

# Educational Opportunities and Ethnicity Regarding Buddhist Schools in Thailand: A Case Study of Doisaket Phadungsasana School in Chiang Mai Province

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## 1. Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to explore the situation of a Buddhist School (*Rongrian Phrapariyattidhamma: โรงเรียนพระปริยัติธรรม*) in terms of educational opportunities for hill tribe students or poor families and to analyze the ethnic identity of hill tribe students who attend a Buddhist school.

According to Perve (2011), there were 38 ethnic minorities in Thailand in 2005, accounting for about 2% of the population (about 1.1 million people). Among such minorities are the hill tribe people, who are subdivided into six main ethnic groups: Karen, Akha, Lahu, Lisu, Hmong, and Yao. The hill tribes have their own languages and beliefs, and earn their living primarily through agriculture.

This paper focuses on Buddhist school. There are various educational institutions in Thailand, including Buddhist schools; Buddhist schools are not under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education. Various educational institutions have been established mainly in rural and mountain areas, thus ensuring educational opportunities for many children. As a result, northern minorities, that is, the hill tribes, have access to educational opportunities at a variety of formal and informal educational institutions.

According to statistics from the Ministry of Education, in 2015, 2,344,378 students were enrolled in lower secondary school; 2,104,310 students attended schools under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education, while 240,068 students attended schools administered by other organizations. Other educational institutions were administered by the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Social Development and Human Security, the Bangkok Metropolitan Administration, the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Culture, the National Office of Buddhism, and the Border Patrol Police. A total of 34,382 students were enrolled in Buddhist schools under the jurisdiction of the National Office of Buddhism, accounting for 1.5% of all students. Buddhist schools offer general education as well as Buddhist education.

Buddhist schools that provide general education have been a major research subject in Thailand.

Damrongrakthanya and Kijmee (2017) analyzed the educational effects of general education at

Buddhist schools from an interview survey with principals, teachers, and students of Buddhist schools in Chiang Mai Province. The authors clarified the educational effectiveness of Buddhist Schools in the general education section, revealing that respondents overall agreed that these schools had high capacity but still had problems with budget for the development of instructional media, leading some teachers to use more textbooks than technological media. They also showed that Buddhist schools were not able to produce significant educational outcomes using new teaching materials.

Phra Chapakdee (2017) analyzed the participatory model of academic affairs of the general education division in Buddhist schools in Sakon Nakhon Province. In addition, the author identified effective participatory academic management in Buddhist schools in Sakon Nakhon, particularly with regard to educational media at the highest level. On the other hand, the curriculum and curriculum management aspects were rated poorly in terms of effectiveness.

Several previous papers addressed participatory academic affairs models in Buddhist schools. Investigating a similar topic to that explored by Phra Chapakdee in a separate research field, Phra Inthibal (2017) concluded that participatory knowledge management in group 8 of the General Education Division in Buddhist Schools was overall at a high level<sup>(1)</sup>. In particular, the knowledge search aspect was at the highest level, while the knowledge construction and the learning exchange aspects occupied a lower and the lowest levels, respectively. Phra Bunpan (2017) also investigated a similar theme to that explored by Chapakdee, and Phra Inthibal in a separate research field, attesting to the high quality of the academic affairs management of Buddhist schools in Nongkhai Province. Particularly, the instructional media and technology development aspect was at the highest level, while the educational supervision and the school curriculum development aspects occupied a lower and the lowest levels, respectively.

Phra Wattanachote, Ladawan, and Yurachai (2017) analyzed the problems regarding information and communication technology in Buddhist schools and made management recommendations after analyzing the management of Buddhist schools in group 10<sup>(2)</sup>.

Although the management and educational development of Buddhist schools have been studied extensively in Thailand, research on the ethnic identities or educational opportunities of hill tribe children in Buddhist schools is still scarce.

According to Murata (2007), “Buddhist education” was implemented as a means of “national integration” in Thailand. Each hill tribe originally had its own spiritual beliefs. However, in the mid-1950s, the Thai government implemented border security activities, which resulted in the spread of school education and Buddhism among hill tribes. Because Buddhist education is part of school education in Thailand, many of the hill tribes have adopted Buddhism as their belief.

Sakamoto (2003) studied a Buddhist school in Chiang Mai Province and highlighted its important

role in ensuring education by accepting hill tribe children. However, the author did not investigate the social background of these children and did not touch on the cultural influences associated with national integrated education.

