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LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT IN NORTH EAST THAILAND

BY

RUENGDEJ SRINUNI

A thesis submitted to
the Faculty of Social
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for the degree of Master
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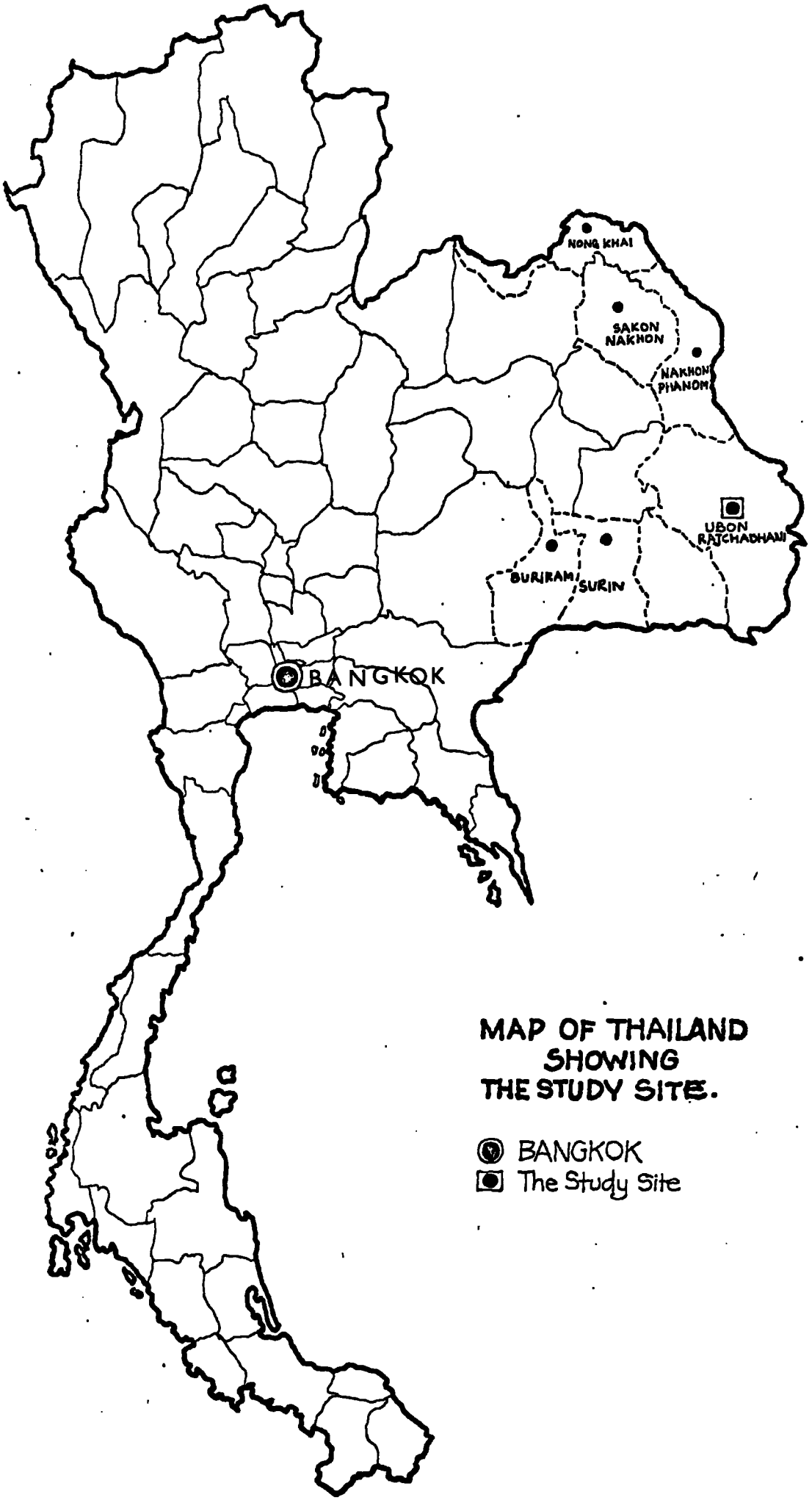
ABSTRACT

The success of planning and implementation of development projects depends to a great degree on leadership

Every human community is organised along some pattern. In rural Thailand the overall pattern of village organisation can be labelled as a social organisation or social structure. Whithin this overall structure there are a number of subpatterns of the system, relating to different aspects of community life. There are, for example, the systems relating to, secular authorities, kinship, economics, education, status-prestige, and religion. The overall structure with its subsidiary systems, along with their associated values and beliefs, provide the cultural framework in which leadership is shaped and nourished.

The persons most likely to act as such leaders are the commune headman, the head of an extended family group, the former monk, the village headman, the teacher and the Abbot. Among them the last three persons are referred to as being more influential and of these three the headmaster is respected for his knowledge, but he is rarely a local man, and this reduces his effectiveness. The Headman is often seen by many as the representative of the Central Government being involved too much with the administration. Therefore the Abbot emerges as the most influential person in the village, being both, a local man and independent of government support.

Therefore the Government is trying to involve the Sangha in its Village Development Project, especially in the sensitive areas of the North East which are open to communist infiltration.



MAP OF THAILAND SHOWING THE STUDY SITE.

◉ BANGKOK
▣ The Study Site

INTRODUCTION

This study was broadly conceived to deal with the village problems, village organisations, leadership and the role of Buddhism in the context of rural development. The main reason for such a broad study was that this provides this author with a "research apprenticeship", as well as the opportunity to achieve greater familiarity with different aspects of village life. Another reason was that such a broad basis allowed the author to employ both the anthropological approach and the sociological technique of survey interview as suggested by the author's supervisor and the research specialist of the Thai National Research Council respectively. An additional reason related to a major thesis of the study, namely, that genuine insight into any aspect village life is significantly enhanced by gaining a thorough understanding of the total village culture, i.e. the people's overall way of life.

It is appropriate to give here a note of some previous events in the author's life which are directly relevant to the field study.

The author is originally a native of the North East, and was born in a remote village which is located nominally in Kalasin province, but is geographically 40 miles Northwest of the Kalasin main town. The author has led the monastic way of life as a novice and monk since 1949 and, during 1954-1964, was a student of both the Pali school and the University in

Bangkok. It was traditional that a student who had previously passed the higher education examination, should be appointed a member of the committees for marking the lower level examination papers and as one of the members of those committees the author marked annually the Nakdham examination papers from 1956-1965 and also that of the Pali grade 3-4 and 5 during 1963-1966.

During 1960-1964, in order to observe the examination of both the Nakdham and the Pali and also as a regional Sangha superintendent's representative, the author visited many examination centres in the country as a whole, including that in the North East. One of these was that of Ban Phai Yai where the field study was conducted.

With regard to the above examinations they occurred annually and at set times of the year.

From 1965 to 1967 as a practical graduate student of Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya, the Buddhist University, the author was officially invited by the Sangha governor Deputy of Ubol to help the Sangha with their social services and assigned to Wat Thung Srimueng in the Ubol main town. In the meantime the centre for the Sangha social services was constituted by its committee with the Sangha Governor as the Director, the Sangha Governor Deputy as the Director's deputy and the author as the executive secretary. In the following year similar programmes extended rapidly to the other five North Eastern provinces. During the two full years that the author was

The household is the basic unit of the sample, which consisted of 100 individuals representing 100 households, drawn from the three village sections. In a large majority of the cases the person interviewed was the head or, in his absence, a senior member of household. This accounts for the preponderance of males over females in the sample. Approximately two-thirds of all households in the three village sections were included in the survey. In selecting the sample units a map of all the houses and lanes in each section was first drawn, and then every first and second house was marked out in advance. If the head, or a responsible member, of the selected household was not available for the interview, as it frequently happened, then the next household was chosen. The survey, then was designed to elicit the household attitude, not individual attitudes.

The techniques of research were varied, ranging from the administration of questionnares to 100 individuals dividing into various groups by sex, age and career, to investigation of various institutional aspects of life, to interview and participant observation; and to the use of case histories to provide further insight into the principles which regulate community life.

The field study was started on 20th of December 1971 by devoting the first week to establishing rapport with the village residents and preparing the research team of whom six were local monks, three from the Ubol main town and two from Bangkok including the author and Mr. Alan John Adam, the English friend who closely assisted the author throughout the field work.

After a socio-economic survey in the following two weeks, the research was continued by, one month later, another interview survey focussed on leadership, village organisation, problems, and relevant attitudes of the people. After two months, the research operation in the field came to an end, and then the author returned to the University of Durham at the end of February, 1972.

The author's interest in development is real, but untrained. Nevertheless the author has had some experience through serving as consultant to the Buddhist Co-ordination Centre in the North East for Sangha social services, acting as an advisor to the Buddhist Centres in the six provinces and participating in various seminars for the Sangha social service of the Department of Religious Affairs, and serving as executive secretary of the Ubol Buddhist Study Centre. The author lists these institutions only to establish his own credentials and not to imply that their officers share any of the author's opinions.

It was that the study as a whole was largely concerned with basic, traditional practices and attitudes rather than with fleeting opinions and views. In many cases, this study was not based on the attitude survey data alone. In many crucial parts of the analysis, Chapter III and IV particularly heavy reliance was placed on the author's direct practical experience, together with findings and observations contained in studied by others.

I use throughout the volume transliterated Thai words where there are no precise equivalents in English. Amphur, Tambon, Ban, Baht are used, for example. Since Thai does not pluralise by adding "s", the words are unchanged for either the singular or plural forms, and such words as well as their explanation in English are listed in pages xiv-xvi

This thesis also contains several maps, pictures, figures and tables. It is hoped that this study may contribute towards the right understanding of the various aspects of the village life in rural areas as they really are in present Thai society.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

During two years that this thesis has been in preparation I have received much advice, encouragment and practical assistance from a variety of different people whose kindness it is my pleasure to acknowledge.

Thanks are due to Prof. E. Sunderland, Head of the Department of Anthropology who kindly accepted me into his department and twice allowed me to return to do field work in Thailand during termtime.

