

# **A Study on Life Adjustment and Identity of Abroad Students from Northern Thailand**

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After the Chinese Civil War in the mid-twenty-first century, a unit of the Chinese Nationalist forces who later became known as China's' Lost Army in Bo Yang's novel *The Alien Realm* retreated from Burma's northern frontier to northern Thailand. The descendants of the lost Chinese soldiers settled in northern Thailand. For historical and affective reasons, some decided to pursue studies in Taiwan. The purpose of this study was to explore the lives of these abroad students from northern Thailand , their adjustments to life in Taiwan, and how they identified themselves culturally and nationally. This study was intended to be a qualitative study in which in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with five students from northern Thailand. In addition to interviewing the five college students, the author also interviewed two graduates for further comparison and analysis. Teachers who volunteered in northern Thailand were also interviewed.

For northern-Thailand born Chinese, studying in Taiwan was difficult due to Taiwan's complicated and changing educational policies for overseas Chinese from northern Thailand and the regulatory requirement that those students must be Thai nationals. In terms of adjustment to life in Taiwan, these foreign students who came from a different culture had to cope with studies, cultural differences, and personal finances, as well as physical and psychological issues. In terms of cultural identity, they grew up in Yunnan and Thailand so they experienced an inevitable cultural shock in Taiwan. As for national identity, as the third generation of the Chinese lost soldiers these students faced issues of what their homeland and country of origin were.

The population of northern-Thailand-born students in Mainland China is larger than in Taiwan. This research found that the decision to come to Taiwan for study was out of instrumental rationality, not for cultural or ethnic affection. As to adjustment to life in Taiwan, schoolwork was the priority for these students. Moreover, they found it difficult to adapt to a Taiwanese diet and were faced with cultural challenges. Obvious individual differences were observed in adjustments to personal finance, psychological state, and climate.

As for identity, these students did not identify themselves either culturally or nationally with Taiwan. They identified themselves with Yunnanese and Thai cultures and viewed themselves as Thais or Chinese Thais.

**Keywords :** northern Thailand, abroad students, life adjustment, identity