Ueda (2018a) and Ueda (2018b) conducted research related to the cultural background and identity of hill tribes. Ueda (2018a) surveyed a *Suksa Songkhro* school, which is intended to support hill tribe children, and revealed that hill tribe children tend to have a stronger Thai identity than that of their own ethnicity. In addition, Ueda (2018b) conducted a survey encompassing several general national primary schools in Hmong villages and revealed that Hmong children have a combined Thai-Hmong identity. Similar studies with Buddhist schools have not been conducted.

This paper surveys a Buddhist school attended by many hill tribe students, in order to clarify two points: 1) the social background of children attending Buddhist schools and 2) the cultural background and identity of hill tribe children attending Buddhist schools.

The first significant issue is the division of education by social hierarchy. Thai secondary education opportunities have improved since the 1990s. While the poor have been given educational opportunities, problems with “quality of education” still exist. It can be inferred that the poor tend to choose lower quality schools. For example, there is a school system called “Educational Opportunity Expansion Schools (EOESs)” in lower secondary education. EOESs are defined as schools that teach the lower secondary education curriculum to students by utilizing the educational resources of primary schools. In other words, EOESs do not have sufficient quality facilities and teachers. Ueda (2019) pointed out that EOESs tend to accept only poor children. Buddhist schools are smaller than regular secondary schools and tend to have inadequate facilities and teachers. While Buddhist schools are monk training schools, they are also considered schools for the poor. This paper examines the hypothesis that they play a role in providing educational opportunities for the poor.

The second issue is the harmful effect of national integrated education. Since the end of World War II, the Thai government has been implementing policies to assimilate other ethnic groups into Thai society in order to stabilize the nation. Even in education, the Thai government has emphasized Thai consciousness and the speaking of the Thai language nationwide. Education aimed at ensuring non-Tai tribes adapt to Thai society is called “National Integrated Education.” However, “national integration” and “preservation of ethnic culture” in school education are contradictory concepts. Murata (2001) pointed out that education has both centripetal and centrifugal effects. In other words, there is a possibility that children may lose their hill tribe identity through education aimed at assimilating them into Thai society. In particular, “Buddhism” is a pillar of national integration education<sup>(3)</sup>. One of the purposes of this paper is to analyze the impact of national integrated education.

## 2. Background: Buddhist Schools

Buddhist schools are secondary education institutions under the jurisdiction of the National Office of Buddhism that provide both general and Buddhist education. Because of this, the qualification for enrollment in and graduation from Buddhist schools is handled in the same way as those of schools under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education. In Thai Theravada Buddhism, girls cannot become monks; Buddhist schools are lower and upper secondary educational institutions for boys only.

While Buddhist schools primarily aim to train the next generation of monks, they also offer regular secondary education courses approved by the Ministry of Education. In addition to being institutions for the training of monks, they are religious and educational facilities that provides free educational opportunities for children whose access to secondary education is hindered for economic and family reasons. In these schools, general subjects are taught by regular teachers, while Buddhism-related subjects are taught by apprentice and regular monks. Since operation costs are covered by donations from local residents and the private sector, and subsidies from the National Office of Buddhism, there is no need for tuition or dormitory fees (Sakamoto 2003: 144-145).

According to statistics from the National Office of Buddhism in Thailand, there were 409 Buddhist schools in 2017. There were 27,868 students enrolled in lower secondary education institutions and 12,516 students in upper secondary education institutions<sup>(4)</sup>.

Table 1 shows the distribution of Buddhist schools across Thailand. This distribution reveals that Buddhist schools are concentrated in the northern and northeastern regions of the country, with over

**Table 1** Distribution of Buddhist Schools

	Bangkok	Central	Northern	North-eastern	Southern	Total
Number of Provinces	1	25	17	20	14	77
Number of provinces where Buddhist schools are located	1	18	17	20	9	65
Number of Buddhist schools	11	39	127	212	20	409
Number of students (M1-M3) in 2017	1,073	2,032	10,397	13,445	921	27,868
(%)	3.9	7.3	37.3	48.2	3.3	100
Number of students (M4-M6) in 2017	601	930	4,797	5,891	297	12,516
(%)	4.8	7.4	38.3	47.1	2.4	100
Population (thousands) in 2015	5,696	16,753	12,072	21,916	9,293	65,730
(%)	8.7	25.5	18.4	33.3	14.1	100

(Source) School Statistics of the National Office of Buddhism in 2017 (in Thai)  
Demographics by provinces of the Bureau of Registration and Administration in 2015 (in Thai)

85% of students enrolled in Buddhist schools in these regions. There are Buddhist schools established in all provinces of the northern and northeastern regions.

