers mentioned the red skirt in the question about the most important rite in the wedding, it can be said that the red skirt has a latent influence on the Karen people. In this sense, the change from the white one-piece to the red skirt in the wedding seems not to be the most important rite in the wedding, but we do not doubt that the rite is important for them.

3.4 The Age of Marriage

Table 3.4: At What Age Did You Get Married?

age	men	women	total(people)
15-19	8	23	31
20-24	8	3	11
25-29	8	3	11
over 30	4		4
n.a.		1	1
total	28	30	58

Source: Author

Here, we will examine whether there are different views as to the ideal age of marriage according to sex and generation. At first we asked the villagers at what age they were married (there were three single men, so total is 58 people.) Most of the men were married on average at the age of 23.8 years, while the women's average age for marriage was 18.2 years old. One woman who was interviewed replied that she does not remember at what age she was married. From Table 3.4 we can easily tell the difference between men and women. Most of women married between

15 to 19 years old which accounts for 77%. On the other hand, men do not have a particular age to get married.

When we visited the community of Phamon, we met two girls who were cutting bamboo and chatting. They were both quite young and it was revealed that one was 18 years old and already had a daughter. Karen people live close to their families so mothers and grandmothers can help to take care of babies. Also, there is the tradition of helping to take care of younger brothers and sisters or even cousins.

Table 3.5: At what age should men get married

	generation					
age	20s	30s	40s	50s	60s	Total
under 15						0
15-19	1	2	4	1	1	9
20-24	5	5	6	6	6	28
25-29	4	2	2	4	2	14
over 30		1	1	1	1	4
up to them	1	2			2	5
n.a.	1					1
Total	12	12	13	12	12	61

Source: Author

Table 3.6: At What Age should Woman Get Married

	generation					
age	20s	30s	40s	50s	60s	total
under 15	1					1
15-19	5	5	12	10	2	34
20-24	2	3	1	1	8	15
25-29		2		1		3
over 30						0
n.a.	3					3
up to them	1	2			2	5
total	12	12	13	12	12	61

Source: Author

As demonstrated by the table, there is a big gap between men and women. According to the literature (part of 2.2), men should go out of the village and make their network and they begin building this network when they are around 15 years old. Depending on the network, they may not be able to marry in their 20's. As a result, this means it is acceptable that men over 30 years old are not yet married. On the other hand, for women it is not acceptable to be unmarried at over 30 years old. Women have a strong pressure to be married before 30. The same situation can be seen in Japan but Karen people have a much more difficult situation because they stand out wearing the white dress. The other girl in Phamon community wore the white dress which showed that she was still single. Because of this Karen women can easily be compared with other married women and therefore we think Karen women tend to get married earlier than men. This difference can be seen from the next question "What is the ideal age they should get married?" It

was found that the average of ideal ages for a man of the Karen people was 22.1 years old (Table 3.8). Twenty-eight villagers, about 46%, said that men should get married between 20 - 24 years old. The second highest response at 23% is between 25 - 29 years old. We found that they think it is best for men to get married from 20 to 29 years of age. (Table 3.5) It might be because it takes more than 5 years to have good experiences or build a good network after they leave the village. Also, from the literature we saw that before a man and a woman get married it may take some months or even year. Approximately five years after they go out of the village they start looking for a woman with which to be married. The person that responded "n.a." was a single man, 20 years old, who was not considering marriage.

Next is the average ideal age for woman that was noted to be 18.8 years (Table 3.8). Thirty-four villagers (56%) said they think the best time to be married is between 15 - 19 years old. The second highest percentage of respondents (25%) responded between 20 - 24 years old. (Table 3.6) This means they think women should get

married earlier than men. From this table we can understand another difference of opinion between the generations. Of those in their 60s, there are eight villagers that answered the ideal age is between 20 - 24 years old, while only two responded between 15 - 19 years old. There was only one person who responded “under age 15” and that person was in their 20’s. From this table we could understand that people’s perceived ideal age for marriage for women is getting younger.

Table 3.7: What age you want your daughter get married.

	generation					
age	20s	30s	40s	50s	60s	Total
15-19	1	2	5	6	3	17
20-24	4	5	3	3	4	19
25-29	1	1				2
over30		1				1
n.a.	6	3	4	3	3	19
up to them			1		2	3
Total	12	12	13	12	12	61

Source: Author

19 and 20 – 24. Unlike Table 3.6, there was not a big difference between the age categories in table 3.7. When asked about their sons, the highest response was 44%, stating 20 - 24 years old, while the second largest response was that of between 25 - 29 years old. The average of the parent’s ideal age is 21.9 years old and this shows no significant difference in opinion between the parents and the sons.

Table 3.8: The Ideal and Actual Ages for Marriage

	Man	Woman
the ideal age	22.1	18.8
the parental ideal age	21.9	19.7
the actual age	23.8	18.2

Source: Author

However, we also asked them what age they wanted their daughter to be married. These results show a different idea. It was found that the parent’s ideal age for their daughter was 19.7 years old. As demonstrated, 19 people (34%) want their daughter to get married between 20 - 24 years old. The next largest response is 17 people for 15 - 19 years old. The response “n.a.” indicates that some villagers didn’t have daughters. Table 3.6 shows a big different number between 15 -

There is a difference in thinking about the ideal age to get married between men and women. Most people think women should be married earlier than men. For men the actual age of marriage is older than the ideal age given both by the men and their parents, but for women the actual age of marriage is earlier than the ideal age given by the women and their parents.

4. Ohe ritual

4.1 About Ohe

We collected information in reference to the spiritual aspects and also related to activities of the Ohe ritual from various interviews with the village head and villagers. The following is a detailed account.