During seminar sessions throughout the course I received genuine guidance, valuable criticism and a variety of suggestions for improvement from both Prof. Lucy Mair and Mr. David Brook; to them I am particularly grateful.

Language correction has been helped by my friends, Mr. Alan John Adam, Mr. D.C. Salter, and Mr. Richard Vann, to whom I am deeply grateful. And my work was made less arduous by the hospitality extended to me by the friendly staff of Van Mildert College as well as my friends in Durham to all of whom I am deeply indebted.

The financial support came from the Asia Foundation in Thailand, who provided me with the means and the opportunity of undertaking the intensive study of the Village of Ban Phai Yai on which this work is based, as well as having a visiting tour of the North East to observe the Sangha Social Service. I am thankful to the authorities of the foundation, especially to Mr. W.J. Klausner and Mr. Sneh Ratchinda.

I am deeply grateful to Dr. Chumpon Sawadiyakorn, Director of the Thai National Research Council, Nai Somport Klinpongsa, the Ubol Governor Assiatant, the Nai Amphur of Amphur Moungsamsib, who assisted my research efforts.

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I am profoundly indebted to the ten members of the research team who ably assisted me throughout the study and whose names cannot be individually listed here for lack of space.

The greatest collective gratitude is reserved for the residents of the village of Ban Phai Yai, both monks and lay people. They opened their hearts to me and my companions and allowed us to participate freely in the full round of the village activities, in their rice field and other work places, monasteries, schools, and homes. We shared their joys as well as their sorrows. Above all they took us into their confidence and provided us with the data we sought. To them I owe much of what I know about their village culture.

Among these residents I must single out one individual who was most helpful to me personally in numberous ways. He is Prakru Sopondhammaporn, the present Abbot of Wat Weluwan, and without a doubt the most successful village leader; I salute this fine man and his incumbency.

I am grateful to Mr. Swadi Thirapat and his sons for providing transport from the Ubol Main Town to the village throughout the period of the study. Thanks are also due to his daughter, Miss Vasna Thirapat, who although in London and engaged by her study, can devote her spare time to greatly helping me by typing the material and the draft of this thesis.

Typing and photocopying of the thesis was fully completed by the great help of both Miss Achara Thanyavut and Miss Olivia Abeyta, to them I am deeply grateful.

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VACABULARY OF LOCAL TERMS

Amphur	district of a province.
Baht	Thai monetary unit consisting 100 Satangs, also goldsmiths weight equaling 15 grams - which is the weight of the Baht coin. The weight reference is not used in this Thesis.
Ban or Muban	village.
Bhikkhu	fully ordained monk.
Boon	merit, this is used traditionally in all the senses of religious practice.
Chao Kana Amphur	District Headmonk.
Chao Kana Changwat	Provincial Sangha Governor.
Chao Kana Park	Sangha Regional Supervisor.
Chao Kana Tambon	Commune Headmonk.
Changwat	province, one changwat consists of many districts (Amphur) ranging from five to twenty.
Chao Nai	master.
Dhamma or Dharma	Buddha's teachings.
Dhamma Suksaa	The Buddhist study system which is conducted for the laity. The pupils are required to show competence in writing essays in the Thai language and study the life of the Buddha, the essentials of the Buddhist doctrine excluding the 227 rules that apply to the monks.
Goy	uncooked fish or meat mix with lemon, salt and chilli.
Kammakan Changwat	Monks who are appointed by Provincial Sangha Governers to conduct Religious Educational examinations in the provinces.

Kammakan Park monk	The monks who are appointed by the Sangha Regional Supervisor as mambers of the regional committee to oversee the examination centres in the provinces in their region.
Kammakan Pracham Hongsob	invigilator or Examination Room Supervisor.
Kammakan Sobnakdham	The committee controlling examinations for general Buddhist studies.
Kamnan	commune headman.
Kathin	Offering traditionally and ceremonially the robes to the monks who have fully observed the three months rainy season retreat where at least five monks have gathered.
Khiun Hien Mie Ogham	Village monks traditional weekly visit home of their supporters. This generally appears in village where the Buddhist school is established.
Kowh neow	sticky rice or glutinous rice.
Laab	uncooked meat cut up and mixed with salt, lemon, onion and chilli
Lugkam	literally means "the son who is looked after".
Mahathera Samagom	Sangha Supreme Council, the highest executive body of the Thai national Sangha.
Mie Ohkkam	The term "Mie Ohk" is used by the monks and novices to mean "mother" or "waman" while "kam" means "supporter"; so the words "Mie Ohk" and"Kam" when used together give sense of "mother who looks after one".
Nai	A general honorific title for a man, it can be translated as mister (Mr.)
Nai Amphur	District Headman

Nakdham or Pariyattidharma	general Buddhist study system; conducted for monks and novices; the pupils are required to show competence in writing essays in the Thai language, and study the life of the Buddha, the essentials of the Buddhist doctrine and the 227 rules applying to the monks.
Nakdham Ehk	The first grade of the general Buddhist study szstem. It is the senior of three grades.
Nakdham Toh	the lower (2nd) grade of that study system.
Nakdham Treeh	This is the lowest grade (3rd) of that study system.
Nang	a title of a married woman; it is generally used in the sense of (Mrs.)
Nangsao	a title of an unmarried woman. (lit. Miss).
Para	fish, uncooked and mixed with salt, and kept for one or two months.
Pooyai Ban	village Headman.
Tambon	Sub-district of an Amphur, made up of around five to sixteen villages.
Thera	Elder, This refers to the monk who has been over ten years in the monkhood.
Ubon or Ubonrajdhani	refers to the North-East province where the work site is situated.
Wan Phra	The Buddhist holiday; this is used by the people in the North East, and is the equivalent of the sabbath falling on the four phases of the moon.
Wan silnoi	the day before Wan Phra on which the participants receive traditionally five precepts that are generally known as the small precepts (lit. the day for the small precepts).
Wan silyai	The Buddhist holiday on which the participants receive eight precepts (lit. the day for the great precepts). See Wan Phra.

PART 1

THE NORTHEAST VILLAGERS' APPROACH TO THEIR PROBLEMS AND NEEDS

CHAPTER 1

The Village Needs

Many Thai rural areas are characterized by low production, low income, and poor welfare facilities. The people have little knowledge about modern and better methods of production. Poor health and lack of initiatives are other basic problems of the Thai rural society. Thus, the most important human resources of the country are underdeveloped and this adversely affects the progress of the country as a whole.

Village problems in Thailand are similar to those found in many developing countries. In general these problems are the result of three factors: first, the lag in the application of improved technology; second, the shortage of capital; and third, until recently, the indifference or apathy of the people and the government to take appropriate action to solve major problems.

What are the most urgent needs and problems of the North East village? The North East villager himslef is best qualified to answer this question. In their answers to the questions, the villagers made it abundantly clear that their major needs are basically three in kind. Listed in order of importance, they are:

1. agricultural and general economic development,
2. better village roads and connecting bridges, and
3. improvement of health conditions.

Agricultural and economic development, which ranks the highest amongst the village needs, breaks down into several specific categories. These take the form of a requirement of the following:

1. Modern farm implements and supplies, such as fertilizer and insecticide, towards increasing rice production;
2. An adequate water storage, water supply and control system; a durable year-round reservoir that would facilitate irrigation farming, enable the soaking of kenaf (which is similar to jute) and ensure the bathing of animals in the dry season;
3. Improved market outlets for farm produce, with better prices;
4. New cash crops to supplement income from the rice farm;
5. A favourable credit system that would permit farmers to borrow money on easy terms;
6. Technical assistance in improving livestock-especially poultry raising;
7. Development of home industries, in particular agriculture;
8. New employment opportunities.

The people of Ban Phai Yai depend for the major part of their diet on the produce from their land. Almost all the villagers have a portion of land which they refer to as their farm and on which they grow their supply of sticky rice. In addition some have a piece of garden near one of the

water sources where they grow a few vegetables. A few keep poultry and may have some kind of a fish farm in a pond on their land, and some have kenaf or jute farms. In order to plough the land each family keeps one or more water-buffalo. It is predominantly subsistence farming which is practised and very few sell their rice, but jute and kenaf is sold.

During my observation, the villagers of Ban Phai Yai were beginning to appreciate the benefits derived from the use of fertilizers. This interest was stimulated by the concerted efforts of the Ministry of Agriculture and USOM (United States Operations Mission). USOM donated 100 tons of fertilizer for distribution amongst farmers in three provinces, one of which was Ubol rejdhani where this study was conducted. The important point is that the farmers in this village in a very short period of time became convinced of the value of fertilizers.

A villager reported that from a paddy field of area one rai (.4 of an acre), his rice production increased nearly three-fold, from around 15 Muen (or 180 kilogrammes) before using fertilizer to 42 Muen (504 kilogrammes) afterwards.

The monks play very little part in this vital activity, although some villagers claimed that the monks had helped with advice. Mr. Deon Tchupat the vice-headman of Section 10 mentioned Phra Maha Prichaa who gave advice on the use of fertilizers; he has an opinion that trees should be grown so that their leaves can fall on and improve the land and he advises the farmers thus. The same man said that although it was contrary to the Monks' Vinaya Rules to advise

about farming, he thought that according to the demands of the society, they should. The monks do make visits to the farms and take an interest in what goes on, but do not have a definite policy on agriculture. It is not their province but obviously they help and advice where they can.

It goes without saying that fertilizer alone will not guarantee an increase in crop production. The control of crop pests, for example by spraying the growing crops with insecticide, and an adequate supply of water are also important factors of which the farmers are well aware.

Closely related to the preceding needs is the desire for better market outlets, better prices for farm products, and a favorable credit system that would permit the farmers to borrow money on easy terms. An incident that occured in the village studies will best illustrate these various requirements.