Some areas in the southern region are under the influence of Islam. The northern and northeastern regions are surrounded by countries that are mostly Buddhist, such as Myanmar, Laos, and Cambodia, and are thus areas where Buddhism has a strong influence. In addition, there are many relatively poor areas in the northern and northeastern regions, indicating a possible demand for Buddhist schools.

### 3. Targets and Methods

This study consisted of a questionnaire survey conducted on September 6, 2018, with participants being students at Doisaket Phadungsasana School, a Buddhist School located in Chiang Mai Province.

This school was selected for two main reasons. First, among the provinces of Thailand, Chiang Mai has the largest number of Buddhist schools and students. The top five provinces in terms of the number of Buddhist schools are as follows: Chiang Mai, with 28 schools; Khon Kaen and Ubon Ratchathani, with 26 schools each; and Chiang Rai and Udon Thani, with 21 schools each. As for number of students, the top five provinces of the country are: Chiang Mai, with 4,541 students; Ubon Ratchathani, with 2,609 students; Chiang Rai, with 2,452 students; Khon Kaen, with 1,794 students; and Loei, with 1,751 students. Second, Chiang Mai Province is a residential area for hill tribes. In this school, hill tribe and Thai students learn together, which enable the investigation of cultural influences on hill tribe students.

The surveyed school is a Buddhist school with curriculums for lower and upper secondary education. The author conducted a direct questionnaire survey with the students present on the survey day. A total of 145 valid responses were obtained from students from different grades as follows: 27 M1 students, 35 M2 students, 27 M3 students, 27 M4 students, 15 M5 students, and 14 M6 students. There were 158 students at the school in total.

Established in 2000, the surveyed school initially included only the lower secondary curriculum (M1-M3). The school incorporated the upper secondary curriculum (M4-M6) in 2010 and was relocated to its current location in 2012. Students live in 30 nearby temples and go to school on red buses.

## 4. Results 1: Social Background

### (1) Ethnic Composition

Regarding ethnicity, the questionnaire results revealed that Tai<sup>(5)</sup> and hill tribe students learned together. Overall, the school had the following ethnic composition: 69 Tai students (47.6%), 41 Karen students (28.3%), 20 Tai Yai students (13.8%), four Burmese students (2.8%), three Lahu students (2.1%), three Lawa students (2.1%), two Hmong students (1.4%), and two students from other ethnic groups (1.4%). About 48% of Tai and 52% of hill tribe students actually shared classrooms.

## (2) Student Origin

All students attending the surveyed Buddhist school lived in nearby temples, including 94 students (64.8%) from Chiang Mai Province, 48 students (33.1%) from other provinces, and three students (2.1%) who did not answer. In other words, about one third of the students were from outside Chiang Mai Province. The breakdown of students from outside Chiang Mai Province is as follows: 18 students from Tak (12.4%), 11 students from Mae Hong Son (7.6%), seven students from Chiang Rai (4.8%), three students from Bangkok (2.1%), three students from other northern provinces (2.1%), three students from central provinces (2.1%), two students from northeastern provinces (1.4%), and two students from southern provinces (1.4%). Since Tak, Mae Hong Son, and Chiang Rai provinces are close to Chiang Mai, most students were from the northern region.

## (3) Social Status of Parents

Table 2 shows the occupations of the students' parents. Many parents either had blue-collar jobs in the construction industry or were farmers, while few parents were white-collar workers, such as civil servants or company employees. As a general feature, the students' parents were in relatively low-income occupations.

Table 3 shows the educational background of the students' parents. Although the questionnaire

**Table 2** Parents' Occupational Classification

### 2-1. Fathers (N = 145)

Blue-Collar Worker	Farmer	Artisan	Factory Worker	Civil Servant	Merchant
49 (33.8%)	39 (26.9%)	7 (4.8%)	4 (2.8%)	4 (2.8%)	3 (2.1%)
Office Worker	Househusband	Unemployd	Death or Separation	Other	Unknown
2 (1.4%)	2 (1.4%)	0 (0.0%)	9 (6.9%)	9 (6.9%)	17 (11.7%)

### 2-2. Mothers (N = 145)

Blue-Collar Worker	Farmer	Artisan	Factory Worker	Civil Servant	Merchant
47 (32.4%)	44 (30.2%)	2 (1.4%)	8 (5.5%)	5 (3.4%)	11 (7.6%)
Office Worker	Housewife	Unemployd	Death or Separation	Other	Unknown
0 (0.0%)	7 (4.8%)	2 (1.4%)	1 (0.7%)	5 (3.4%)	12 (8.3%)