Ohe is based on a traditional family belief system. For the most part, Ohe is performed when a person is

unable to undergo or has an unsuccessful medical treatment. For example, sometimes medical science proves unable to treat the patient, but Ohe on the other hand seems to cure the patient. People are encouraged to seek treatment through Ohe. People who are unable to get better through medical treatment feel better when they experience Ohe treatments. Families also support sick people who participate in the Ohe ritual. During Ohe all family member come together. This is believed to be one of the better ways for the treatment of sick people. We also observed that it is related to the feeding of the spirit. For example, when a person gets sick it means he or she may have offended the spirit. Therefore, they apologize to the spirit by way of performing the ritual of Ohe. Even if someone is not sick he/she has to practice Ohe to satisfy the spirit. Because Ohe is not the ritual for expelling the spirit from the house. Ohe is the residential spirit with which they have to live with in their house.

Some rules are very essential to be kept in mind while performing Ohe. Particularly the eating steps are very important. During Ohe a family member cooks at least one bowl of rice and one bowl of stew and then eats them together. The order of eating is the most significant part of Ohe. The eating starts from the father then the mother then the oldest child and likewise down to youngest child who may eat in the end. It is worth mentioning that it does not make a difference whether the eldest child is a boy or a girl. This example illustrates that they must not break the established order. If someone breaks this order of eating, it means that he has made the resident spirit angry. It is also a significant part of Ohe that non family members be unable to join the family during the Ohe ritual. This is the say that Ohe is only performed within the family. In other words, it is exclusively for family members otherwise the spirit will become angry.

Basically Ohe signifies feeding the spirit or is a direct reference to spirit. Ohe, Okhe or Omakhe are similar words which indicate the same meaning. There are two kinds of rituals. Ohe is within the family which is called Ohe. The second one is not Ohe but held within the community which lead by the Zikho; who is the traditional leader of the community. These two rituals are similar but are not exactly the same. In reference to the Mae Sapok village, there are two Zikhos in each community and the tilte of Zikho is passed on from generation to generation in a man's lineage. However, the spirit of Ohe only follows the female members of the community. The Northern Thai call it the grand ma/grand pa spirit or Papua. Therefore, it is only women who can practice the Ohe and as a result women are considered to be the leaders of all the activities of Ohe with the exception of eating where it is the men who must start first. During the course of Ohe, after eating food, the drinking starts. No one can leave the house until the eating and the whole ceremony have come to an end. In the end they wash the pots and the ritual is officially finished.

4.2 Participation in the Ohe Ritual

Table 4.1: People practice Ohe or not (communities)

	Tai	Takhray	Nua	Phamon	Klang	Total(people)
Practice	1	3	16	0	0	20(31%)
Don't Practice	23	4	7	1	6	41(67%)
Total	24(39%)	7(11%)	23(38%)	1(2%)	6(10%)	61(100%)

Source: Author

We interviewed 61 villagers in the Mae Sapok Village; 33% of the villagers participate in Ohe and 67% do not. Furthermore, there is a large difference between each community in relation to the rate of participation in Ohe. Table 4.1 shows that, in Mae Sapok Nua, 70% of the people practice Ohe. In Huay Takhray 75% of the people take part in Ohe which is consequently the highest level of participation in the ritual. As a result, our findings show that the Mae Sapok Nua and the Huay Takhray are the most traditional communities among the Mae Sapok villages we encountered.

One of the hypotheses about Ohe is that: “As the generation gets younger, people tend to reject Ohe.” Table 4.2 shows the relationship between generations and practice of Ohe. Most people in their thirties do not practice Ohe. However, it may be that of the people in their thirties that we interviewed, few of them were from Mae Sapok Nua or Huay Takhray in which there are many people who practice Ohe. On the other hand, of the people in their twenties that we interviewed, eight people were from Mae Sapok Nua. Of these eight, six actually practice Ohe, which is the highest rate among people who partake in Ohe compared with other generations. Before our research we supposed that the older generations would try to keep their traditions and we hypothesized that they would tend to practice Ohe, while younger generations would not. As we see in Table 4.2, there is little interrelation between generations and the practice of Ohe. Also, people who actually practice Ohe are a minority in most of the generations. As a result, it seems that the practice of Ohe is not related to generation.

Table 4.2: Ohe, generations and communities

	Ohe	Tai	Takhray	Nua	Phamon	Klang	Total(people)
20s	Practice			6			6
	Don't Practice	1		2		3	6
20s Total		1		8		3	12
30s	Practice			1			1
	Don't Practice	8	1	1		1	11
30s Total		8	1	2		1	12
40s	Practice		2	3			5
	Don't Practice	6	1	1			8
40s Total		6	3	4			13
50s	Practice	1		2			3
	Don't Practice	6	1	1		1	9
50s Total		7	1	3		1	12
60s	Practice		1	4			5
	Don't Practice	2	1	2		2	7
60s Total		2	2	6		2	12
Total		24	7	23		6	61

Source: Author

Another hypothesis was that: “Men don’t want to practice Ohe, while on the other hand women want to perform it.” Table 4.3 shows the relationship between sex and the practice of Ohe, as well as the result of the question: “To what extent do you desire to keep doing Ohe?” This question is directed only towards those who

practice Ohe. On the whole, there are more men who partake in Ohe at 23%, than women at 10%. Furthermore, 24% of the people said that they desire to keep participating in the Ohe ritual (Very much 17% and Much 7%). As for men who desire to keep practicing Ohe, there were ten out of 14 people (Very much 6 and Much 4) counting for 71%. Women who desire to keep doing Ohe number four people out of six (Very much 4), or 67%. It means that there are more men, not women who tend to think of continuing Ohe.

