A "Bangladeshi" Descendant Muslim Community in Northern Thailand: Its formation process

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Abstract—Thailand is a majority Buddhist country. However, there is a Muslim population in some parts of the country. One such community is a so-called "Indian" Muslim community in northern Thailand. In fact, they originally came from East Bengal, now Bangladesh, not India. A large community of such Bangladeshi descendants can be found in Chiang Mai and other groups of them live in some smaller towns in northern Thailand.

This paper discusses the migration processes, routes, and settlement processes of a group in northern Thailand. When the author started researching them, they declared themselves "Bangladee" (Thai pronunciation of Bangladesh), but they added that they did not know where their ancestors came from, only knowing place names like Chittagong or Noakhali. This paper will focus on an examination of their settlement processes and community formation. It will also emphasize the importance of the land route connection between South Asia and Southeast Asia[2]

Keywords: Muslims, northern Thailand, Bangladesh, Bengal, migration, British colonial era, community formation

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1.Introduction

This paper examines some small communities of Bangladeshi Muslim descendants in northern Thailand. It first discusses Muslim and South Asian studies in Thailand before describing the communities.

In Thailand, a Buddhist country, Muslims are a significant portion of the population. General studies have examined Muslims in Thailand (Bajnid, 1999; Gilquin, 2005; Saowanee 2009). At the same time, many South Asians and their descendants have immigrated to Thailand. Some studies are notable (Hussain, 1982; Mani, 1993; Sato, 1995). However, when looking specifically at northern Thailand, there are few relevant studies. Wang (2011) presents a good and detailed case study of the Yunnanese Muslims (Chin Ho) in northern Thailand, but this is not a study of South Asians. Suthep (2013) presents the only exceptional case study of the South Asian descendant community in Chiang Mai, a capital city in northern Thailand. In this sense, his study is valuable. However, the study seems questionable in some crucial aspects. This paper, together with a previous study (Takada, 2018), is expected to fill the gap in the above-mentioned studies and contribute to a clearer understanding of South Asians and Muslims in northern Thailand.

2."Bangladeshi" Muslims in Northern Thailand: A definition

In the wake of globalization, many Muslim groups have migrated from abroad and settled in northern Thailand. This paper examines the indigenous and quasi-indigenous Muslim communities in the area. There are three categories of Muslim people in northern Thailand: Chinese Muslims, "Indian" Muslims, and other Muslims from central or southern Thailand. The most prominent are the Chinese Muslims from Yunnan, the Chin Ho, in Chiang Mai and surrounding areas.

"Indian" Muslims are harder to describe. The most prominent subgroup is the so-called "Indian" people, which will be discussed later. There are at least three or four other subgroups: "Pakistani" Muslims from Pakistan; "Tamil" Muslims from Tamil Nadu; "Burmese" Muslims from Myanmar; and "Rohingyas" from Rakhine State. Despite being called "Burmese" or "Rohingyas," they are clearly South Asian descendants

who resemble "Indians" or "South Asians." It is extremely difficult for ordinary Thai people to distinguish between them.

If the scope of this paper is limited to Chiang Mai and surrounding areas, one could exclude the "Pakistanis" because they are more concentrated in the Chiang Rai area. One could also exclude "Tamils" because they are so few. One could also exclude "Burmese Muslims" and "Rohingyas" because most of them are newcomers and illegal immigrants, or have a similar status from a legal point of view.

Who are the "Indian" Muslims in the Chiang Mai area? This is a difficult question to answer, as previous works have referred to these people as "Indian" Muslims and some as "Pakistanis." This nomenclature may mislead readers unfamiliar with these peoples. They are neither "Indian" in the sense of present-day India, nor "Pakistani" in the sense of present-day Pakistan. It is best to ask them directly about their identity.

"We are 'Bangla' or 'Bangladee' (Thai pronunciation of 'Bangladesh')". Most of them insist that their ancestors came from "Chittagong" or "Noakhali." These are place names from the eastern part of present-day Bangladesh. They learned these names indirectly from a father or grandfather. These "fathers" were not first-generation migrants, so they didn't know these words well.