While the study was in process a rice farmer reported that he borrowed 1,000 Baht from a local merchant and immediatly invested the sum of money in the growing of kenaf. At the time he borrowed the money the price of kenaf was unusually high. Many farmers plunged into kenaf growing, for it seemed the best thing to do. However, later in the year when the crop was ready for harvesting, the kenaf market completely reversed. Unfortunately the world and national supply of jute and kenaf had increased enormously, and the price of kenaf fell sharply. As a consequence the farmer was unable to pay off his loan to the merchant. He continued by saying that from 1965, the year he borrowed the money, to 1971, his debt,

originally 1,000 Baht, had grown to 5,000 Baht as a result of an exhorbitant interest rate. Upon further inquiry it was learned that the unfortunate victim of circumstances had just lost a court suit pressed against him by the creditor merchant, who was given title to the 25 rai of land that the debtor owned. This land was subsequently sold by the creditor for a sum well exceeding 5,000 Baht. An interesting side light to this episode is that it occurred in a village where a Co-operative Credit Society had been in existence for many years. One might have assumed that the existence of such a society would lessen the likelihood of such a debt occurring.

As for the second village need, it is not the lanes within the village which concern the people, but the roads linking neighbouring villages and ultimately linking each village to a market town in the Amphur. Among other benefits, such roads would expedite the transportation of farm products for sale in the nearby market village or town. And vice versa, the products of the outside world would become more readily available to the village people. Moreover, social intercourse between villages and between villages and towns would be greatly facilitated.

The Northeast Thai villagers have always been engaged, to a greater or lesser extent, in building roads within and between villages. However, for the most part there are cart tracks at best, often unusable during the monsoon season. With only hoes and bamboo baskets (for hauling earth) as construction equipment, the crude roads linking villages are continually in need of repair. There is little doubt that

the construction of more and better village roads and bridges represents a genuine rural need.

As an example of the desire of the villagers for better communication by road the building of the new road guided by the village monks is discussed below.

Formerly Ban Phai Yai, like so many other small villages, did not have any road link with any other community. The absence of good communications was obviously a considerable inconvenience, although some might argue that this was not so, prefering the benefits of isolation. The people whose livelihood and social development was threatened by the lack of a road could not agree. Neither could they do much to improve things. It was not until the head monks of four Communes, finding it difficult to attend their District meetings, began to discuss the possibility of a proper road link that anything happened.

The four Communes whose head monks discussed road improvements were Ban Phai Yai, Yang Yo Pap, Jŭk Duh, and Sangthorh. It was in 2505 (1962) that the building work commenced. Prior to that it was necessary to consult the Kamnan (commune headman) of the four communes and draw up a plan of work which had to be submitted to the District Headman, (Nai Aphur), who then applied to the Governor for permission to build. The four Abbots and four Kamnan then met to discuss the project and it was agreed that each Commune should be responsible for the portion of road passing through its territory. A general committee to oversee the complete operation was formed with Phrakhu Sopondhammaporn, Abbot of Wat Weluwan, as Chairman.

It was he who supplied the information quoted here. The general Committee was composed of three persons - Phrakhru Sopondhammaporn, the District Headman, and the Vice-Headman of the District. Each Commune had its own construction committee of which it was the responsibility of the General Committee to advise. In Ban Phai Yai the committee numbered nine. Sitting on the committee which was chaired by the Abbot was the Kamnan, the Vice-Kamnan, two Pooyai Ban (Village Headmen), two school teachers and two monks.

In all 24 kilometres of road was constructed. From Nongkhuhn, which is 47 kilometres along the main road linking Ubol to Amnadchareon, to Ban Phai Yai the width is 6 metres with a verge on either side of one metre. From Ban Phai Yai to Jik Duh the width remains at 6 metres but the verge increased to two metres on either side.

To pay for construction a contribution was levied on the people. In addition to labour the following amounts according to status were asked from each family:- Farmers - 10 Baht; teachers - 100 Baht; Kamnan - 100 Baht; Pooyai Ban and Commune Doctor - 30 Baht each. In all, the four Communes contributed a total of about 200,000 Baht. Most of this was spent on petrol for the tractor loaned from the Government. A pneumatic drill was also loaned from the Government, and the Governor provided an architect.

Three years were needed to complete the work but of course the project has not ended there. Now there is the question of maintenance which must somehow be financed and dealt with. Despite a toll levied on all vehicles using the roads they have difficulty in raising sufficient funds.

Although the new road has brought with it certain problems, it seems that these are preferable to those endured without it, and they now plan to continue the road to Huotapan District.

In riding on the road it is difficult to think of it either an new or as a road. Surfaced principally with fine gravel and sand it is obviously unable to stand up to the beating handed out by heavy motor vehicles, especially the sturdy county buses - in reality lorries with seating which traverse it several times a day. In many places the road has collapsed into large troughs where normal cars must be very careful.. Elsewhere the uneven surface provides an exciting test for the light Japanese motorcyles which a few can afford. It is a pity that having made such an effort to build the road they are unable to maintain their achievement properly. No doubt when possible repairs will be carried out. Anxious to take advantage of good communication, some villages have built small roads to connect with the new road. Unfortunately, this has been done without any agreement and so adds somewhat to the strain.

Apart from the buses, lorries, motorcycles, bicycles and cars are now able to visit the villages where formerly a car was unknown. The economy of the villages has been improving slowly.

Health and Sanitation

The general desire for improved health and sanitation breaks down into the following: (a) the need for a year-round supply of safe drinking water, through the

construction of deep, concrete-lined wells, and (b) the need for adequate medical services rendered through first-class health centres established at convenient locations. With regard to the above I shall consider the water supply, diet, toilets, commune doctor, and midwife of Ban Phai Yai.

The Water Supply

With the exception of an adequate water supply system that would facilitate irrigation farming, Ban Phai Yai is fortunate in that there is, on the East side of the village, a large lake and also a pond from which bath water may be obtained, and surrounding the village there are four good wells for drinking water. The people take from these wells according to convenience and preference. Unfortunately the attempts to sink a well in the village have failed as the water has proved to be briny.

Some people were fortunate and only had to spend 10 minutes on a trip for water but others perhaps spent 40 minutes. The water was usually carried by the women or school children in two buckets on a yoke. (See photo 1.1) Some boys and others used rough carts and old parafin cans - mostly for bath water. Others didn't bother to carry bath water home but bathed at the pond. On a weekday at about 5 p.m. many children could be seen carrying water; often very small children not much taller than their buckets would be doing this but not unless they had tins smaller than buckets with which to fill them. At home the water is stored in large earthenware jars.

It was said that the Buddhist monks give advice on well construction and assisted particularly with labour,

Photo 1.1
A little village girl carrying bath water from a pond by buckets on a yoke.

Photo 1.2
A village girl drawing up a bucket of drinking water from a well by bamboo pole.

The cost of the four good wells was as follows: the well on the old road 2,000 Baht; the well on the new road 2,000 Baht; the well to the West 1,700 Baht; the old well to the North West 3,000 Baht. The way to these wells is often rough, and only the one on the new road has faily easy access but it is nearly half a mile from the village.

The principal complaint was the dirtiness of the water. The pond seemed to be fed by underground springs which means that it does not keep too clean naturally and so far the villagers had not done anything to help by using unclean buckets. It was said that an attempt to clean the pond was under discussion. The wells too were criticised. Although the water is pure, people often drop dirty buckets into the well when taking the water. Also the wells are uncovered and have little or no wall which allows amall animals to fall in and die. About 10 per cent of those who were interviewed said that they always boiled their water, while another said that it had been necessary in the past to chlorinate the water.

It seems unlikely that a proper piped water supply will be built in the near future. Such a project is extremely costly and complex to run. It has been under discussion but money is the problem. The popular and active Pooyai Ban (village headman), Mr. Lee Khunmea, has decided that a big improvement would be the provision of pumps on each of the drinking water wells. This would eliminate the danger of contamination and save the effort of drawing water with a long bamboo pole (See photo 1.2). On his own initiative he

applied to the District Headman on January 2nd to do this; there had been no reply at the time of the survey.

The only improvement in sight is the cleaning up of the water sources. It may be that the people will have to continue to carry water for a long time yet. It should be added that this carrying of water did not seem to be too much of a problem and often provied some sport for the children.

Diet

The villagers of Ban Phai Yai exist on a very simple diet of locally produced food. Almost every villager owns a little land on which he grows the local "kowh neow" sticky glutinous rice. Fish which is caught locally forms the rest of the staple diet with the inclusion of vegetables and eggs when available. Meat is a very rare luxury and may not usually be obtained locally.

The amount which each family spends a day on food varied tremendously but this is not taking into account the amount of rice eaten or the families' talents with regard to fishing and bargaining. One family was able to feed 9 persons on only 5 Baht per day while a young couple with 2 young children spent 20 Baht a day on food. Almost 60% of those interviewed grew a few vegetables such as cabbage, lettuce and onion. Thirty percent were able to quote the price of eggs at 4-5 Baht per dozen and these people included eggs in their diet.

For those unfamiliar with Thai food some attempt will be made to describe a Thai style meal. Rice forms the basis of the meal and each person is given a generous helping. The people usually sit on the floor to eat and form a group

around a number of small dishes containing various kinds of food. Each person as he or she wishes then takes a small quantity (about a spoonful) of food from a dish to mix with the rice. The various kinds of food, the curries and sauces, are never mixed together but are taken with the rice and one keeps taking from these dishes until one has had enough. The dishes of various foods serve the whole group. In the North and North East of Thailand, where glutinous rice is eaten, the way of eating is a little different from the rest of the country, where no glutinous rice is used, and the meal is eaten with a fork and spoon. In the North East they eat with their hands and the sticky rice is contained in cylindrical baskets about a foot or so high and 6 to 9 inches in diameter (See photo ๖.๓ and ๖.๔). A small quantity of rice is taken in the hand and moulded into a ball and then dipped into a sauce or curry before being put in the mouth and eaten.

It was ovserved that most of the dishes contained some kind of fish curry made with a little vegetable and chilli. There might be one egg dish, perhaps an omelette. Some kind of fresh raw vegetable such as lettuce or onion (of the spring-onion type) was sometimes present. Fruit was relatively rare and was ususlly sweet tamerin (makhamm whaan) from the many trees in the village. Locally grown bananas were sometimes served and oranges made a very rare appearance although they were on sale in the village.

