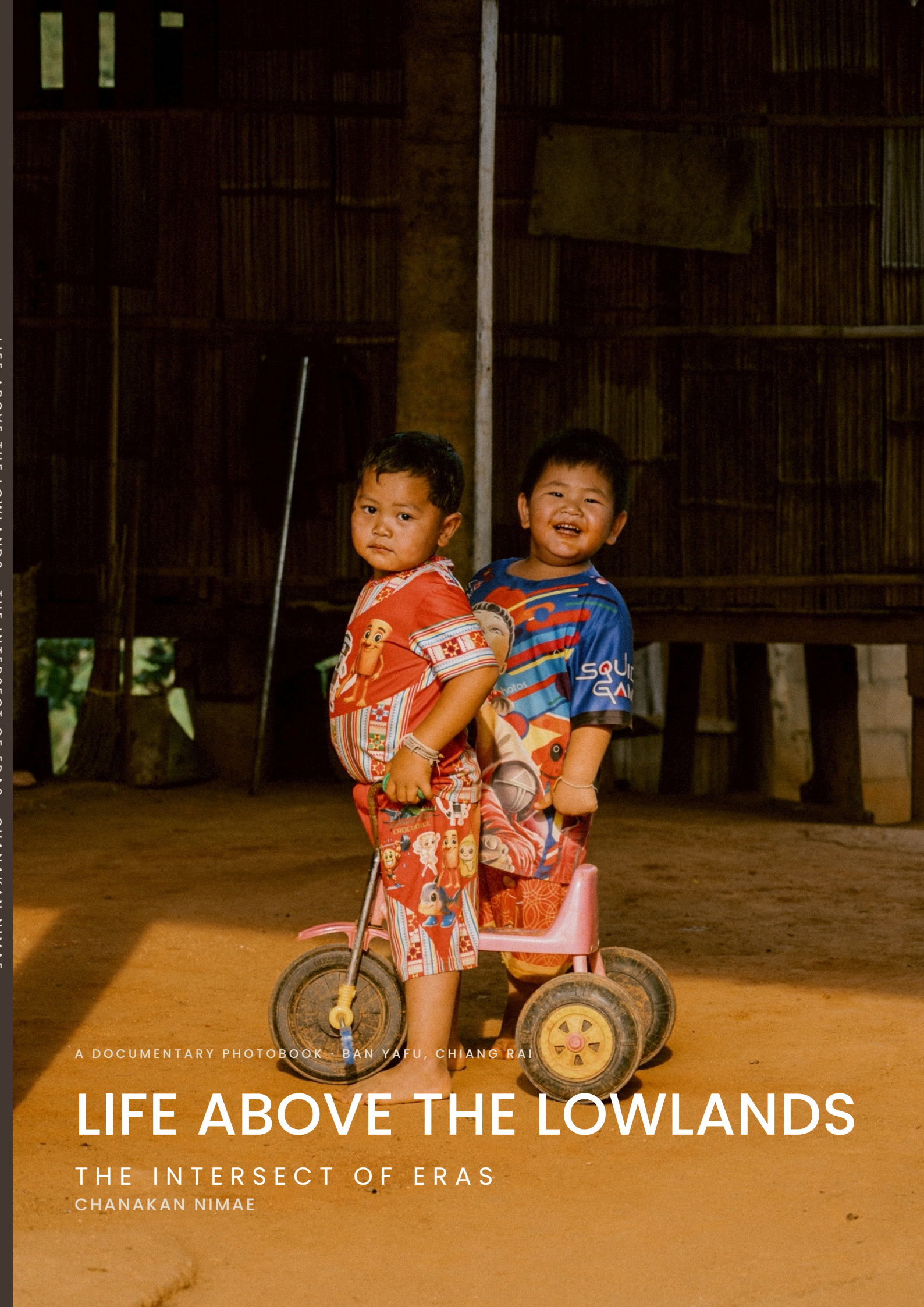

A DOCUMENTARY PHOTOBOOK · BAN YAFU, CHIANG RAI

LIFE ABOVE THE LOWLANDS

THE INTERSECT OF ERAS

CHANAKAN NIMAE

INTRODUCTION

Highland villages are usually shown as places frozen in time. Ban Yafu is not frozen. It is moving, and it moves with both hands.