Most of the "fathers" (first-generation migrants or early migrants) didn't teach their children about their villages or mother tongue, Bangla. They just described their place of origin as "Chittagong" or "Noakhali". Today, these place names are unfamiliar to most people, as one person explained: "We don't know what these words mean or if they're place names for districts, villages, or divisions. We just know they're place names in eastern Bangladesh.

It's clear they hail from eastern "Bengal" in colonial times, or the eastern part of the former Pakistan region, or the eastern part of present-day Bangladesh. We will discuss this later, but for now, we'll refer to them as "Bangladeshi" Muslims.

They are mostly concentrated in the Chang Klan area on the southern outskirts of Chiang Mai city. Some of them live in an area near the northern gate of Chang Pueak. They are also scattered in other

parts of the city and in smaller nearby towns such as Doi Saket, San Kamphaeng and Non Bean. In addition, a significant number of them live in Mae Sariang, a border town located about 200 km southwest of Chiang Mai, and its surrounding areas. They estimate 400-500 households and 1500 population; however, it is difficult to determine the exact number because of intermarriage with other Muslim groups.

3. Reconstruction of their "history" from the narratives of the descendants of the present

Today, the "Bangladeshi" Muslims in northern Thailand have vague memories of their "fathers." I'll discuss three points: their early history and occupation, settlement process, and the days immediately after settlement.

3.1 Early history of the "Bangladeshi" Muslims

Perhaps one of the "oldest" stories about their "fathers" is that of an old man, Abdul A., who lives in Nong Baen, a small village outside Chiang Mai. He said:

"My father was a farmer and so am I. I was born here and may be the fourth or fifth generation. Adding my own age (87), it would be at least 200 years or more (after the first ancestor settled)".

He was likely one of the oldest men, and his account was crucial. If reliable, it suggests the first generation migrated around 1800 AD. However, the date of settlement is suspicious compared to other accounts.

A more detailed and apparently more reliable story was given by the other man, Abdul B. (68), from the same village.

> "My wife's father (WF) was the first to settle in this village. At that time there were many "Bangladeshis" (then "Bengalis") in this village, I have heard. It was perhaps around 1900 or so. I heard that there were 3 or 4 of the first generation and 2 or 3 of the second generation. At that time, the course of the Pin River ran right through the village and there was a relatively large river port just outside the village. Many people, including

> "Bangladeshis", had come and gone, using the port for trade. I do not know exactly who the first person (a "Bangladeshi" who came and settled) was, but from what I have heard, the person came here to trade and met a local girl and decided to marry her and settle down. He invited the other 'Bangladeshis' who visited the village for trade or travel to settle in the village and as they married local girls, our 'Bangladeshi' community was formed. I have heard that this Nong Baen village is the oldest "Bangladeshi" settlement in this area. After this village, other settlements like Chiang Mai, San Kamphaeng or Doi Saket were formed."

This is the most detailed and reliable story the author heard. It says several "Bangladeshi" (Bengali) petty traders traveled extensively on foot or by boat in northern Thailand around the mid-19th century. It's hard to know what they sold, but it was probably clothing or small daily-use items. One of them met a local girl, married her, and settled down as a farmer in her father's place. As a Muslim, he had to uphold the Islamic faith, so he asked his wife to convert. One by one, the men married local women in an almost identical path. Together, they formed some small "Bangladeshi" Muslim communities in the area.

The same Abdul B. went on to say.

> "The first generations all did the farm work. It took about 7 days from here to Chiang Mai (at that time) because the road was bad. So, some people decided to stay in Chiang Mai city; they started many other occupations there like cow trading, butchering, meat selling, vegetable selling and subsistence trading".

His earlier statement and this narrative are contradictory. His WF came to the village to trade, then started farming. Most 'Bangladeshis' were involved in trade or trade-related occupations before coming to the village. Then, they settled down and changed their occupation to farming. A few years later, some found it difficult to participate in agricultural work and tried to move to Chiang Mai city to develop other professions.