Table 4.3: Do you desire to keep doing Ohe?

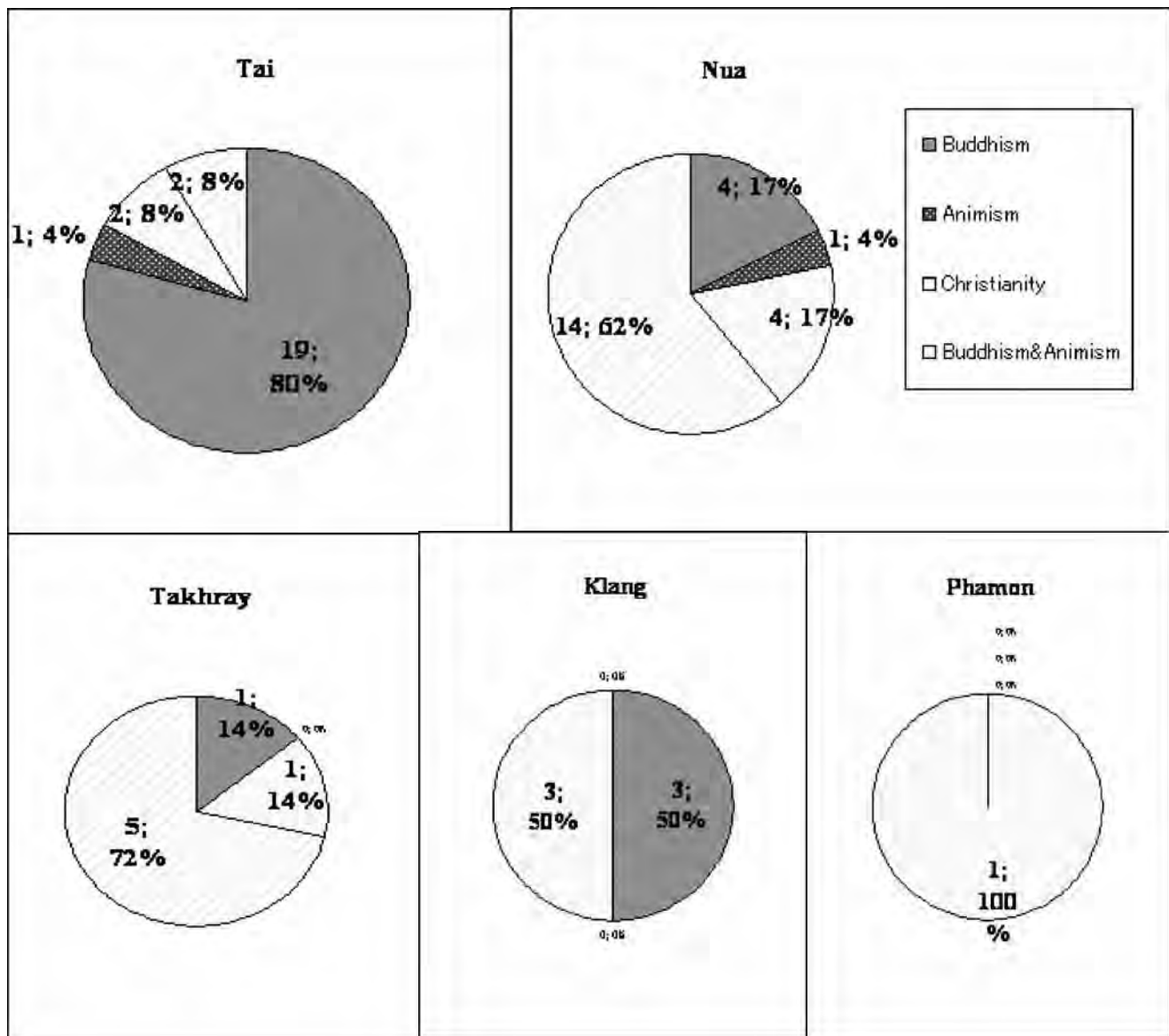
Ohe	Sex	Very much	Much	No	Not at all	N.A.	Total
Practice	Male	6(10%)	4(7%)	2(3%)	1(2%)	1(1%)	14(23%)
	Female	4(7%)			2(3%)		6(10%)
Practice Total		10(17%)	4(7%)	2(3%)	3(5%)	1(1%)	20(33%)
Don't Practice	Male					17(28%)	17(28%)
	Female					24(39%)	24(39%)
Don't Practice Total						41(61%)	41(67%)
Total		10(17%)	4(7%)	2(3%)	3(5%)	1(1%)	41(61%)
							61(100%)

Source: Author

As Hayami (1998: 258) says, Ohe is a form of social status for women. If so, there should be more women who desire to keep practicing Ohe than men. However, the data from our research shows different results from our initial hypothesis. The village head said that although women are considered to be the leaders of all the activities related to Ohe, as far as eating is concerned; it is man who has to start first. This means that both men and women have responsibility when participating in Ohe, and as a result, shows that Ohe is not only a form of social status for women.