It was usual then for the people to subsist on what they were able to produce themselves: rice from their land, and some vegetable and fish which they could either catch or

Photo 1.3
One kind of sticky rice container.

Photo 1.4
Other kinds of sticky rice containers.

buy locally. The price of dish was quoted at from 5 to 10 Baht a kilo but the majority claimed to pay 7 or 8 Baht a kilo. Twenty men of those interviewed had some kind of crude fish farm on their land and one of these claimed to produce 200 kilos of fish a year. Fish caught locally and sold in another district could fetch as much as 9 Baht a kilo. Eggs usually cost 4-5 Baht a dozen but twenty people said 6 Baht a dozen, and 10 said they kept ducks for their eggs. A fair amount of poultry was observed running about in the village but in the absence of any organised method of farming their yield was probably not too high or reliable. Poultry meat was never mentioned except as a source of disease and was never observed either on sale or served at mealtimes. Perhaps the birds were too highly valued for their eggs. Only two out of a hundred said they had bought meat and they quoted the price at 10 and 15 Baht per kilo respectively.

With regard to rice it should be noticed that although they grow for themselves the villagers must each keep a water-buffalo to pull the plough and they must also have the rice milled at one of the four mills in the village. The cost of milling is 25 Stang (about ½ new penny) for 12 kilo or free if the coarse bran is left with the mill. One shopkeeper who did not farm at all paid 1,400 Baht for 2,400 kilos of rice. Others sometimes had to pay for extra labour to help the family in the fields.

Most Buddhist monks advise the people on diet and nutrition and the people were also able to acquire some such information from Government Health Officials and Development

workers. Ten men claimed to have read about nutrition. Such advice is essential because such a limited diet may not always be able to meet the needs of the people. The village doctor stated that poor food was a principal cause of stomach complaints. Some people are still attached to the old habit of eating uncooked or pickled fish which the Development workers are now advising against. To eat an excessive amount of rice dipped in hot chilli suaces is also not advisable. Many now claim to be following the advice and are giving up such dishes as Parah, Laah and Goy. "Parah" is fish uncooked and mixed with salt and kept for one or two months; "laah" is meat cut up and mixed with lemon, salt, onion and chilli - the meat in this case is uncooked; "goy" is uncooked fish or meat mixed with lemon, chilli and salt. Some said that they still favoured these dishes of uncooked fish or meat. Wild poultry, living off of soiled and decaying food, may also be dangerous to eat.

The majority felt that food was now easier to obtain and only two complained that it was now more difficult because of an increase in population and the fact that people liked to take food out of the village to sell in markets elsewhere. Generally it seemed that food was relatively plentiful and when used properly it was nutritious. Now that the people are responding to advice and are abandoning old bad habits a significant improvement can be made. It still remains for a more varied diet to be encouraged with the addition of more fresh vegetables. It is probable that more people could grow vegetables but the necessity of carrying water to the gardens is a hindrance.

All the people interviewed contributed food to one of the Wats (monasteries) often twice a day in addition to giving food to a monk on Pindapata (alms-round). There is then a plentiful supply of locally produced food in the village, most people managing to grow food for themselves. It didn't seem that much food was taken out of the village to the market, neither did much come in from outside. Only a few shopped at the Ampur (district) market or in the nearby towns and then not regularly.

There is still much to be done by the Government and Development workers to help and to encourage the people to improve their diet. They need to be shown new methods of cooking and to be taught how to cook the existing foods in more varied ways and by methods that retain the nutritious value of the food. Perhaps too it might be possible to attempt to produce a greater variety. It seemed that there was sufficient to eat but the dietary problems seemed to rest with the lack of variety and the poor and sometimes not too clean cooking conditions. As they want to improve their diet and are responding to advice it seems that much can be done.

Toilets

The well-being of the people in a community is measured by their state of health. An adequate toilet system is an important improvement leading to disease control, which is one of the urgent needs of the North East villagers.

Almost all villages in Thailand were without toilet systems until the Village Health and Sanitation Project was initiated by the Government in 1960[1]. The programme was first

implemented in the North East Region, and Ban Phai Yai is one of the villages included in the programme. So it might be said that toilets are a relatively new development in Ban Phai Yai and their use has not yet extended to the whole community. The majority of villagers do now have a toilet even if the people don't all use it. One young girl said that many don't use the toilet but just leave it clean to show off to the Development workers. This may be true but these people may be getting fewer if another young lady's information is correct. According to her the people formerly used the bushes around the village but now these are getting fewer so in the absence of adequate cover the toilet may be used more frequently.

Estimates of the percentage who had toilets varied but the majority reckoned it to be about 80-90%. In fact, Mr. Lee Kunmee, one of the two Pooyai Ban (village headman), said that there were 130 toilets in the village, only 20 families being without. He said that 95% use the toilets, and those who don't just don't see any necessity to do so.

Mr. Pai Boon Kunmee was the first to install a toilet in B.E. 2503 (1968). Since then the rest of the community had gradually followed his example. It was said by Mr. Lee Kunmee that the Wat had always used toilets. He is 62 years old so it is probable that the Wat has had toilets for a long time.

The cost on installing a toilet varied much and seemed to bear little relationship to the different places of purchase and the quality. Perhaps the people couldn't remember very accurately. Estimates varied from 50 Baht to

600 Baht and there can be little variation in the style of toilet. In all cases it is a squating toilet in a shelter usually of corrugated zinc adjacent to the house. About 50% of those interviewed had spent 250 Baht and it may be that this is a reasonable estimate. Only 10 who had spent 150 Baht felt that it was too expensive. The others seemed to appreciate the toilet and regarded it as good value.

Materials have to be obtained from Ubol or locally. Some toilet units are made in the village and some are supplied free by Development workers. Some who receive these, it was said, had sold them. Certainly people did not appreciate the units supplied by the Development workers and claimed that they were of poor quality and were easily broken. As with other aspects of social work the Buddhist Monks seemed to have no definite policy but many villagers mentioned that they did give advice regarding toilets. Mainly it seemed to be the Development workers who helped the people in this matter and instructed them about how to clean and maintain the toilets properly. However it was said that the Monks had also helped with advice. Government officials sometimes helped with free cleaning powder.

There is then still some way to go; 20 families have yet to build a toilet and many have yet to learn how to use it and look after it properly. A toilet is not too expensive and, as many have shown, the villager may build it himself. It just seems necessary to educate the people properly about the toilet.

It was observed that the success of the sanitation improvement depended heavily upon the villagers' understanding

of the problems and co-operation in their solution. Health education is a necessary tool for this and it is regarded as an integral part of all health services.

The Commune Doctor

Over the past several decades the Government had made an impressive effort to develop social services in the field of health. This Health Service is important to economic development since it affects the efficiency and productivity of population. Thailand's achievements in this field compare favourably with most other countries of Southeast Asia.[2]

In 1947 there was only one doctor per 13,600 inhabitants in all Thailand which increased to one per 7,100 inhabitants in 1956.

The majority of the Thai doctors work in the capital; only a few of them are willing to work in the country and with the exception of paying visits occasionally, none work in the villages. A villager has little or no contact with trained physicians as it is inconvenient for them and there is a poor relationship between the villagers and the town medical practitioners. He therefore still depends on local remedies and spirit practices. In order to examine who the villagers refer to as a doctor I shall discuss the village healer of Ban Phai Yai.

Nai (Mr.) See Lateerom, being regarded as the Commune Doctor, was interviewed on the open portion of his house, which like most houses in Ban Phai Yai is built some fifteen feet above the ground. (See photo 1.5). Part of the

Photo 1.5
A wooden house in the village of Ban Phai Yai.

area below has been enclosed to provide him with an office and accommodation for his assistant. Nai See Lateerom is now fifty-five years old and has been on the Commune Doctor training course which he completed in 1969. He is not then the kind of practitioner to whom the term "doctor" normally applies. His style in Thai is translated in Manich's Thai-English Dictionary as "a healer of the old school".

Before embarking on his present profession Nai See spent seven years as a Buddhist monk, and it was during this time that he became interested in herb medicine and began to learn his art from another monk, Phra Maan Bodhi Pakkhi. When he disrobed he felt that he would like to help the people as a doctor, since the people were very poor and there was not then any doctor. Nai See further explained that he is a Buddhist and the duties of a doctor help him to follow the Buddhist way of life and the promotion of compassion towards others. It is also quite a profitable career.

He is to some extent under the control of the Government, which pays him a small salary of 125 Baht per month, and he is able to earn another 300 Baht per month from his patients. The maintenance of his office is his own responsibility and he must keep a horse as his principal means of transport. When he makes his monthly visit to the Government Health Service he must use the bus. The Government also provides him with vaccine.

The Government licence limits him to the area of the Commune but this he explained was impractical and he occasionally treated patients outside his area. He also complained about the order limiting his treatment to herb-

alism because he has some knowledge of modern methods and would like to be able to use them more extensively. He felt that the Government should allow him to extend his methods but of course it is unlikely that he could now prove his competence sufficiently to satisfy the Government department. At fifty-five, which in Thailand is quite old, he has no hope of qualifying properly as a medical doctor.

The nearest hospital is 53 kilometres away at Ubol and it is there that he sends any patients who are seriously ill - perhaps five a year. In the event of an emergency he has the use of the radio in the Commune Headman's office and can thus contact the hospital. An ambulance or car can be sent from Ubon. The hospital also offers him help, and doctors sometimes give instruction, and about once or twice a year a doctor may come to assist him.

Until recently he was very busy and about 500 patients a year contacted him but since communications with Ubol were improved about six years ago many patients prefer to visit the hospital. Now only 200 patients a year come to him.

He has no set hours for work but makes himself available all the time the whole year round. When the patients need him he gives help, often visiting the patients in their house some distance away and perhaps staying overnight. He said that unlike the District Nurse he is often called out at night.