**Table 3** Parents' Educational Backgrounds

## 3-1. Fathers (N = 145)

Lacking Formal Education	Primary Education	Lower Secondary Education (EOESs)	Upper Secondary Education	Higher Education (University or College)	Unknown
17 (11.7%)	29 (20.0%)	17 (11.7%)	12 (8.3%)	7 (4.8%)	63 (43.4%)

## 3-2. Mothers (N = 145)

Lacking Formal Education	Primary Education	Lower Secondary Education (EOESs)	Upper Secondary Education	Higher Education (University or College)	Unknown
27 (18.6%)	30 (20.7%)	12 (8.3%)	10 (6.9%)	7 (4.8%)	59 (40.7%)

results identified few parents with high levels of education, the large number of “unknown” answers makes it difficult to grasp the situation accurately. In Thailand, lower secondary education enrollment rates remained low for a long time until the 1980s, and secondary education became mandatory in 1992. Although the school enrollment rate has increased since the 1990s, some hill tribe and some poor children are still unable to attend regular schools. Thus, Buddhist schools currently play a role in providing educational opportunities for poor children.

**(4) Reasons for Enrollment in the Buddhist School**

Regarding student' purposes for enrolling in a Buddhist school, the questionnaire asked students “Why did you enroll in this school?” and set three answer options: (1) “Because I had little money,” (2) “Because I wanted to become a monk,” and (3) “Because I was interested in Buddhism.” Multiple answers could be given to this question. As a result, 41 students (28.9%) answered “(1) Because I had little money,” 26 students (17.9%) answered “(2) Because I wanted to become a monk,” and 83 students (57.2%) answered “(3) Because I was interested in Buddhism.”

**5. Results 2: Cultural Background and Identity**

This section presents the results of a survey with 76 non-Tai students excluding one who did not respond (N=75).

**(1) Identity**

The questionnaire asked students about how they perceived their identity. Thai education emphasizes

the cultivation of the “Thai citizen identity.” On the other hand, according to Ueda (2016), “ASEAN citizenship education” was introduced in Thai school education in 2012, which led the Thai government to focus on the cultivation of “ASEAN citizen identity.”

Hirata (2017) presented a four-factor framework of citizenship identity: “local,” “national,” “regional” and “global.” In addition to these four citizenship identity factors, this study measured ethnic identity. The questionnaire asked the question “What kind of identity best describes you?” Multiple answers were acceptable, including “Your ethnic group (ethnic),” “Chiang Mai citizen (local),” “Thai citizen (national),” “ASEAN citizen (regional),” and “Global citizen (global).”

The results are as follows: 44 students (58.7%) answered “Your ethnic group,” 28 students (37.3%) answered “Chiang Mai citizen,” 36 students (48.0%) answered “Thai citizen,” 22 students (29.3%) answered “ASEAN citizen,” and 26 students (34.8%) answered “Global citizen.” This accounts for an average of 2.08 checks per student. Only 18 students (24.0%) checked both “Your ethnic group” and “Thai citizen.”

## (2) Language Use and Understanding of Language and Culture

This study reveals students’ use of language and self-evaluation of language and cultural understanding. As mentioned earlier, each hill tribe has its own language and culture. Students who go to Buddhist schools usually use Thai language in their school lives. This part of the study investigated what languages these students speak with their parents.

Table 4 shows students’ language use and understanding of their own language and culture. Of the 71 respondents, 47 students (66.2%) mostly used their own ethnic language. In other words, about two-thirds of students used their ethnic languages as their main languages, while about one-third

**Table 4** Language Use and Understanding of Language and Culture

(N=71)

			Understanding ethnic culture		
			High	Intermediate	Low
Using mostly ethnic language with parents (47 students)	Ethnic language ability	High	10	16	0
		Intermediate	2	17	0
		Low	0	2	0
Using both ethnic language and Thai with parents (15 students)	Ethnic language ability	High	2	7	1
		Intermediate	0	4	0
		Low	0	1	0
Using mostly Thai with parents (9 students)	Ethnic language ability	High	2	0	0
		Intermediate	0	3	1
		Low	0	2	1



of students used Thai. Students who mostly used their ethnic languages tended to have a “high” or “intermediate” self-assessment of their ethnic language abilities. On the other hand, students who mostly used Thai tended to choose “intermediate” or “low.” Overall, most students chose “high” or “intermediate” for self-assessment of their understanding of their language and ethnic culture.