Why are 67% of the villagers not participating in Ohe? We asked people who do not practice Ohe about their reasons why. The top reason for not practicing Ohe being that it is “complicated.” In order to practice Ohe, they have to follow many steps and they must not make any mistakes with any of them. Some people said that if they do something wrong with the steps of Ohe it creates a big problem. The second reason being that it is “difficult to get together.” For example, when they decide to hold an Ohe ritual, they have to reunite all the family members from the mother’s side. However, if some members live outside of the village, for example children studying at schools in the cities or adults working in the cities, they have to be absent from school or to take a holiday to go back to the village. Moreover, others told us that they are reluctant to participate for the reason that they are not happy practicing Ohe and they feel that other religions may be more comfortable. Thus, because of these difficulties, many people mentioned that Ohe is not easy to practice and some mentioned that it is not fun to do. In extreme cases, some villagers even changed their religion because they wanted to quit Ohe. We can now hypothesize that in the future, more people will stop participating in Ohe. However, one thing that impressed us was that some young people still consider the Ohe as very important. For instance, a twenty-five year-old man from the Mae Sapok Nua told us that Ohe is an important tradition that we have to follow and as a result he wants to keep doing it forever. He said that tradition is precious and it seemed that he took pride in practicing Ohe. We thought from these young people that the tradition of the Karen has been passed on from generation to generation. It is very probably that they will save the tradition and the Ohe will continue as long as they live.

Figure 4.1: Religion in each community



Source: Author

4.3 Religion and Ohe Ritual

Here we consider the connection between religion and the Ohe ritual. In Mae Sapok village there are different colors for each religious group and we were able to determine the percentage of each religion by these colors. The religions represented were Buddhism, Animism, Christianity and a combination of Buddhism and Animism. In this research, animism means that one believes in the Ohe ritual. As a result, in these small communities there are two religions and one ritual.

According to the questionnaire results, 80% of villagers are Buddhist and only 12% of them believe in Animism, which by the way is combined with Buddhism to form a type of syncretism in Mae Sapok Tai community. For example, in the Mae Sapok Village, there is only one temple to which everyone has ready access. In contrast, 66% of villagers in the Mae Sapok Nua community believe in Animism. Moreover, in the Mae Sapok Nua community Buddhism is 17% and Christianity is also 17%. Traditional culture remains but Christianity is

becoming established in the Mae Sapok Nua community because it is easiest to get to church from these communities. However, 79% of them are still connected with Buddhism. In the Huay Takhray community many Northern Thai people are living and they are predominantly Buddhist. Even people in Huay Takhray community are close to live with Buddhist, there are still some 72% of Karen people who believe Animism in the Huay Takhray community. Figure 4.1 shows Buddhism, which includes a combination of Buddhism and Animism, as the largest percentage in all communities (except the Phamon community, because we were only able to interview one villager, and as a result the data doesn't show clear result). Also, we were able to see a Christian presence in each community.

Table 4.4: Practice of the Ohe Ritual and Religion in Community

		Buddhism	Animism	Christianity	Buddhism & Animism	Total
Practice	Thai				1	1
	Takhray				3	3
	Nua	1	1	1	13	16
Practice Total		1	1	1	17	20
Don't Practice	Thai	19	1	2	1	23
	Takhray	1		1	2	4
	Nua	3		3	1	7
	Klang	3		3		6
	Phamon			1		1
Don't Practice Total		26	1	10	4	41
Total		27	2	11	21	61

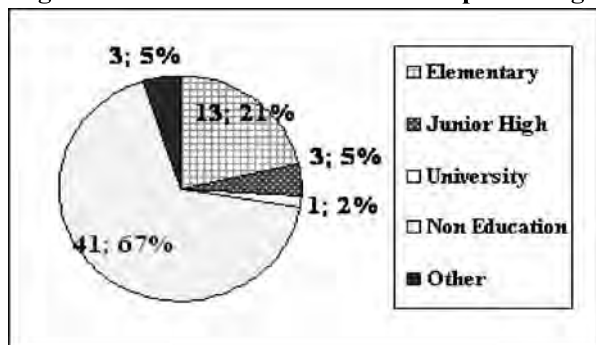
Source: Author

In Mae Sapok Tai community, 12% of the population believes in Animism which is to include also a strict form of belief in only Animism. However, in this case only one villager was practicing the Ohe ritual. This means that although they believe in the Ohe ritual they don't do the ceremony anymore or they only participate in the community rituals in which it is easier to participate. In fact, 80% of villagers who practice the Ohe ritual live in Mae Sapok Nua community. Also, most of them say they are Buddhist and Animist. For example, they celebrate Buddhist religious days. However, if bad things happen, they perform the Ohe ritual which demonstrates that they really believe in both of religions. As a result, it can be seen that the Ohe ritual and Buddhism have a close connection. Now we shall examine the connection between the Ohe ritual and Christianity. First, Christians cannot participate in the Ohe ritual and Karen people change religions to Christianity to quit the Ohe ritual. However, during our research there was a Christian who performed the Ohe ritual. Consequently, our research shows that the relation between Ohe ritual and Christianity is changing. It also suggests that people who believe in any of the local religions are able to perform Ohe.

4.4 Education and the Ohe Ritual

4.4.1 Interviews with the Villagers

Figure 4.2: Education level in Mae Sapok Village



Source: Author

Recently, many parents want their children to get a high level of education. We suspect that this trend is one of the reasons for stopping their participation in the the Ohe ritual. For instance, if they go to school in urban area, it is hard to get together for the Ohe ritual and also it costs much money to keep going to higher levels of education. Therefore, we examined parent's educational level and which educational level they want their children to attain.

As you can see, 67% of villagers have no experience at school. The second largest percentage is elementary school, however a certain percentage of them did not finish. In the category of "other," there are non-formal types of education, such as art school etc. In addition, some villagers said they could write and read even if they were uneducated as they had studied by themselves.