Patients most commonly suffer from stomach trouble caused by the local food, particularly the glutinous rice

which is the staple diet, and it may also be that the people are not too clean in the preparation of food. Impure water is another hazard to health, and some kinds of local fish cause illness of the liver. There is not now any malaria in the area but a species of mosquito (black and white mosquito) with a rather vicious bite can cause children between the ages of one and 12 years to become seriously ill, with haemorrhage and a very high temperature.

Although he gets no help from either the villagers or the Buddhist Monks, Nai See felt that he is successful in his work and succeeds in maintaining a good relationship with the villagers. He felt that the principal reason for his success was his interest in his work the unimportance of the fee. The fee depends on the nature of the sickness and the means of the patient. Patients must pay for medicine, all of which except for the vaccine Nai See makes himself.

The office, which also provides accommodation for an assistant, was decorated with pictures of the King and Queen and Prime Minister, some pictures of Buddha, and a stationary Japanese motorcycle. It appeared that there was a hurried effort to clean up a bit before the visitors were shown round, but his office, which was opened in 1969, had something of a professional air about it. It should be remembered that his practice has declined recently and that he treats a number of patients in their homes.

Nai See Lateerom is a thin, alert and composed little man with a family. He appeared to have a genuine interest in the welfare of the villagers and had no attachment to old methods as opposed to the new - indeed he would like to be able

to use both. He obviously provides a very essential service in the remote area. His principle complaint was the Government's lack of interest in his efforts. This may be to some extent unjustified as it is probably too late for him to advance his medical techniques very much. It is not possible to say how able or efficient he is but it seems that the people much prefer the local hospital, perhaps because this is cheaper for them. It would appear that in the past he has provided at least a useful service but now with a very competent district nurse and reasonably easy access to the town the people prefer to go elsewhere for treatment. In an attempt to get some idea of his competence and efficiency without creating any offence, the villagers were asked their opinion of him. Of all asked, 20% said he was not good enough, but 60% felt that he was good and did his job well. From such a random sample no conclusions should be drawn, but on taking into consideration the character and background of those who were questioned and a similar consideration of the Doctor himself the resultant impression is that he tries to do a difficult job to the best of his limited ability.

All those questioned fully realised the necessity of a Commune Doctor. One person mentioned his inability to use modern methods and the withdrawal of permission by the Government for him to give injections confirms this. A passing reference may be made to their positive response to advice regarding lavatories and nutrition and the constantly repeated complaint about the dirty bathwater which all indicates their desire to guard their health. This Doctor then is good

but not good enough as the village progresses and makes further contact with the outside world. Soon it is likely that they will be pressing for a modern doctor complete with modern ideas and equipment. As the dictionary says, Nai See is of the old school but such an idea should not be allowed to detract from the service that he gives. It may turn out that Nai See is hard to replace.

The Midwife

The organisation of professional nursing in Thailand was initiated by opening a school of midwifery at Siriraj Hospital, Bangkok in 1897 and in 1914 the second nursing school was opened at Chulalongkorn Hospital. Many more nursing schools have been established during the last two decades. At the present there are thirteen schools of nursing in Thailand which are capable of producing 700 graduates a year. In addition there are four schools of midwifery and five schools of practical nursing. In 1962, a third school of midwifery was opened at Khon Kean province in the North East to raise the annual output of midwives from 200 to 300.

There are now 5,000 midwives for the whole country and 3,000 of them are serving in health centres, in midwifery centres, and on various health projects throughout the kingdom.[2]

As the central heart of the commune, Ban Phai Yai has a midwifery centre with a small wooden building to provide a third-class(*) midwife with her office and accommodation. Less than a hundred yards up the road from the Doctor's house is a smart little building with a flagpole in front of it which flies

the Thai National Flag. This is where the local midwife lives and works. On the verandah there are two chairs for the visitors who, while waiting to talk to the midwife, may read the nutrition charts supplied by the Bear Brand Condensed Milk Company, the family planning advertisement and the chart giving details of how the midwife manages her week which respectively cover the three walls.

The midwife, Mrs. Vilai Sangchat is thirty years old and the mother of two young children. She was born in Ban Phai Yai and after completing her secondary school education she trained for eighteen months as a Midwife before returning to take up her present position. Now she has been the midwife of Ban Phai Yai for nine years.

The building where she lives and works is set in about one acre of ground donated by Mr. Grombooland who also contributed 9,357 Baht towards the cost of the construction of the centre. Another 1,013 Baht was donated by the Abbot. She has no knowledge of any help offered by the villagers as the building was built in 2504 (1961) when she was a student. Like most other buildings in the village it is of wood with a corrugated zinc roof but it is not raised high off the ground. There is a bathroom and toilet separate from the building. She and her family and a maid live in the larger portion, while the smaller part, which has a curtain dividing it from the rest, comprises her office and treatment room. Her equipment seemed to be very sparse, consisting of a set of bathroom scales, a rough couch and a few pieces of apparatus.

Most of her work is evidently conducted in her patients' homes. The chart on the wall indicated that she

spends every afternoon except Friday visiting, and on Friday mornings she gives health and hygiene instruction in the primary school. No women are normally delivered of their babies on the premises as there are no facilities - she simply checks and instructs her patients there.

The Government pays her a salary of 750 Baht a month and also provides her with a bicycle. Medicine and equipment comes from UNICEF and also the National Health Service. She is supplied with five kinds of tablets by the Government once a month. Patients are expected to pay for her services when she visits them at home but treatment at her office and all medicines are free. However there is a donation box in the office for those who would like to contribute, and she reckons that she gets about 150 Baht a year from this source, the money being used for any extras she might require. The Government has made a ruling on the amount that patients should pay, but generally they claim that they can't afford the fee and only pay what they can afford - all this is recorded and reported to the Government. The fee is 10 Baht for a visit giving no medical treatment, 30 Baht when medical treatment is included, and 50 Baht for delivering a baby. In the latter case she often only receives 5 or 10 Baht.

She only had records available for 1971 and they were as follows: - A total 2,134 patients contacted her, of these 1,722 were for home visits and 412 came to her. Eighteen babies were delivered by her in Ban Phai Yai, 69 pregnant women were checked and she visited and gave medical treatment to 45 new mothers and their babies, 45 children of a year old

and under, and 82 children aged from 2-7. She also visited 117 pregnant women, 76 young mothers, 143 children of a year or less and 124 of 2-7 years. She has no restriction on her working area and many of the above were outside Ban Phai Yai.[3]

In addition to the duties mentioned she must collect the medicines herself from the Government Health Service in Ubol and also make a monthly visit to Ubol for instruction. She said that the instruction meeting normally lasted three hours and there were many speakers to give advice. She is given no other assistance, but twice a year a Government Health Service official comes to visit her.

Like the doctor, she has no efficient emergency service but may contact Ubol by radio from the Commune Headman's office. Transport may come from Ubol but usually the patient or someone else drives her. She is officially under the supervision of a doctor in Ubol and is given some instruction by him once a month. But it is only in time of emergency, for example in an epidemic, that they work together. Although she is referred to as the midwife she does give simple treatment of a general kind and her work does perhaps extend her position to correspond to that of a district nurse in England, but it is difficult to understand how much general work she does.

She claimed to have a very good relationship with the villagers and informed me that she had never coused a death. Later some gossip was encountered when the villagers were asked their opinion of her work, and twenty people accused her of causing one or two deaths in her office. Otherwise those ques-

questioned were evenly divided in their opinion: forty felt that she was a good and active worker and forty thought she wasn't competent enough. Certainly she gave the impression of working actively. A copy of the timetable displayed on her verandah is reproduced in English below.

TIMETABLE OF THE MIDWIFE[4]

	a.m.	p.m.
Monday	check suspected pregnancies	visit patients in their homes(some ante natal advice)
Tuesday		visit patients
Wednesday	check health of pregnant women	visit patients
Thursday	give advice on nutrution	visit patients
Friday	instruct pupils in Primary School about health	Prepare medicines and equipment.

Her service is obviously very necessary and is at least appreciated by some if not all. In a small community such as this the demands on her are probably not too heavy and there seems no reason why this capable little woman should not be able to cope. She seemed to be giving of herself quite generously, like the Doctor, taking no holiday - but unlike him being at least officially free at weekends.

As the facts have been discussed so far it is clear that the subsistence economy practised by the people of the North East does not satisfy all their needs. As for a long time they have not been receiving adequate assistance from the Central Government, they got used to be dependent on inadequate traditional ways of helping themselves.

They struggle unsystematically and without technical knowledge with the development work for increasing their living standard, but with the lack of sufficient equipment and finance they cannot fully succeed.

The people are unaware of the political changes that have taken place in Thailand during the last century. They do not realize the rights inherent in their Thai citizenship, they feel they are only subjects of the Crown and their loyalty to the Government is slowly declining.

This is one of the several sources of opportunity for infiltration into village life exploited by terrorists from both inside and outside the country. Now fully realising the necessity of village security the Central Government has recently begun efforts to promote the integration of the North Easterners and the strengthening of bonds between them and the Central Thai.

The Community Development Projects are directed in the first place to those areas which are subject to subversion. The Government concentrates the bulk of available resources on satisfying a single major need, namely the construction of quality roads, and it appears to be unaware of other major needs and the desirability of more balanced development programme.

Although it could be argued that spreading the scarce resources thinly in order to satisfy several needs would result in none of the needs being satisfied adequately, the question may be raised as to why just roads? Why not agricultural development as well? This is an equally important need and its successful implementation would make a more direct and more favourable impact on the villagers. In connection with road development, why concentrate on a few large scale arterial ones that affect directly only a few villages? Why not build smaller secondary roads that would link more villages?

So far, the Government and the villagers are approaching development from different directions and this complicates the tasks involved and makes adequate solution of village problems more difficult.

CHAPTER 11

ORGANISATIONAL AND LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE AND VILLAGE PROBLEMS

This chapter is concerned with how the North East villagers traditionally handle problem situations to resolve group needs, and what are the established patterns for solving such problems.

Problem-solving is an activity that is divided into three basic processes, namely,

1. the identification and clarification of the problem at hand,
2. the formulation of a suitable solution, and
3. the implementation of the agreed plan of action.