Bamboo houses stand beside solar panels; motorbikes carry pool rings home from town. For 48 hours I lived with one family and photographed the village by natural light only. Five chapters follow a day and a generation: the road, the hearth, the roof, the children, and the hands that carry it forward.

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01 The Road Up

02 By the Hearth

03 Under the Same Roof

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05 The Hands That Carry

ONLINE EDITION · LIFEABOVELOWLANDS.COM



BAN YAFU · 06:40

Morning haze over the village.


Huaymaessi
School
1กฎ
เชียงราย
7237



01

CHAPTER ONE

The Road Up

Everything new in Ban Yafu arrived by this road: the concrete, the motorbikes, the phone signal. It is the first place where the two eras meet.



THE ROAD UP · 03 / 05

The concrete came last year. The games did not change.





THE ROAD UP · 04 / 05

Where the village ends and the valley begins.





02

CHAPTER TWO

By the Hearth

The fire is still the centre of the house. Modernity has entered this room too, but quietly, the way a guest does.

Photographed by firelight alone.







BY THE HEARTH · 04 / 06

The last light in the house is the fire's.







BY THE HEARTH · 06 / 06

A season of firewood, stacked beneath the floor.



03

CHAPTER THREE

Under the Same Roof

A bamboo house holds three generations and three eras: one floor, one fire, one router. The house does not choose between them. It makes room.






BATMAN





03

UNDER THE SAME ROOF · 05 / 06

Carried on the back, close to the work.







04

CHAPTER FOUR

The Inheritors

They wear cartoon T-shirts and climb the trees their grandparents climbed. Whatever the village becomes, it becomes through them.



THE INHERITORS · 03 / 06

Every hand in the village has touched this wall.



THE INHERITORS · 04 / 06

A bamboo fence becomes a stage.







THE INHERITORS · 05 / 06

Fruit from the tree, a gun that shoots water.



05

CHAPTER FIVE

The Hands

Every transition is carried by someone. Here it is carried by the generation that learned to thatch a roof and to top up a SIM card in the same lifetime.





THE HANDS THAT CARRY · 02 / 05

A new roof of grass, tied the old way.



THE HANDS THAT CARRY · 03 / 05

Thatch above, tin beside. Both keep the rain out.







THE HANDS THAT CARRY · 05 / 05

Small hands learning what the older ones know.

AFTERWORD

Forty-eight hours is not long enough to understand a village. It is long enough for a village to stop noticing you.

The photographs were made without flash, without staging, and without asking anyone to hold still. Where they are dark, the room was dark. Where they are warm, the light came from a fire.

My thanks to the family who let me sleep beside their hearth, and to my advisors at Mae Fah Luang University.

The full story, with every photograph, is also online at lifeabovelowlands.com.

Chanakan Nimae, 2026

PLATES

01 The Road Up · haze at dawn · pool ring by motorbike · the yard · water guns on the new road · the viewpoint · the lane

02 By the Hearth · cooking by fire · two cooks · pots on the wall · sleeping by the last light · the dog's place · the woodpile

03 Under the Same Roof · mother and child · evening gathering · the sofa · bicycle at the door · carried on the back · on the rail

04 The Inheritors · the climbing tree · in the branches · the handprint wall · fruit tree · at the fence · water gun

05 The Hands That Carry · baskets and firewood · a new roof · thatch and tin · the workshop · night hands

COLOPHON

TITLE	Life Above the Lowlands: The Intersect of Eras
PHOTOGRAPHS & TEXT	Chanakan Nimae
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COLOUR	Graded in Adobe Lightroom after Kodak Portra 400
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Ban Yafu sits above the lowlands of Chiang Rai. In forty-eight hours, by natural and hearth light only, this book follows a village where tradition and the modern world live under one roof, not as rivals but as family.

lifeabovelowlands.com

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