Table 4.5: Education level in generation and gender

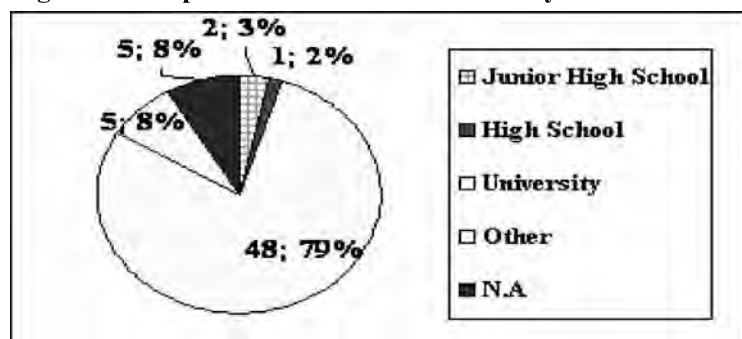
generation	gender	Elementary	Junior High	University	Non Education	Other	Total
20s	Male	3			2	1	6
	Female	2			4		6
30s	Male	2	1		3		6
	Female	2		1	3		6
40s	Male	3	2		2		7
	Female				5	1	6
50s	Male				6		6
	Female				6		6
60s	Male	1			4	1	6
	Female				6		6
Total		13	3	1	41	3	61

Source: Author

From the Table 4.5, villagers in their fifties and older had no educational experience to speak of, citing that there was no school near the village as the reason. They simply did not have the chance to go there. In addition some of them couldn't speak the Northern Thai language. They could only speak the local Karen language. It was with villagers in their 40s that signs of education started to be seen. However, we can see a clear difference between male and female levels. Among people in their 30s we encountered a woman who had graduated from university, despite this woman's presence approximately half of the population in their 30s had not gone to school. Amongst the population in their 20s, the no education category is still bigger than any of the other categories. From interviews we have already mentioned that there are some villagers in their 50s and older couldn't speak Northern Thai. However, even uneducated villagers in their 40s and younger can speak Northern Thai but speak

Karen with villagers in their fifties and older. From this part of our research it was hard to find a connection between education and the Ohe ritual. However, we find that villagers know the importance of education from the result of the second question.

Figure 4.3: Expectation of education level to your children



Source: Author

uneducated, they could be cheated more easily, etc. Also, even if they are able to write and read the Northern Thai language it is seen as not enough for them.

In reference to this question a few villagers stated different levels of education for boys and girls. One reason may be that they want girls to help with local village life in the traditional way. Moreover, in Mae Sapok Nua community where there are many villagers who still practice the Ohe ritual, it was hard to find women open to being interviewed. For example, when we requested women to participate in an interview, many didn't respond and disregarded us. This refusal to participate may have been related to their traditional way of life. For instance, they do not seem to have the opportunity to talk with many people outside their village. They often seem to stay in their communities. In which case, it is hard to obtain an education.

Table 4.6: Women go to city for education

	20s	30s	40s	50s	60s	Total
good	11	10	8	10	7	46
not good		2	2			4
up to them	1			1	4	6
other			3	1	1	5
Total	12	12	13	12	12	61

Source: Author

village or they forget their culture, it is not good. In addition, a few villagers say it was not good, because city life is dangerous for women. It was not only older people who said this, but people in their 30s and 40s. In addition, it was not only men who stated their reluctances, but also women. It might be because villagers who had already been to the city regard it as a dangerous place or it may simply be a villager who had heard stories about the city. Other reasons were stated were "It depends on teachers," "Worry," etc. From these results we can see that the villagers want to give their children the opportunity to receive an education without discriminating between boys or girls; however they do worry about their children losing their culture, life style in city, and the chance that their children may not come back to the Mae Sapok Village. Our research shows that there was not a big difference between generations and gender, but by focusing on generation and particularly by comparing those in their 20s

Almost 80% of villagers said they wanted their children to go to university. The main reason was so they could obtain a good job. This comes from the fact that their jobs are agricultural and they know how hard it is to earn money. For example, they said if their children could go to university, they would be able get a job which would allow them to earn more money. Also, other reasons are related to acquiring more experiences. For instance, if they are

During the interview, we ask the villagers what they think about women going to city to obtain an education. 46 villagers, or about 75% of those interviewed, said that it was a good opportunity to acquire experience and knowledge. On the other hand, some of them say it may be good for them, but if they don't come back to the

and those in their 60s we see that eleven villagers in their 20s stated that obtaining an education was good, and only one villager said that it depended on the situation. However, by examining the opinion of the villagers in their 60s there were four villagers who said that it was “up to them.” This may indicate that the older villagers believe that it is not highly recommended for their children to obtain an education in city. Moreover, the response “up to them” could have many meanings because it may indicate that it is their children’s responsibility or that the older villagers don’t have enough information about the city to say whether it is good or bad

4.4.2 Nursery Interview

Now we shall examine the research done at the nursery near the temple in Huay Takhray. It was built in 1998 by the TAO (Tambon Administration Office.) There was only one assistant teacher who was Karen. She received her salary from the TAO. It is open from 7:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. There are 30 children, 25 were Karen, 3 were half Karen half Thai and 2 were Shan, all aged from 3 to 6 years old. Every morning the assistant teacher would do health checks of the children as well as a ceremony to teach everyone to respect the national flag. After that they would play, sing and learn basic reading and writing in Thai and English and also non-formal education based on their local situation, etc. In the nursery there were many tables for language, mathematics and other data related to the village population. When she would teach she would use Thai and English, in addition to the Karen language, which she would use for translation, though the students are not permitted to write in Karen.