Indeed, leadership may be defined as the capacity to influence people in problem-solving and in goal formulation and achievement. In this sense, then, it may be said that the real concern of this chapter is with patterns of village leadership.

Such a topic as patterns of village leadership does not lend itself readily to strict quantitative treatment. The present analysis, therefore, tends to be qualitative in character, with heavy reliance placed on general observational date, as well as the findings of studies conducted by different scholars. At various points in the ensuing analysis, however, pertinent results of the attitude survey will be presented.

Every human community is organised along some pattern. The overall pattern of village organisation may be labelled social organisation or social structure. Within this overall structure there are a number of sub-patterns of systems,

relating to different aspects of community life. There are, for example, the authority and leadership system, kinship system, economic system, educational system, status and prestige system and Religious system. The overall structure with its subsidiary systems, along with the associated valued and beliefs, provide the cultural framework in which leadership is shaped and nourished. To achieve genuine understanding of village leadership or the political system, or any other aspects of village life for that matter, it is necessary, therefore, to examine the more salient features of the larger village culture. Towards this task, then the analysis may now proceed.

The Secular Authority and Leadership System

At the apex of the formal secular authority and leadership structure, or the village political system, is the office of the Pooyai Ban or village Headman. Although such an office has long existed, it was only recently that it became officially recognised by the Central Government with the office holder being paid a small monthly stipend of 75 to 135 Baht.

A general election is supposedly held periodically- about once every five years - in each village to elect a new Pooyai Ban. However, once elected a Pooyai Ban generally remain in office indefinitely. The Nai Amphur (district headman) must approve his election and in addition has the power to remove him from office for reasons of incompetency or unsuitability. The Nai Amphur's real power is considerable and the respect and fear that his office evokes are of such magnitude that he can easily influence the villagers one way or the other. In the eyes of the rural people he is the embodiment of the National Government, which otherwise exists in their minds only

as a misty entity.

Between the Pooyai Ban and the Nai Amphur is the office of the Kamnan (commune headman). Generally speaking, the Kamnan is nothing more than a glorified Pooyai Ban who has been designated by fellow Headmen of the Tambon - a sub-district or commune made up of around five to sixteen villages - to serve as their chief representative in dealings with the local District Government headed by the Nai Amphur. Because the villages making up a Tambon (commune) are usually spread over a wide geographic area with connecting roads being either bad or non-existent, and since the Kamnan has his hands full administering his own village and managing at the same his own farm, the office of the Kamnan is generally not a very effective administrative link between the individual villages of the Tambon and the District Government. The individual Pooyai Ban therefore, tends to maintain direct contact with the different officials of the local District Government, consulting the Kamnan only on certain official matters.

Kaufman makes this appraisal of the position of Kamnan:

> "The commune head (Kamnan), a village headman himself but with more territorial responsibility, is actually an expendable part of the structure. His status in theory commands more respect than that of village headman, and though he is highly respected by the farmers, the headmen seem not to manifest the same deference. Indeed, he was seen in Bangkhuad only once in 1953, and approached by the village headman only twice, being by-passed

most of the time.[5]

On the other hand, there is always the exceptional Kamnan who by virtue of his personality is able to exercise considerable influence over the Pooyai Ban and residents of the several villages under his administrative charge.

The office of the Pooyai Ban and Kamnan are, then, paid part-time positions. The incumbents are usually engaged in farming on a full-time basis. The Kamnan has a paid part-time assistant (called sarawat) who usually is a farmer also. Serving under him also is a paid part-time Commune Doctor, who is not a trained medical doctor at all but one who knows a little about health matters. This person, who may be a local village quack and farmer as well, assists in recording births and deaths, reporting epidemics when they occur, disseminating pertinent health information to the people, and generally serving as a "health officer" for the Tambon. He reports to the Kamnan and the Amphur Health Officer. The Pooyai Ban, on the other hand, has one or more local assistants who serve voluntarily.

The major findings about the Pooyai Ban are briefly summarized below.

1. The vast majority of the villagers expressed approval of the manner in which their respective Pooyai Ban were discharging their official duties and responsibilities. The Pooyai Ban, in other words, enjoyed the trust and confidence of the village people.

2. The vast majority were satisfied with the manner in which the Pooyai Ban is selected.

3. On the whole a large majority of the villagers were fairly knowledgeable about the duties and responsibilities of the Pooyai Ban.

4. Most of the people thought of the Pooyai Ban as their representative to the government rather than merely a Government official stationed in the village. Less than one-fifth viewed the Pooyai Ban as being mostly a Government official. About the same proportion said the Pooyai Ban was equally a Government official and the people's representative. These results would suggest that the village people Identify the Pooyai Ban as one of them rather than being an outsider.

5. The large majority of the people thought that the Pooyai Ban either had sufficient or not enough authority to carry out his official duties.

6. Asked if the village could get along without the office of Pooyai Ban the vast majority responded in the negative. In other words the Pooyai Ban office is keenly felt by the people to be indispensable to their welfare, and that without it there would be general disorder.

7. The people were quite divided as to whether it would be desirable to place the position of Pooyai Ban on a full-time basis instead of the part time basis as it is now established. Although one-half of the people had felt the present system was satisfactory, almost as many (40%) thought the suggested change would be beneficial and desirable. The remaining 10% had

mixed fellings or no opinion.

8. When asked if they would be interested in occupying the office of Pooyai Ban, the large majority (83%) declined the honour, mostly on the ground that they do not possess the necessary qualifications for the job. Interestingly one respondent declined on the ground that he had insufficient religious merit. Only a very small percentage (6 %) expressed willingness to serve if they were elected to the job by the villagers.

These summarised findings make it clear that the villagers have an intense emotional identification with the office- not necessarily the person - of the Pooyai Ban, which they regard as indispensable to their welfare. Viewed objectively, it may be stated that the office functions as a community unifier and as a supplier of guide lines for group action and individual conduct as well. Above all, the office serves as a key institution in the solution of village problems.

Important as his office may be, however, it is obvious that the Pooyai Ban does not solve village problems alone. Problems of sufficient concern to the entire village, such as the need to build or repair a village road, a temple structure, or the school, are generally discussed and resolved by the entire adult population at meetings called by the Pooyai Ban. Such meetings, which occur at irregular intervals when the need arises, are attended by senior male and female members of the village households. Frequently, however, the Pooyai Ban would meet with a related group of problems, such as those relating to the local temple or school, which are handled by specially

established village committees of which, except the Abbot, the Pooyai Ban is almost always the leading member.

To summarise, then the office of the Pooyai Ban functions as a fulcrum in the community's continuing effort to solve common problems. But it is clear that other village personalities and institutions are involved at various crucial points in this problem-solving activity. These include above all, the recognized village leaders, the "elder statemen" so to speak. These elders tend to be heads of influential, bilateral extended family units, which usually are large in size and moderately prosperous. For convenience sake these family units may be referred to as kin groups in the present discussion. Not infrequently some of these village elders exercise far greater influence in the body politics of the village community than the Pooyai Ban. In the village studied, for instance, there was a former Pooyai Ban/Kamnan who wielded greater influence than the incumbent Pooyai Ban. He was addressed by all the villagers as "Kamnan". Of course, this man's prestige and influence derived in part from having been a Kamnan. But his continuing influence was also due to being the active head of the most influential kin group in the village. This latter observation is corroborated by the case of another former Pooyai Ban in the same village who exercised relatively little influence. In addition to being very advanced in age, his kin group had dwindled in importance.

There is, then, a select group of village elders who are consulted as a matter of course by the Pooyai Ban on all village matters of any importance. This consultation may occur with the Pooyai Ban visiting the key leaders individually

at their homes or with the village leaders coming to the Pooyai Ban's house.

There are a number of committees in the village, the most common of which are those concerned with temple and school affairs. In recent years, under the impetus of accelerated rural development efforts on the part of the Government, the roster of village committees has grown to include one concerned with health and sanitation and another with village development. The membership of these bodies tend to overlap with certain key individuals belonging to many or all of these groups. Such individuals, if they have been elected by the people themselves, obviously represent the real leadership in the community.

Tambon (Commune) Council

The Tambon is a sub-district that contains from five to sixteen villages. It is an arbitrary administrative unit that geographically may reveal the shape of a salamander. Whereas some of the villages in the same Tambon may be linked by oxcart roads, some may be completely isolated from the rest. Walking is the only means of getting to these latter villages. One wonders at times how the Tambon were ever carved out. One of the Tambon villages bears the name of the Tambon, and usually it is here that the Kamnan, head of the Tambon, resides.

A[6] series of Government edicts, dating back to 1941 and issued by the Ministry of Interior, made possible the establishment of a Tambon Council (sapha tambon) made up of representatives from each village, including the Headman and some other respected individuals. Until recently, however, there were only a handful of Tambon throughout the country where such a Council was operating actively. In most places a Tambon

Council never existed. By and large it is acknowledged by Government authorities themselves that past efforts in this connection have not been too successful. The reason for this failure is not difficult to trace. In the first place, the Tambon Council has no real budget to work with, although it allegedly receives a portion of the local improvement tax - a very small sum of money - and small amounts of subsidies from the local provincial and district Governments from time to time. Secondly, there is no strong bond of identity among the residents of all the villages making up a Tambon. Thirdly, there has never been any need for the Tambon to function as a political entity, other than serving as an administrative convenience to the Government. Above all, the Government has never given adequate support to the establishment of the Tambon Council. All this perhaps explains in part the relative ineffectiveness of the office of the Kamnan.

The Kinship System

Attention may now be directed to another aspect of the overall village social structure that is significantly related to village leadership. This has to do with the family system, a topic that was touched on briefly in the preceding section. The discussion here is restricted to only those features of the kinship or family system having direct relevance to the main purpose of the study.

