

CREATING MULTIPLE SOCIAL BOUNDARIES IN A BORDERLAND: YUNNANESE MIGRANTS IN NORTHERN THAILAND

WANG Liulan

Graduate School of Asian and African Area Studies, Kyoto University, Kyoto 606-8501, Japan

E-mail: wliulan@asafas.kyoto-u.ac.jp

This work elucidates how Yunnanese migrants in northern Thailand establish identities and form social spaces by remolding and creating social boundaries as they interact with others. The history of first-generation Yunnanese migration since the end of the nineteenth century is briefly summarized. The different socio-cultural and political backgrounds of Han and Muslim Yunnanese have led them to adopt different migratory patterns and adaptive strategies in Thailand, the host country. The process by which Yunnanese Muslims have adapted and built networks within Thailand is emphasized. Due to the disparity in migratory experience and past memory between the two groups, their sense of belonging to and boundary construction of a “homeland” are different. Yunnanese social spaces are constructed through a sense of ethnicity, such as Han or Muslim; however, each individual migrant also seeks to establish a sense of belonging to a “homeland” (either Taiwan or China), based on different ideas of “being Chinese,” which were fostered by their migratory experiences from Yunnan to Thailand. In the migrant’s view, living spaces are always renovated and reconstructed by means of multiple logics, which are based, in turn, on the different living conditions they have experienced.

Keywords: Migratory history, Social boundaries, Homeland, Thai/Burmese border, Yunnanese Chinese