When we visited we had not made an appointment. As a result, the assistant teacher wasn’t there and the children were sleeping. However, a lady came out of the room and invited us in. She was the mother of one of the children. The children’s mothers are able to come to the nursery anytime. We wanted to investigate why the villagers need a nursery. It was our assumption that since most villagers were working in agriculture that they would not have enough time to take care of their children. During our research we were able to find that the TAO charges nothing for the nursery so the parents want their children to go there. However, with only one small room and one assistant teacher, resources are quite limited. After leaving this nursery the children go to elementary school, but because of the limited resources, only a few children can take advantage of the free education before they go to elementary school. As a result, the gap that occurs between the children who are able to obtain free nursery education and those who cannot seems unfair. We believe the TAO should pay more serious attention to this situation.

4.5 Ohe and the Number of Children

We interviewed 58 married villagers and the average number of the children they had was 2.81. From table 4.7, we can say that people who practice Ohe had more children than average. Traditionally, they believe that they should have as many children as possible (Hayami 1998: 261). This is to say that children are often the workforce for the family and furthermore if they have many children the ceremony of Ohe can become be a grand event because all of the children have to participate in the Ohe. In short, it can be said that people who have many children have a traditional way of thinking and as a result they tend to practice Ohe.

Table 4.7: Ohe and the Number of Children

	Number of children				Average(children)	Total(people)
	0-2	3-5	6-8	9-11		
Practice	10	6	1	1	3	18
Don't Practice	27	10	1	2	2.73	40
Total	37	16	2	3	2.81	58

Source: Author

4.6 Ohe and Livelihood

Regarding the different types of occupations in the village, 75% of the villagers were engaged in agricultural activities, 8% in wage labor, 7% in handicraft, 3% in livestock, 2% in tourism, 8% in the category others, and 8% of the people were unemployed. "Others" consists of activities such as managing a shop or a barbershop in addition to some people engaged in more than one job. As a result, the total of percentage is not exactly 100%. Among the people who practice Ohe, 80% are engaged in agriculture, while on the other hand, among people who don't practice Ohe 73% of the practice agriculture. As a result, it seems that people who practice Ohe are engaged more in agriculture than people who don't practice Ohe.

Table 4.8: Livestock use in Ohe

Chicken & Pig	Pig	Total(people)
17	3	20

Source: Author

During the Ohe ritual, they use pigs and chickens to appease the angry spirits. Table 4-8 shows what livestock they use in Ohe. Most of the people use both chickens and pigs, but only three people used only pigs. This is because pigs are expensive. One villager mentioned that the spirits particularly

enjoys pig gall bladder. However, villagers usually use chicken for the Ohe while pigs are used only one time every 10 years. Hayami (1992: 112) states as follows:

"The performance may take from one to four days depending on the occasion. If more than two are combined, the wife's Ohe precedes the husband's, and the chicken Ohe precedes the pig. As long as the wife lives, the husband's rite is never performed by itself but must be preceded by the wife's. A pig Ohe is always preceded by a chicken Ohe and is not usually performed by itself."

Livestock is one form of property for most of the villagers and if they do not have much livelihood or they fail to breed them they have to buy some for Ohe. For this reason, at first we thought that whether people can practice Ohe or not might depend on their economic situation. However, some villagers said that Ohe doesn't consume a lot of money because they use their own livestock and they can increase the number of animals by breeding. Though it is better for the spirits to use a pig which is valuable, they can substitute one for a chicken which is cheaper. In addition, no one mentioned any economic reasons for the lowering rates of participation in Ohe. Therefore, we consider that economic conditions related to livelihood to not be a significant reason for the lack of participation in Ohe.

5. Religion

We already know about the connection between the Ohe ritual and religion from the interviews. In this section, we can report about what those who believe in Buddhism and Christianity think about the Ohe ritual and what they actually do to discourage it. We interviewed the monk and some Christians in the community.

5.1 Monk

There is a temple in Mae Sapok Tai and one monk resides there. The temple was built for the Thammacarik, a project of Buddhism in which the monk and the followers go everywhere for a training to learn Buddhism and preach Buddhism. The monk doesn't know the history of this temple, however, judging from the state of the pagoda, he estimates that the temple was built about five or six hundred years ago. When he came to the temple as a new monk he started rebuilding it.

He understands that those practicing Buddhism are also still practicing the Ohe ritual. He does not want to force and oblige people to quite the Ohe ritual because everybody is Buddhist and he thinks it depends upon them to quite. He thinks it is his responsibility to teach basic belief to the people and make them aware about both the Ohe ritual and Buddhism. It is true that there is a big difference between them, but he cannot tell them to quit because they respond that it is the religion of their forefathers and their grandparents who are still living. He doesn't force villagers to stop performing the ritual, which ironically results in some people seeking his advice on how to quit. If they decide to quite, a simple ceremony is held. In this ceremony the items used for preparing the food for the ritual, (i.e., there is a special pot) are thrown into the river, which testify that they have quit Ohe ritual. There is also a ceremony to prevent the "angry spirit" coming to them. The monk makes sacred water that is showered on them and a white band of thread is fastened around the wrist.

The monk also mentioned the relationship between Buddhism and Christianity. Some Buddhist youngsters go to the church to receive clothes, food and school bus fees, which are distributed on Saturday and Sunday. They are still considered Buddhists, however. Christians rarely go to the temples but the children of the Buddhists go to church and their parents do not try to discourage their children because they can get their school bus money.