### **(3) Parents' Religion**

Hill tribes began to adopt Buddhism in the 1950s. Since the student surveyed attend Buddhist schools and are apprentice monks, they can be considered Buddhists. Regarding religion, the questionnaire asked students about their parents' faith and religion. Regarding their fathers' religions, 69 students (92.0%) answered “Buddhism,” zero students (0.0%) answered “folk beliefs,” three students (4.0%) answered “Christianity,” and three students (4.0%) answered “unknown.” Regarding their mothers' religions, 69 students (92.0%) answered “Buddhism,” zero students (0.0%) answered “folk beliefs,” five students (6.7%) answered “Christianity,” and one student (1.3%) answered “unknown.” This result shows that, although most parents are Buddhists, there are interestingly a number of Christians.

### **(4) Incorporation of Thai National Principles**

Finally, the questionnaire addressed the incorporation of Thai national principles. The Thai government has aimed to transform children into Thai citizens through school education. This study sought to ascertain how much this purpose has been achieved. The Thai national principles refer to the political and spiritual foundation of Thailand, and require the people to respect the “nation,” “Buddhism,” and the “King.” One of the educational purposes of Thai school education is promoting the spread of Thai national principles.

The questionnaire asked students how much they respected the “king,” the “prime minister,” “parents,” the “school principal,” “teachers” and “monks” using a four-point scale. “Teachers” refers to the teachers in the school, while “monks” refers to the monk as a general concept.

The results in Table 5 reveal that students particularly respected the “king” and their “parents.” Some students revealed weak or slightly weak respect for the “school principal,” “teachers,” and “monks.” It is characterized by the many students who do not respect the “Prime Minister.” In Thailand, a coup took place in 2014 and the military has conducted politics ever since. Since the coup, General Prayut Chang-O-Cha has been the prime minister. Thus, this result may indicate political dissatisfaction among the hill tribes.

**Table 5** People Respected by Hill Tribe Students

(N=75)

	4. Strong respect	3. Slightly strong respect	2. Slightly weak respect	1. Weak respect	0. No answer
King	60 (80.0%)	9 (12.0%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (8.0%)
Prime Minister	6 (8.0%)	21 (28.0%)	18 (24.0%)	22 (29.3%)	8 (10.7%)
Parents	67 (89.3%)	2 (2.7%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (8.0%)
School Principal	52 (69.3%)	14 (18.7%)	2 (2.7%)	1 (1.3%)	6 (8.0%)
Teachers	52 (69.3%)	16 (21.3%)	1 (1.3%)	0 (0.0%)	6 (8.0%)
Monks	52 (69.3%)	13 (17.3%)	2 (2.7%)	0 (0.0%)	8 (10.7%)

## 6. Discussion

### (1) Social Background

In the surveyed school, the ratio of Tai and hill tribe students was approximately 1:1. That is, Tai and hill tribe students learned together in this school. Although most students were from the northern region of Thailand (particularly from Chiang Mai), some students came from Bangkok and the northeastern, central, and southern regions. The survey does not identify the reasons why they came to Chiang Mai - this is a subject for further studies.

Regarding the occupations of the students' parents, it was found that many parents had relatively low-income occupations, such as blue-collar workers and farmers. This leads to the conclusion that Buddhist schools play a welfare role for relatively poor children, because they provide free tuition and living expenses. There are three possible ways for hill tribe people who are relatively poor to have access to secondary education. The first way is through a Buddhist school, although Buddhist schools can only accept boys. The second way is through *Suksa Songkhro* schools, which are co-educational and are under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education. According to Ueda (2018a), these schools also offer free tuition, dormitories, and living expenses. *Suksa Songkhro* schools provide agriculture and craft classes, which help students develop their careers. The third way is through a non-formal school. Future research is required for non-formal schools.

Regarding reasons for enrollment, more than half of the students enrolled in the Buddhist school surveyed answered "Because I was interested in Buddhism." Only 26 students (17.9%) answered "Because I wanted to become a monk," which is a positive motivation. This rate was lower than

originally expected, suggesting that, overall, students did not go to Buddhist schools to become monks. On the other hand, only 41 students (28.9%) answered “Because I had little money,” which is a negative motivation. This rate was also lower than originally expected. Future research should analyze the reasons behind choosing Buddhist schools in detail.