There are several reasons to believe this. Bowie (1988) reported some very interesting points about the people and their movement. She

described "oxen caravan traders" (164-171). "There were long-distance oxen and mule caravan traders who came from as far as Yunnan, China, bringing such goods as opium, raw silk, copper pots and pans, silk thread, medicines." In the case of the Yunnan-Chiang Mai or Yunnan-Eastern Burma routes, the main participants in these oxen caravans were "Ho" (Chin Ho), Yunnan Muslims. In the case of the Chiang Mai-Moulmein route, the main bearers of the oxen caravan were unclear. Some scholars suggested Karen people, while others suggested Muslim people. The most likely candidate of these 'Muslims' were 'Bangladeshis,' as they are the most numerous Muslim populations after the Chin Ho group in Chiang Mai and surrounding areas.

Bowie described another interesting occupation as boat trading (171-179), reporting the following: "Smaller river-traders plied the Ping River, trading goods between Mae Rim and Chiang Mai or Thaawang-phrao, some even going as far as Wang Lung. (176)". She did not name the participants, but Abdul B's narrative suggests that some of the boat traders were 'Bangladeshi.' At the same time, Bowie described more subtle forms of trade: foot trade (182-186) as "...thousands of petty traders, both male and female, travelling on foot,... (182)". Some "Bangladeshis" who lacked funds for boats engaged in this type of small-scale trade.

This trade was set up amid several diplomatic accords, particularly those concerning foreign trade. In the case of Lan Na (tributary state of Siam in the 19th century), including Chiang Mai, "The Treaty between the Government of Siam and the Government of India to Promote Commerce between British Burma and the Territories of Chiang Mai … was signed in Calcutta on January 14, 1873" (Ongsakul, 2005:180), and "negotiated a second Treaty of Chiang Mai in 1883" (183). As a result, the British Consulate was opened in Chiang Mai in 1884, and "Burmese, Shan, and Indian traders, now British subjects, settled in Lan Na and set up shops." (239). At that time, 'Indian' referred to anyone from British India, including 'Bangladeshis' ('Bengali Muslims' or 'Chittagonians', Muslims from the Chittagong region, the easternmost part of colonial Bengal). In other words, it was after 1884 that the number of 'Burmese, Shan and Indian traders' increased. This also coincides with the fact that "The population around urban centres such as Chiangmai seem to have expanded rapidly during the second

(half) of the 19th Century" (Gehan, 1985:98).

3.2 The first wave of migration: a "probable" story

Is it reasonable to estimate that the first Bangladeshis arrived in northern Thailand around 1884 or later? Could one say that the first generation of migrants were clothing or small goods traders? Probably not. The first group of "Bangladeshis" probably arrived in the area around the middle of the 19th century. Their occupations seem to have been related to animal husbandry. Though the author has no historical material to support this claim, there is much evidence that suggests it.

We have important oral evidence about the first Imam of the Chang Clan Mosque in Chiang Mai. Suthep's (2013) study of "Bangladeshis" (or "Pakistanis") in Chiang Mai is the only one of its kind. He submitted the original dissertation of this book in 1977. His study was conducted in the early or mid-1970s. In this study, he wrote a saying of the Imam from his research days in the mid-1970s as "The first migrant who found the Chang-Klan Pakistani Muslim community was originally a cattle trader, from Eastern Bengal of India, who married a Burmese woman, brought cattle from the border Burmese areas to trade, and finally around 1870, (settled permanently in) the City of Chiang Mai." (ibid: XlV). He also wrote, as one of "The first group of Pakistani migrants … known later as Usman Miyashi, was the pioneer settler of the Chang-klarn Pakistani Muslim quarter, … Miyashi took up peddling as his major occupation. His business involved frequent travel with pack oxen between Rangoon and Moulmein in Burma and the northern Thai border towns …" (31). Usman Miyashi's account suggests the following: First, the initial occupations of the first groups of "Bangladeshis" were cattle traders or oxen caravan leaders. Second, they arrived in northern Thailand immediately after the mid-19th century and settled in Chiang Mai around 1870.

Secondly, some witnesses describe their "fathers" as cattle breeders or herders, so they also pursued careers in related fields. For example, Abdul C. from San Kamphaeng offers the following account:

> "My father and mother's father were butchers. They raised cows or goats and sold them, or slaughtered them and sold their meat".

