

Tourism ... to become one of the world's largest industries – sponsored by governments, regulated by international agencies, and supported by multinational enterprises as well as local businesses – presupposes that tourism is a positive or beneficial force. But whom does it benefit? (Smith 1978: 4)

ABSTRACT

The long-neck Kayans have long been subjected to scrutiny by both Thai and foreign writers. This study traces the historical existence of the Kayans in Burma and their status as refugees within Thailand. Since the arrival of the first group of Kayans in late 1984, this tribe have been of interest to the provincial government of Mae Hong Son, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, NGOs and tourism developers. All of these groups, in one way or another, claim to be protecting the interest of the Kayans. This thesis investigates the validity of claims that Kayan interests are being protected. It further questions the government's move to centralise the Kayans into one settlement at Huay Pu Kaeng. I argue that the Kayan race is the most marginal beneficiary of the Kayan ethnic tourism and illustrate how their vulnerability has been exploited both by government agencies and tourism developers.

Keywords: Kayan long-neck, ethnic tourism, human zoo, relocation, government of Mae Hong Son, stakeholders, exploitation