## (2) Cultural Background and Identity

Regarding their own perceptions of identity, “Your ethnic group” was selected by 44 students (58.7%) and “Thai citizen” was selected by 36 students (48.0%). This result reveals that student’ ethnic identity is slightly stronger than their national identity. However, the overall trend is somewhat weaker. Previous research by the author of this study revealed that there is a tendency for secondary school students to have a weaker sense of identity than primary school students.

Regarding language use, two-thirds of the students speak mostly their ethnic languages with their parents. The fact that students use Thai language in school life is a concern from the point view of preservation of ethnic languages, although there is evidence that ethnic languages are still being used in their daily lives. Students who use ethnic languages tended to have a good understanding of ethnic languages and cultures.

There are two points regarding parents’ religion: the absence of folk beliefs and the considerable number of Christians. The first is true for Thailand as a whole, while there is a high possibility that folk beliefs and Buddhism are fused. The Tai tribe also believes in animism, which is called “*Phi* faith.” Many Tai tribe people believe in this “*Phi* faith,” but their main religious identity is Buddhist. The same can be said for hill tribes.

Second, Christianity is popular among hill tribes. Christianity has been propagated to the Lahu and Karen tribes since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. All students who answered that their parents were Christians were Karen. Hayami (1996) points out that Karen tribe people had cultural diversity intermingled with Buddhism and Christianity. Since not only ethnic beliefs, but also Christianity are blended into Buddhist culture, it can be inferred that students are not resistant to enrolling in Buddhist schools.

Regarding the incorporation of Thai national principles, it was found that almost all the students respected the “King.” The current king of Thailand is King Vajiralongkorn, who was enthroned in 2016. However, the king is not very popular among the people. Compared to the previous king who used to visit all parts of the country, the current king mostly stays apart from the people. His private life, which includes three marriages and three divorces, is also different from that of the family surrounding the previous king (Asahi Shimbun, December 2, 2016). However, since Thai law states that doing so is a “disrespectful sin against the king,” it is difficult for citizens to complain about the king.

## 7. Conclusion

This paper addressed two research topics: 1) the social background of children attending Buddhist schools and 2) the cultural background and identity of hill tribe children attending Buddhist schools.

The first research topic examined ethnicity, home province, parents' occupation and educational background, and reasons for enrollment in the surveyed school. As a result, it was found that both Tai and hill tribe children learn together in the surveyed Buddhist school. Most of the students' parents have low-income occupations, such as blue-collar workers and farmers. Few students' parents were white-collar workers. Therefore, it can be concluded that the surveyed Buddhist school plays the important role of providing education for children from relatively poor families, including hill tribes. There were also few parents with high levels of education. Moreover, since there were few students who wanted to become monks, it can be concluded that many students enroll in the surveyed Buddhist school in search of educational opportunities.

The second research topic examined the student' identities, language use, understanding of language and culture, the religion of their parents, and incorporation of Thai national principles. Over 40% of students had no strong sense of identity toward "their ethnic groups." This result shows that quite a few students did not have a strong ethnic identity. On the other hand, two-thirds of students reported talking with their parents in their ethnic languages. This means that a third of the students' families also use Thai language. Most of their parents were Buddhists, while some parents were Christians. These results reveal a fusion between the hill tribes and the Thai cultures. From the perspective of Thai national principles, most students respected the king.

This paper is a case study of one school, Doisaket Phadungsasana School. Although the above results about the social and cultural backgrounds of the Buddhist school students were obtained, this paper surveyed and analyzed only one school. To generalize this result, future studies with multiple comparisons are required.

Future research should further investigate in detail the factors behind enrollment in Buddhist schools. Since this study covered only one school, future research should include comparative studies covering several schools.

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- Note (1) Group 8 has jurisdiction over Buddhist schools in Udon Thani, Nong Khai, Sakon Nakhon, and Bueng Kan (Northeastern region).
- (2) Group 10 has jurisdiction over Buddhist schools in Maha Sarakham, Kalasin, Roi Et, and Nakhon Phanom (Northeastern region).
- (3) National integrated education is based on the philosophy of “Lak Thai.” The three pillars of Lak Thai are “Nation,” “Buddhism,” and “King.”
- (4) According to statistics from the Ministry of Education in 2015, there were 34,382 students in lower secondary education institutions and 15,328 upper secondary education institutions. According to teachers of the surveyed school, Buddhist schools are characterized by the fact that students are often replaced and enrolled. Therefore, there may be a difference in the calculation method.
- (5) “Tai” is usually written as “Thai,” but it is written as “Tai” for linguistics and ethnic classification purposes.

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