This was made possible by the presence of grazing land, which facilitated the sustainable rearing and maintenance of livestock. He continued:

> "We now purchase cows or goats (from others), not rearing them (by ourselves). We slaughter them and sell the meat. We also process the meat and sell it as dried beef."

A gentleman of Mae Sariang explains the circumstances.

> "There are some butchers here in Mae Sariang, including relatives. They used to raise and slaughter cows and sell the meat. Sometimes Muslim people brought cows from Burma, but now they buy cows from Karen or get them from the Myanmar side through Mae Sam Leab, mainly from Meiktila near Mandalay."

Thirdly some people still work with cows. These include cattle herders and meat processing and sales professionals (such as butchers and meat vendors, etc.).

The above witnesses and related facts provide evidence that some of their "fathers," likely the first wave of "Bangladeshi" migrants, were engaged in occupations like cow-herding or working as oxen caravan laborers. These individuals may have initially crossed Burma's fields and lower hills without a specific destination in mind. However, upon hearing rumors of fertile grasslands, they may have begun a journey eastward.

They came to northern Thailand to herd cattle and initially visited temporarily, selling cows before heading back to Burma or even East Bengal. They kept coming back, becoming used to the area and gaining knowledge. One man decided to stay, presumably due to his emotional bond with a local woman. Abdul B.'s accounts show this process clearly. These events likely happened before the 1884 British Consulate was set up, so in the 1860s or 1870s. For the same reason, it is not possible to determine their exact route.

3.3 Migration route

The British consulate opened in Chiang Mai in 1884. As a result, the number of "British subjects"—including Burmese, Shan, and Indians—in the city increased rapidly. However, there may be a history that precedes this.

The most common route of communication from Chiang Mai (or more broadly Lan Na) to the south was to Moulmein in eastern Burma, not Bangkok. For example, a historical study of Lan Na reveals that "Because of the slow connection, mail from Europe and even from North America was sent to Chiang Mai via Moulmein in Burma" (PENTH 2002: 142).

It described 19th-century circumstances. A British diplomat's journey from Bangkok to Chiang Mai, then to Moulmein and southern Thailand, around 1860 (Schomburgk 1863), revealed noteworthy points: 1) Bangkok-Chiang Mai was difficult and took a long time; 2) the Chiang Mai-Moulmein journey was easier and shorter; 3) so, Moulmein was the common route from Chiang Mai to the world.

It should be noted that the communication route between Chiang Mai and Moulmein went through the small town of Mae Sariang rather than Mae Sot because Mae Sariang was part of the Lan Na territory (Pongsawat 2007: 386). Around 1900, the volume of trade between Lan Na and Moulmein exceeded that between Lan Na and Bangkok (Kakizaki 2000). Furthermore, due to the difficulty of communicating with other parts of Thailand, the Upper Salween Basin area (Mae Sariang, Mae Hong Son, etc.) depended on trade with Moulmein even in the first half of the twentieth century (ibid., ch. 5).

Considering all these facts, the communication route between Chiang Mai and Moulmein had developed and was established before British power. Many people used the difficult, narrow route, and the "Bangladeshi" forerunners followed it. We conclude that the first wave of "Bangladeshi" migrants followed this route, i.e., from Moulmein to Chiang Mai via Mae Sariang. It's hard to determine the route between eastern Bangladesh and Moulmein. Considering their profession, they may have walked all the way from their villages.

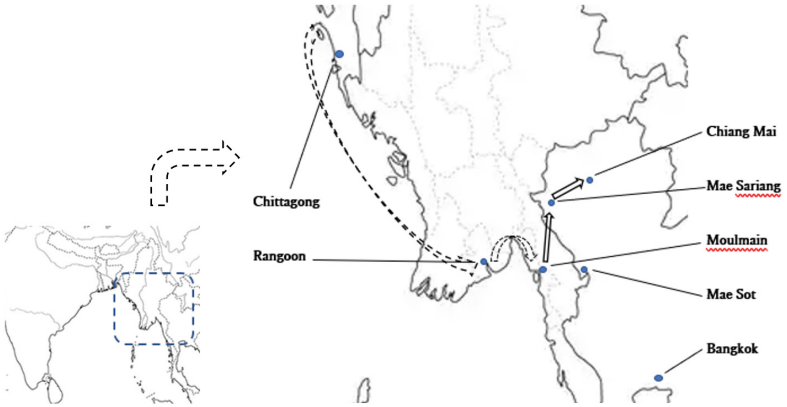

Figure 1 Maps showing the location of the related area from Chittagong to northern Thailand

3.4 Second wave of migrants and beyond: the establishment of settlements

One can better understand their situation after 1884 and the establishment of the British Consulate in Chiang Mai.