5.2 Christianity

In Mae Sapok village there are 45 Karen Christians who are Protestants. There is a church on the top of the hill in Mae Sapok Nua. It was built on October 6, 2007, just two years ago. It is for the Christian community to get together for special occasions, and for socializing. However, even though we visited 2 - 3 times during our research period we couldn't see anybody at the church. Therefore, we concluded that they only gather on days of worship. Missionaries started working in Mae Sapok village about 12 - 13 years ago. At that time they just granted scholarships to students and did not work in the village. Now on Tuesday and Wednesday a missionary teaches about Christianity to villagers who do not believe in Jesus. They go to villagers' homes and give them literature and brochures about Christianity and Jesus Christ. They visit maximum 4 - 5 villagers in one day. On Saturday and Sunday they preach to the students. Every Sunday around 45 Christians go to church but during the rice season only around 20 people attend Sunday service.

They have a ceremony to be Christian. The people who want to be Christian first study the literature. If they decide to become a Christian, a ceremony is held in which the whole body is put into sacred water. After Communion the person is considered a Christian. Christians believe it is the right of the people to believe in the Ohe ritual and consider it a personal activity in which should not be interfered.

The Christian church gives support to children to go to school. The students are provided scholarships, which include school bus fees, tuition fees, clothes, equipment for studying, etc. They also pay the hospital bills if they get sick. This scholarship program is supported by Christians in foreign countries. First, if children are interested in Christianity, they get scholarship easily. Next, the Christian church takes pictures of the students and they are sent to the foreign country, i.e., Singapore or Canada. Then the people in the foreign countries choose a student to sponsor and they are granted scholarships. The monk said that the children become Christian to get support from the church, but the Christian church said the support is not only for Christians. They also said it depends upon them, whether or not they want to change to Christianity. Even though, they said it seems easier for those who convert to Christianity to get the scholarships because out of a total of 18 students who received scholarships, only 3 - 4 are non-Christian. However, they are not certain that the 14 - 15 remaining students have truly converted. Some students convert to Christianity for the sake of obtaining the scholarship but in reality they remain Buddhist.

From these interviews it is seen that both the Buddhists and Christians are tolerant of the Ohe ritual, and leave it to the people to decide what they believe. It seems as though it is not so difficult for people to change their religious beliefs because it is not a full commitment. For example, both Buddhists and Christians in the community believe that children are changing to Christianity just to get the scholarship benefits, though their belief remains Buddhist. Regardless of the religion, it does seem difficult to stop the Ohe ritual because it is a part of their culture and they are afraid of angering their ancestral spirits.

6. Conclusion

This research tried to understand the change of the Karen's tradition in the Mae Sapok Village, concerning both the wedding and Ohe rituals. We found that there are some changes in the Karen's tradition; the number of days for the wedding ceremony is decreasing and people tend to quit the Ohe ritual. In addition, the relationship between the Ohe ritual and religion is changing.

6.1 Marriage

We had two hypotheses about the marriage of Karen: 1) It is the most important rite for women to change clothes from a white dress to a red skirt in Karen's wedding; and 2) the parents' ideal age to get married is earlier than the ideal age.

Firstly, we found that many villagers regarded tying the cotton thread as the most important rite in the wedding. The cotton thread is related to the spirit and by tying it, the spirit is thought to not go away from the body and they will be protected as a couple. We realized that Karen people and the spirit are in a symbiotic relationship; their behavior and thoughts are prescribed by the spirit. It can be said that in this way they have been continuing their tradition until the present-day. From the literature review, we predicted that many villagers would regard the change of the clothes as the most important rite. Actually, few people regarded it as the most important

rite in the wedding. However, as we saw most of the Karen women were wearing the red skirt, the red skirt is a part of their life and has several meanings for them; identification of marriage and identification of Karen.

Secondly, we researched about their perception of the ideal age to get married. The actual age to get married averaged 23.8 for men and 18.2 for women, and most of the people thought woman should marry earlier than men. The average of the ideal age for the marriage was 22.1 for men and 18.8 for women. Moreover, the parent's perception of the ideal age for their children to marry was 21.9 for men and 19.7 for women. Consequently, the parental ideal age to get married was earlier than ideal age for men but not for women.

6.2 Ohe ritual

We had two hypotheses about Ohe: 1) as the generation gets younger people tend to reject Ohe; and 2) men don't want to practice the Ohe ritual but women are carrying on the tradition. As a result, we couldn't find a significant relationship between the Ohe ritual and generation or sex. However, some lessons can be found in understanding Ohe. First, people have a lot of difficulties to continue the Ohe ritual. As our research shows, 67% of the villagers don't do the Ohe ritual and they even changed their religion to quit Ohe. We can predict that more people will quit Ohe in the future. However, it is certain that the tradition of Ohe still gets passed from generation to generation. Second, most of the villagers who do Ohe believe in both Buddhism and Animism. It is also interesting that there are Christians who are also still practicing Ohe. This means that the relationship between the Ohe ritual and religion is changing. Third, though we couldn't find the relation between doing Ohe and education, most of the villagers regard education as very important. Approximately 75% of the population said it is good for women to go to the city for education, which is the same result as Hayami (1999: 110). Fourth, people who practice Ohe tend to have many children. This means that people who continue the Ohe ritual may have the traditional idea of having many children. Finally, the economic situation of a family is not a significant reason for quitting the Ohe ritual.

Consequently, whether one practices Ohe is rather a personal decision and not related to simply generation or sex. Some people discontinue the Ohe ritual because of the condition of their family members, because they want to be free from the complicated ritual and for other reasons. It depends on the situation of each person.