Kaufman, in his study embodied in Bangkhuad, states in several places that the household, which includes a man, his wife, their unmarried children, and frequently one married son or daughter and the latter's spouse and their offspring, forms the basic socio-economic unit in the village social

structure. The household is that unit whose members pool their economic resources, eating from the same rice bin or together, and sleeping under the same roof or in adjoining houses. He stresses the importance of the household to the individual in various statements in his study, such as the following:

> "Some scholars have commented that the Thai have very little sense of family responsibility; but in Bangkhuad, responsibility toward one's family is by no means lacking....The son will not let the family name be slandered. The woman will consider the welfare of her children before remarrying, and the husband will not enter monkhood on a permanent basis, however much he would like to, until his children are grown and married, and all other family responsibilities have been met".[7]
>
> " Each morning the mother, if she has the means, will give food to the monks who pass by on their daily begging route...to bring merit to her household as well as to herself."[8]
>
> "The following instance is indicative of a certain amount of cohesiveness within the family group, exemplifying the responsibility and loyalty felt toward one's family. One candidate for village headman, who had recently been released from two years in prison, received only four votes out of a total of eighty-six: his two sister's, his wife's, and his own."[9]

John deYoung agrees with Kaufman that the household is the basic or primary social unit of the village community. But

he goes on to observe that the Thai family is not that powerful institution around which the village social organisation revolves, as is the case in traditional Japanese and Chinese societies:

> "In contrast to that of other countries of South-East Asia, the social organisation of rural Thailand does not revolve around a tightly integrated extended family or a larger kinship unit. The Thai family pattern can best be described as a loosely woven structure within which considerable variation of individual behavior is permitted. This looseness of structure is evidenced also in the larger kinship groups: relatives tend to cooperate with each other in planting and harvesting work patties, but even in a relatively small village blood-relationship lines do not have the importance that they do in other areas of South-East Asia."[10]

According to deYoung, the looseness of the kinship or family structure is partly attributable to the fact that it is only within the past half century that the Thai family, urban or rural, has had a surname. In 1916, King Vajiravudh decreed that every Thai must have a patronymic name. Villagers were obligated to choose a surname from a list prepared by the King.

Although deYoung does not pursue the analysis further for other explanations for the looseness of the Thai family system, he provides some pertinent clues. These may be found in the following statements:

1. "(The) Thai farm family is not a strict, authoritarian one as is the farm family of Japan or China. Thai farm children are brought up to show respect and

deference to the family head (the father), but his orders are not obeyed as absolute commands."[11]

2. "The social position of the Thai peasant woman is powerful; she has long had a voice in village governmental affairs; she often represents her household at village meetings when her husband cannot attend; she almost always does the buying and selling in the local markets. She not only handles the household money, but usually acts as the family treasurer and holds the purse strings."[12]

3. "The strong individualism of Thai life is seen in the handling of money brought into the family by teenage children who earn shares or a cash wage by working for other farmers."[13]

4. "Friendship plays an important role in the life of the Thai peasant, being particularly strong for the men. Friendships sometimes are described in terms either of a 'die' friend or an 'eating' friend."

5. "The Thai village youth does his own courting and makes his own choice of a mate."[14]

6. "There is no fixed rule where the young couple shall live, but the common practice is for the young man to take residence for a time in the house of the bride's parents."[15]

Statement one above indicates that the Thai village family is not structured around a dominant central authority, such as the senior male, as is the case in traditional Japan and China. Although respect and deference are shown to the father, who nominally serves as the family head, there is a great deal of behavioral latitude for other members of the family, as

indicated by statements two, three, and five above. Statement three in particular suggests that individualism is a characteristic trait of Thai personality and culture. If so, then, this would also serve to undermine family and even village solidarity. Statement four seems to suggest that the individual, especially as he advances in age, tends to go outside his family to secure enduring and meaningful companionship. Such a tendency would affect family unity adversely. The pattern of matrilocal residence, referenced in statement six, should not necessarily lead to weakening family ties, if the mother plays a dominant role in family. But important as the mother's role is, as noted in statement two, she is definitely not recognized as the family head, a position reserved for the father. Herein may lie a basic conflict in the village culture, that is contributing to the relative looseness of the Thai family structure.

Closely related to matrilocality but forming another possible contributing factor is the pattern of inheritance. Both Kaufman and deYoung agree that the family farm land is divided equally among sons and daughters when the parents pass on, but that the house, house compound, household articles, and family-owned equipment are inherited by the youngest son or, more likely, the youngest daughter. Kaufman advances the following pertinent observation:

> "Sometimes one of the older brothers who has brought his family to the house will be compelled to move out as soon as the youngest son has married, for it is considered unlucky for two children of the same household to have their families under one roof."[16]

Elsewhere in his study Kaufman makes reference to another emerging pattern of property inheritance, as revealed in the following statement:

> "Through the system of partitioned inheritance in which all children receive an equal part of the land, the acreage per capita is dwindling into plots so small in size that certain members of the household have little alternative but to sell. Meanwhile there is a trend toward primogeniture as several families have left what little land they had to the eldest son."[17]

The proximity to Bangkok and its influence of the village studied by Kaufman is probably responsible, at least in part, for the trend toward primogeniture as a rule of inheritance. The point requiring emphasis here is that generally speaking the pattern of equal inheritance by the surviving children in rural Thailand is not as rigidly defined, nor as scrupulously adhered to, as is the case of primogeniture in China and Japan. In other words, it is very susceptible to modification as circumstances dictate. This quality would seem to suggest an inherent weakness in the inheritance system that in turn is probably having an adverse effect on family unity.

Despite the looseness of the Thai family relations as evidenced in the preceding discussion, the fact remains that the family or household functions as the basic socio-politico-economic unit in the village social organisation. And although during an individual's lifetime his family ties may become subordinated to other ties, such as a friendship circle or the village monastery, the individual will vigorously honour his primary loyalty to his family, especially while he is still an act-

ive member of it. The bond that have been forged out of working the family farm together, eating together, sleeping under the same roof or adjoining houses, and sharing the joys and sorrows of living together day in and day out is something they cannot be easily breached by the individual. Moreover, the relative isolation of the village community along with the relative lack of organised groups to compete for the individual's loyalty both operate in strengthening his family attachment.

The household, as already defined, forms a part of a larger but less tightly integrated socio-politico-economic unit, the bilaterally extended family. Kaufman defines this unit as the "spatially extended family" and includes in it all persons who grew up together in the same household, plus the relatives of these household members. The latter relatives consist primarily of the spouses of the household members and their children. Stated differently, the extended family consists of several households that are linked by consanguineal and or affinal ties, whose members in varying degrees and on different occasions co-operate with each other in economic, religious-ceremonial, political, and social affairs. In a broad sense, then, the extended family forms a multi-purpose co-operative. Examples of co-operative efforts and expressions of group solidarity are cited in Kaufman's study, some of which are enumerated below along with others.

1. Child adoption occurs within the extended family, this usually following the maternal line.
2. Grown children who may be married and maintaining separate households continue to support their aged parents wherever the latter may be.
3. Extended family members borrow money from each other, at favourable terms.

4. The extended family members unite periodically to celebrate the New Year's festival and observe other festivals and ceremonies - e.g. death and marriage rites. They also share in the cost involved in these collective undertakings.

5. Members of the extended family help each other in farming by making their labour available when necessary, particularly at the time of rice transplanting and rice harvest.

6. Extended family members assist each other in house building.

7. Whenever elections are held for some village office or position, such as the office of the Pooyai Ban or membership on the wat or some other village committee, the adult members of the extended family generally vote as a group for a candidate of their preference. In the case of influential extended families, this candidate will be a senior fellow member.

8. Members of the extended family living in the same village tend to visit each other socially more frequently than with others and to confide in each other about very personal matters.

9. The related households comprising an extended family unit tend to be geographically located in a contiguous area in the village, forming thereby a neighbourhood. This geographic propinquity facilitates the visiting pattern mentioned immediately above. It goes without saying, however, that this pattern of residential proximity does not apply to

> all the extended families. And even in cases where it does apply there may be one or two households located in other parts of the village.[18]

The above examples of village behaviour patterns should be sufficient evidence of the existence of the principle under consideration, that the extended family, consisting of households linked by kinship ties on both the father's and mother's sides, functions as an important socio-politico-economic unit in the village social structure.

To put it more bluntly, what is there in the household and extended family system that has any significance to village leadership and villagers' efforts to solve common community problems? The answer is partly provided in the discussion of the secular authority and leadership system in an earlier section. There it was noted that the Village Headman regularly consults other recognised leaders in managing village affairs, and that these leaders tend to be the senior males or heads of influential extended family units in the village. From the influential kinship units in other words, come the true community leaders who collectively play a leading role in solving common village problems and in resolving common group needs.

The kinship system also supplies important guidelines for individual conduct in many different areas of life. Among other guidelines it obligates kinsmen to support each other in time of need, whether this need relates to, or involves, economic, political, religious, or other considerations. Within the kinship system, then, there is lodged one of the most important motivating forces of life for the individual Thai villager.

John deYoung is essentially correct in saying that the Thai family or kinship system is not that powerful institution

around which the village social organisation revolves. The only institutional complex that qualifies as such in Thai rural society relates to religion. Granting deYoung's observation here, the fact still remains that the household and the extended family continue to operate as basic socio-politico-economic units in the larger village social structure.

The Economic System

The analysis in this section, following the pattern laid down in the preceding sections, is limited to an examination of certain relevant forms of economic behaviour in the villages social structure. For special studies dealing with special economic considerations, such as farm production and marketing problems, the reader is referred to, among other sources, the numerous monographs in the Kasetsart University's publication series titled "Kasetsart Economic Reports." One of these monographs, written by Jancis F. and Millard F. Long and others and dated September, 1963, is titled Economic and Social Conditions among Farmers in Changwad Khon Kaen - henceforth to be referred to as the "Long Study". It contains some pertinent data that will be utilized in the present analysis. Despite what has just been said, a broad review of the economic conditions in the Northeast is in order.

Thailand's economy is based on agriculture, which in turn revolves around rice-growing. This is particularly true of the Northeast where glutinous or sticky rice is grown and eaten almost exclusively by a large majority of the farmers. It is only in the past decade that the Northeast farmers have begun to grow cash crops, notably kenaf but also including corn, watermelon, and peanuts. But this is on a very limited scale and

the income deriving from this source is relatively small. The farms are characteristically family operated and small in size. For the 100 households in the survey sample, for instance, the farm holdings averaged between 16 and 20 rais (approximately 6½ to 8 acres).