Many migrants traveled from the northern Chittagong region, particularly from Mirsarai, to Rangoon. A study of local history offers an account of a renowned local editor who published Bangla-language periodicals in Rangoon. In the early 20th century, many readers in this region read his journals, particularly an issue that highlighted the high cost of steamboat fares (Choudhury 2004). This evidence suggests that 1. Many migrants arrived in Rangoon from eastern Bengal; 2. A significant number of them were literate; and 3. These migrants likely used a steamboat service from Chittagong to Rangoon, starting in the late 19th century.

Newcomers in Rangoon struggled to enter the business market and sought opportunities elsewhere. Some heard of a border town in the Salween River forests and took a local car service to Papun, near the Thai border. Some "fathers" opened tailoring shops. This story was

told by several people in Mae Sariang. Some of the "fathers" were lured by the opportunity in the undeveloped Thai side of the border. They walked to the riverbank on the Burmese side, crossed the border by boat to Tha Tafan—a tiny river port on the Thai side—and traveled by foot or elephant to Mae Sariang, a western border town in the former Lan Na Kingdom. Some of them opened small garment shops there. Many of their followers, who were mostly relatives or people from the same area, came and settled in the town. After that, they established themselves permanently in the town. According to witnesses, their descendants' shops are now located in the city center. They maintain a beautiful mosque near the main market.

Many stayed in Mae Sariang, but some, including old-timers and newcomers, moved further north or northeast. One of those who moved north was the father of a 78-year-old man in Mae La Noi, a small bazaar cluster located 30 kilometers north of Mae Sariang. He provided the following account.

> "I belong to the second generation. My father first came from Comilla, somewhere in eastern Bangladesh. He came to Papun, Myanmar, for two or three days and then to Mae Sarinag because he had a friend there. That was more than 70 years ago. He opened a shop in Mae Sariang and then another here, Me La Noi. He kept these two shops and raised us. My mother was a second-generation "Bangladeshi," but I don't know anything about her father."

So the "Bangladeshis" scattered from Mae Sariang to the north. Some of them went further to Mae Hong Son where there are still some "Bangladeshi" descendants. The old man continues talking:

> " At first he bought clothes from Myanmar, perhaps in Papun. In the year 2500 (1947 in the Buddhist calendar) or so, a road opened to Chiang Mai. Then he changed his place of purchase to Chiang Mai. He walked for 4 days through a narrow and difficult mountain road to Hot (a town halfway between Mae Sariang and Chiang Mai) and rode on a wood gas vehicle to Chiang Mai. There he bought some clothes and went back to Hot. On the way he asked local people to help him when he comes back; on

> the way back he hired some local people as porters in Hot. He walked back with them for 4 days from Hot to Mae Sariang".

Communication between Mae Sariang and Chiang Mai was somehow established, but it was a very difficult and time-consuming trip: about 10 days for a round trip. Therefore, it was natural that some "Bangladeshis" decided to migrate further to Chiang Mai.

An old man keeping a shop in Muang Mai Market in Chiang Mai explains.

> "I came to Thailand by plane in 1962. From Chittagong to Rangoon to Bangkok and then to Chiang Mai. I was born here, but I do not know exactly when, because my father sent me back to my village home in Bangladesh at a very early age for education. My grandfather (FF) first came to Mae Sariang. (He opened and ran) a shop at the market. My father moved back to Chiang Mai. I do not know well, but maybe for a business reason. (Shows the author some rolls of cloth) A lot of these are here because of that, I think."