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Appendix

Interview for Villagers

«General»

1. Sex 1. Male 2. Female
2. Age _____
3. Which community do you live in?
1. Mae Sapok Tai 2. Huay Takhray 3. Mae Sapok Nua 4. Phamon 5. Mae Sapok Klang
4. Jobs (you can check more than one)
1. Agriculture 2. livestock 3. Handicraft 4. Wage labor 5. Tourism 6. Other
5. Education Received (you can check more than one):
1. Elementary 2. Junior High School 3. High School 4. University 5. Non Educated 6. Other
Year _____
6. What is your religion?
1. Buddhism 2. Animism 3. Christianity 4. Other

«Family and Marriage»

7. Marital status: 1. Single 2. Married 3. Divorced/Widowed

For single

8. At what age would you like to get married? _____
9. Who would you like to get married with?
1. Karen 2. Northern Thai 3. Other
10. How many people do you live with? _____
11. Who do you live with?
1. Father 2. Mother 3. Grandfather/paternal 4. Grandfather/maternal
5. Grandmother/ paternal 6. Grandmother/maternal 7. Real Brother(s) 8. Brother(s) in law
9. Real Sister(s) 10. Sister(s) in law 11. Other(s) _____
12. How many children would you like to have?
_____ (Son(s) Daughter(s))
13. If you have children, how old do you want your children to get married? _____

«Education»

14. Which educational level do you want your children to take?

Boy

1. Elementary 2. Junior High School 3. High School 4. University 5. Non Educated 6. Other

Girl

1. Elementary 2. Junior High School 3. High School 4. University 5. Non Educated 6. Other

15. Why do you want your children to take that education?

- | | | | |
|------|---------|-------------|----------|
| Boy | 1. Work | 2. Marriage | 3. Other |
| Girl | 1. Work | 2. Marriage | 3. Other |

《Marriage》

16. How many days do you want to have in the wedding?

1	2	3	more than 4 days
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17. What kind of livestock will you use in the wedding?

1. Pig 2. Chicken 3. Other

18. What is the most important rite in the wedding?

19. Why?

20. Which part of the wedding would you like to simplify?

21. Is it important to change clothes from a white one-piece dress to a red skirt in the wedding?

Yes No

22. What do you think of the red skirt?

23. Do you desire to keep wearing the red skirt in daily life? (only for women)

Yes No

«Ohe ritual»

24. Do you do the Ohe ritual?

1. Yes (go to 26) / 2. No (go to 25)

25. Why not? (go to 30)

26. How many times did you do the Ohe ritual in 2008?

Times

27. What kind of livestock do you use in the Ohe ritual?

1. Chicken _____ 2. Pig _____ 3. Other _____

28. To what extent do you desire to keep doing the Ohe ritual?

Very much	much	No	Not at all
1	2	3	4

29. To what extent do you want your children to keep doing the Ohe ritual?

Very much	much	No	Not at all	up to them
1	2	3	4	5

30. What do you think of people who {don't do/do} Ohe ritual?

31. What do you think of women who go to city for education or work?

For married / For divorce / For Widow • Widower

<p>32. At what age did you get married? _____</p> <p>33. At what age should men or women get married? Men _____ women _____</p> <p>34. What is your husband/wife's ethnic background?</p> <p>1. Karen 2. Northern Thai 3. Other</p> <p>35. How many people do you live with? _____</p> <p>36. Who do you live with?</p> <p>1. Husband/Wife 2. Son(s) _____ 3. Daughter(s) _____</p> <p>4. Real Father 5. Father in Law 6. Grandfather/paternal 7. Grandfather/maternal</p> <p>8. Real mother 9. Mother in Law 10. Grandmother/paternal 11. Grandmother/maternal</p> <p>12. Real Brother(s) 13. Brother(s) in law 14. Real Sister(s) 15. Sister(s) in law</p> <p>16. Other(s) _____</p> <p>37. How many children do you have? Son(s) _____ Daughter(s) _____</p> <p>38. How many children did you want to have when you got married?</p> <p>_____ (Son(s) _____ Daughter(s) _____)</p> <p>39. How old did you want your children to get married when you got married?</p> <p>Firstborn Son _____ Firstborn Daughter _____</p>

《Education》

- 40. Which educational level did you want your children to take when you got married?**
- Boy 1. Elementary 2. Junior High School 3. High School 4. University 5. other
- Girl 1. Elementary 2. Junior High School 3. High School 4. University 5. other
- 41. Why did you want your children to take that education when you got married?**
- Boy 1. Work 2. Marriage 3. Other
- Girl 1. Work 2. Marriage 3. Other

《Marriage》

- 42. How many days did you have in the wedding?**
- 1 2 3 more than 4 days
- 43. What kind of livestock did you use in the wedding?**
1. Pig _____ 2. Chicken _____ 3. Other _____
- 44. What is the most important rite in the wedding?**
- _____
- 45. Why?**
- _____
- 46. Which part of the wedding would you like to simplify?**
- _____
- 47. Is it important to change clothes from a white one-piece dress to a red skirt in the wedding?**
- Yes No
- 48. What do you think of the red skirt? (I saw someone who didn't wear it.....)**
- _____

49. Do you desire to keep wearing the red skirt in daily life? (only for women)

Yes No

-Do you wear it every day? -Do you have any problem with wearing the red skirt?

《Ohe ritual》

50. Do you do the Ohe ritual?

1. Yes (go to 52) / 2. No (go to 51) ←when did he/she quit? _____

51. Why not? (go to 56)

52. How many times did you do the Ohe ritual in 2008?

Times _____

53. What kind of livestock do you use in the Ohe ritual?

1. Chicken _____ 2. Pig _____ 3. Other _____

54. To what extent do you desire to keep doing the Ohe ritual?

Very much	much	No	Not at all
1	2	3	4

55. To what extent do you want your children to keep doing the Ohe ritual?

Very much	much	No	Not at all	up to them
1	2	3	4	5

56. What do you think of people who {don't do/do} Ohe ritual?

57. What do you think of women who go to city for education or work?

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