Pursuing their own business opportunities, they gradually made their way to northern Thailand. Some of them went further than Chiang Mai. Abdul C. from San Kamphaeng explains:

> "Among (Bangladeshi) Muslims, my grandfather (MF) was the first man to come here from Chang Pueak (an area nearby the northern gate of Chiang Mai's old town)."

As mentioned above, "Bangladeshi" Muslims came to northern Thailand and established their communities in Mae Sariang and surrounding areas or in Chiang Mai and its neighboring small towns.

4. Complicated settling process

However, their settlement process was not uniform or easy at all. Some cases of migration and settlement were quite complicated and full of hardships. These will be examined next.

4.1 Different arrival times and different migration routes

We concluded that the typical migration process was that the first wave of migrants from Bangladesh (then East Bengal) came to Mae Sariang. Then some of them moved to Chiang Mai. Then they dispersed to the small towns or settlements near these towns. However, in the case of Non Baen, there is an oral legend that the migration of the first generation of "Bangladeshis" happened earlier than in the case of Chiang Mai. If we assume that the very first migrants were those who participated in cattle or oxen caravans, then some of them came and settled first in Non Baen. With this assumption, the whole story can be understood without contradiction. Their migration and settlement process might be different from those of the subsequent immigrants.

In addition, we can infer the existence of some other routes and settlement processes. The most plausible one appears in the following stories of the Imam of the Chang Pueak Mosque in Chiang Mai:

> "(As far as he has heard) there are basically four migration routes through which "Bangladeshi" Muslims moved to Chiang Mai: 1. Mae Sot/ Tak route, 2. Mae Sariang route, 3. Mae Sai route, and 4. Wiang Heng/ Fang route. (Ancestors of the "Bangladeshis") moved through these points. ... There was a kind of base camp for the caravans. The place was right by the White Elephant statue near Chang Pueak. Those who came through the Chiang Rai (Mae Sai)/Wiang Heng routes had gathered in the neighboring place of the camp".

Of the four routes he described, the third and fourth are plausible because these two routes suggest the existence of the northern route from Burma to northern Thailand. Some eyewitnesses reported the presence of "Bangladeshi" Muslim descendants in eastern Burmese cities, such as Lashio. If this were true, then it is natural to infer the existence of the northward route to Chiang Mai.

4.2 Disappearance of some first ancestors and the fate of their male children

Some attention should also be paid to a fact that some people (today's "Bangladeshi" Muslims) insist on. They heard from their own

"fathers" (fathers or grandfathers) that the first ancestors, for whom the ancestors of their "fathers" were 3-5 generations ago, had most likely returned to their own home villages or to the places through which they traveled. The reason for their departure was not clear. They may have had to leave for business reasons; they may have been struck down by illness or accident while traveling and died. Or they may have simply felt homesick and returned to their home village. In any case, it is certain that at least some of their first "fathers" had gone elsewhere, leaving their wives and children behind in Thailand. In these cases, their wives, who had converted to Islam, had struggled to raise their children, and bring them up as decent Muslims.

In some cases, the early "forefathers" seemed to have some anxiety about the quality of Islamic education for their boys in northern Thailand. At the end of the 19th century or the beginning of the 20th century, very few people in northern Thailand had sufficient knowledge of Islam and were able to teach for Muslim children. In addition, some ancestors seem to have had the desire to give their boys full ability to master the Bangla language at the same time as their Islamic education. Since it was impossible to fulfill these life goals in northern Thailand, these ancestors brought the boys back to their own villages for education. They left the boys in the village and returned to Thailand alone. Most of the boys stayed in the villages, grew up there, and ended their lives among other local people in Bangladesh. We can hardly trace the fate of these people from an exceptional case of the old man of the Muang Mai market as we saw it before. He told the story of his own life: that he was born in Chiang Mai, went with his father to his father's home village at a very early age, grew up there, and later came back to Chiang Mai. This is the only reported case of the return of such a boy. However, it can easily be inferred that there are many more such boys who have followed a similar path in life.

4.3 Nationality and citizenship

Thailand has a policy of nationality by jus soli, which is the principle of assigning nationality by place of birth (Otomo, 2011). Many migrants to Thailand (not only to Thailand, but also to countries with similar nationality policies) have been severely affected by this policy. This is also the case for 'Bangladeshi' Muslims. For example, Abdul B.

makes this point as follows.

> "Many first-generation migrants could not obtain Thai citizenship due to the provisions of the Thai Citizenship Act, and at best they obtained a work permit and ended their lives without Thai citizenship. Their children, on the other hand, were granted Thai citizenship by law (jus soli). Thailand has a conscription system and the boys, not all but some selected, served in the army at the age of 18. Those boys who had completed their service in the army had asked the Thai authorities to issue a formal status for their fathers, and as a result they obtained a "permanent residence permit" for their fathers."

Many had somehow obtained work permits, or permanent residence permits and formally settled on Thai soil. Of course, it is easy to imagine that some of them did not (or could not) obtain permission at all and ended their lives without formal legal status. However, by the second generation and beyond, almost all of them had been granted Thai citizenship. They had become Thai citizens. As a result, the "Bangladeshi" Muslim communities in northern Thailand as a whole were transformed into Thai Muslim communities

4.4 Some Cases of Complicated Migration Processes

Some cases have rather complicated migration processes, as in the cases of double or triple steps of migration. Abdul B. explains how it works below.

> "My father had served in the British Indian Army (the Indian Army in colonial times) and advanced to Tavoi in southern Burma (in the 1930s?); he was honorably discharged from the army there. He had opened a small grocery shop in Tavoi and stayed there for years. But as a result of the so-called "Burmanization" policy after independence, he had to leave and moved to Kanchanaburi in western Thailand.
>
> I was born there. ... I met a man in Bangkok by chance and traveled with him to his home village. That is this village. I met his daughter and married her."

In this case, his father was the first-generation migrant, having migrated from Bangladesh to Tavoi, Burma, and then again to Kanchanaburi in central Thailand. In the next generation, the speaker himself migrated from Kanchanaburi to Bangkok and then migrated again to settle in a village in northern Thailand. The case of his wife's father is also complicated:

> "My wife's father was born somewhere in eastern Bangladesh. I only heard that the place was near the sea. He, like my father, had served in the British Indian Army and left the army in Rangoon. I do not know exactly, but he had stayed there for years. He had to leave Rangoon for the same political reason and moved to Bangkok. There he met a "Bangladeshi" man who brought him to this village. He met a girl, my wife's mother, and they got married."

In this case, his wife's father was the first-generation migrant, migrating first from Bangladesh to Rangoon, Burma, and then again to Bangkok. He then migrated three times to northern Thailand.

These two cases illustrate the great impact of socio-political change in Burma, especially the so-called "Burmanization" or displacement of the Indian population. In both cases, they moved eastward to Thailand, not westward to their homelands. Moreover, because the timing of their movement was late, after the end of World War II, perhaps in the 1950s, they were forced to move first to central Thailand and then again to northern Thailand. These cases suggest that by studying the case studies of a few migrants in detail, one can learn many things, such as the strong impact of national policies or policy changes on the decision-making of each migrant, the complexity of migration processes, the great variety of migration cases, and some consistent or similar migration patterns even among these vague and diverse cases.

5. Conclusion

"Bangladeshi" Muslims have settled in northern Thailand for a long time. They have formed their communities in Chiang Mai and surrounding areas or in Mae Sariang. Many scholars

and sometimes local people called them «Indian» or «Pakistani», but according to their own identification, they are «Bangladeshi» descendants. The author tries to reconstruct their history from their fragmented memories. Through this case study, it is suggested that the importance of the land route connection between South Asia and Southeast Asia has been underestimated to this day. We should pay more attention to this aspect.

Their migratory processes were not simple or consistent. Depending on the time of their arrival, their modes and routes of migration varied. Some of their early ancestors had left their communities, leaving behind their wives and children. Some even took their male children to their home villages in eastern Bangladesh (then East Bengal) for Islamic education. Those who settled, however, faced the difficulty of obtaining Thai citizenship. In some cases, they were forced to migrate two or more times, mainly because of changes in the larger political situation. Overcoming these hardships, the «Bangladeshi» Muslim communities in northern Thailand have paved the way for the creation of their Thai Muslim communities.

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