The finding of the Long study is that in Khon Kaen Province the average farm holding, which included land owned and rented, was 27 rai (or approximately 11 acres).

Another typical feature of farming in the North-east is that it is, at best, only slightly above the subsistence level. As the Long study states, "Many farmers seek only to provide food and cash to maintain their household."(p19) However, elsewhere in the same study is found the following statement: "(The) Khon Kaen farmers (have) what might be called a semi-subsistence outlook. They fall between the category of subsistence and market farmers, being primarily concerned with raising food for their own consumption but, as so amply demonstrated by the kenaf boom, also interested in crops for sale."(p57

It is generally agreed that the North East, containing 15 provinces and over 9 million people or one-third of the nation's population, is economically the poorest region of Thailand. The Long study estimates the average annual per capita income for the whole of Khon Kaen province to be around 1,100 Baht (£22), which may be compared with the comparable figure of 2,200 Baht (£44) reported for the nation as a whole. The income for the Khon Kaen farmers considered apart from the town dwellers is even lower, amounting to 737 Baht (£14.75). These estimates of the Long study are based on the imputed value of the rice and vegetables produced at home; non-cash income is excluded from consideration.

In connection with farm family income, reference may be made to another study. This is the "Household Expenditure Survey" of the North East Region conducted in 1962 by the National Statistical Office. The results of this survey appear in a special publication bearing the title of the survey. Although this survey represents the only systematic coverage of this subject matter for the whole North East Region, it unfortunately contains a number of serious shortcomings. For farm families, in contrast to families living in towns, the survey reports that the average monthly income amounted to 249 Baht (£4.98) and the average monthly expenditure totalled 406 Baht (£8.12). The corresponding per annum figures are 2988 Baht (£59.76) income and 4872 Baht (£97.44) expenditure. The latter expenditure figure included the amount of 308 Baht for living essentials, gifts, contribution and taxes and the value of the rice taken from the family storage bin for consumption, estimated at 98 Baht. These figures show that the average farm family experienced a monthly deficit of1157 Baht. There obviously is an error involved here. This no doubt stems from the fact that the calculation of family income does not take into account the value of the rice and other farm produce produced by the family during the year. This is a most serious omission in as much as rice production is the principal economic activity in the area. The error is compounded when the value of the family-produced rice taken out of storage for consumption is included in the calculation of the family expenditure.

At the very end of the survey report, an adjustment is made without, however, any reference to the previous calculation. Here the value of the family-produced rice and farm product, including, presumably, services rendered for

which no cash was involved, is added to cash income, and the estimated average annual per capita income for villages in the North East now appears as 890 Baht (£17.80). Still later the National Statistical Office ussued a special one-page mimeographed "Note on Income and Savings" in which the annual per capita farm income for the North East is further increased to 1,020 Baht (£20.½). For the entire North East region the revised estimate is 1,150 Baht (£30.½).

Another estimate of farm income is advanced in Hans Platenius' The Northeast of Thailand, Its Problems and Potentialities. This estimate is derived by dividing the gross value of agricultural products of the North East in 1960 by the corresponding number of agricultural households, resulted in a per capita figure of 488 Baht (£9.76) income from agriculture. It is probably closer to the latter figure. Whatever the real income may be, the significance of these and other studies for the present analysis is that they all indicate that the North East represents an economically depressed area.

Despite the relative poverty of the area, it is particularly significant that very few farm families do not own land. Of the 100 families covered in this study only one claimed he owned no land. There is, in other words, no mass of landless peasants as found in many developing countries.

Other significant features of the North East vitally affecting its economy may be mentioned. During the monsoon season that roughly extends from June to September there is an excessive amount of water, frequently resulting in the flooding and destruction of valuable rice fields. In addition the rice fields are regularly attacked by various pests, such as the stem bore and field crabs. The quality of the soil

varies from place to place, but generally speaking it is reported to be poor. During the dry season that roughly extends from January to May, farming practically comes to a halt for there is no water. Rice, the mainstay of the economy, is grown and harvested just once a year, or during the monsoon season. Some cash crops are grown during the dry season, such as kenaf or corn, but as indicated earlier, the income derived from this source for most farm families is relatively small.

Actually, during the dry period many villagers, young and old, men and women, disengage themselves from their farms and undertake various types of non-farming occupations in an effort to supplement their income. This frequently means leaving the family and village for varying periods of time and travelling to different places, even to Bangkok or Laos. These extra-farming pursuits include: selling, buying, and reselling draught animals, such as buffalos (by men); peddling cloth and ther factory-produced goods and medicine on a commission basis (men); working as a labourer in an urban area, including Bangkok (by men and women); hiring oneself out within the village vicinity for various types of work, from digging or cleaning ponds to carpentry; peddling food of various sorts, especially at temple festivals held in surrounding villages (by women primarily); spinning and weaving by women; fishing in nearby ponds and streams (men and women).

With this background sketch of the economic conditions prevailing in the North East region, attention may be directed to topics of more direct concern to the present analysis.

In the treatment of the kinship in the preceding section, it was emphasized that the household and extended family both operate as basic socio-politico-economic units in the village social structure. The household is naturally the more compact entity of the two, with the members working and living together, sharing life experiences, and helping each other in every conceivable way.

Although the extended family is not as closely integrated as the household, it functions collectively in a variety of important ways. For example, the members of an extended family are expected to fulfil the following economic obligations:

a. Help each other in farming, particularly in rice transplanting and rice harvesting;

b. Help each other in house construction, pond digging, and certain other types of work that require more labour then one household can provide;

c. Loan money to each other in time of need;

d. Rent land to each other at favourable terms;

e. Share the cost of holding special ceremonies and rites (e.g. commemorating marriage and death within the group) as well as participation in these events;

f. Contribute to the support of aged parents and needy members generally;

g. Accord each other preference when recruiting hired labour;

h. Counsel with each other in the division or sale of family land or the purchase of additional land and generally in all matters relating to the economic welfare of the extended family.

It is difficult to assess the precise degree to which the extended family fulfills the functions listed above. In the earlier treatment of the kinship system it was acknowledged that the Thai family system, incorporating both the household and the extended family unit, does not represent that powerful institutional structure around which the village social organization revolves, as is the case in traditional Japanese and Chinese societies. At the same time, however, the authorities agree on its relative importance in the overall village social structure, particularly in connection with economic activities. Since there appears to be some ambiguity on this subject, this matter may be examined further.

Kaufman states that "The modern Bankhuad household does not depend upon the extended family in agricultural matters and the extended family does not form the economic unit." In the same paragraph, however he makes the following statement:

"When aid is needed in any phase of the rice cultivation, solicitation of help... is first done in the neighbourhood of the rice farm irrespective of family ties. As often happens, closely related families occupy contiguous areas and are the first to be asked, not because of family affinity, but merely because of proximity." [19]

This latter observation begs the question as to whether it was not family affinity that led to related house-

holds being located in a common neighbourhood in the first place. Even though geographic proximity may be admitted as an important factor in the development of close economic ties between households, the fact still remains that the households in a neighbourhood tend to be related. Thus the only reasonable conclusion that can be drawn is that kinship ties and spatial propinquity are both important.

It must be remembered that Bangkhuad village, the study of which formed the basis of Kaufman's observations, presents a very special case. Located as it is on the outskirts of Bangkok, only 25 miles from the heart of the Capital, it has been under heavy urban influences, and over the years this has produced fundamental changes in the village culture. Many of these changes are nearly summarised in the last chapter of Kaufman's work. Thus, Kaufman explains the weakening of the economic ties among related households in Bangkhuad as follows:

> "This was not the case thirty years ago. There was then a definite relation between kinship affinity and degrees of obligation. However, the farms were smaller, and it was more important for both social and economic reasons that the (extended) family remain a cohesive unit."[20]

In summary, it may be said that in the matter of economic co-operation among related village households the bulk of the North East villages come closer to the situation that characterised Bangkhuad thirty years ago than that obtaining today.

There are various types of voluntary assistance villagers extend to one another. Kaufman identifies two types

prevalent in the Central Plains. One, called Khauraeng, and basically non-reciprocal, is restricted to wealthy households who employ it in connection with rice cultivation. Tenants and debtors are approached, as well as relatives. In exchange for their labour the workers are furnished special food and even rice-wine by the host. Khauraeng is also employed in the construction of a new house, except that it is practiced by rich and poor alike and involves intimate friends and relatives.

The other type of help identified by Kaufman is called Khawraeng, or reciprocal labour exchange. It is also known as longkaek in the Central Plains, Mua-torb in Northern Thailand, and naa-wan in the North East. This is the more common form of volantary assistance rendered in connection with any phase of rice cultivation. Help is received from neighbouring families and relatives and close friends of the household. In this form of voluntary help the host household is obliged not only to provide food for the workers but also to return the help received in kind at some future date.

According to the survey results, four out of ten villages expressed a negative attitude towards practicing mutual labour exchange, preferring the hire farm workers when necessary. Although more villagers favoured the practice, this totals over five out of ten people. One would have expected a larger proportion of affirmative responses.

The observational date covering actual behaviour indicate that for a given year the villagers as a whole are involved in the practice in one way or another, either as donors or recipients of labour exchange, or both. As household may help another household in rice transplanting or har-

vesting one year, but this help may not be reciprocated until the following year, if and when the need arises. In other words, the exchange of farm labour is a continuing transaction that extends over an indefinite period of time and is not necessarily consummated on a reciprocal basis in a given year. What is significant here is that although mutual labour exchange is not practiced on a regular and formal basis it represents a major village institution available for use by the villagers when the need occurs. Even when farm labourers are hired, these usually burn out to be relatives or close friends for the most part.

There are other forms of village co-operation that are more or less economic in character. One of these involves the entire village co-operating in the construction or repair of public roads, bridges, ponds or reservoirs, schools, hall, well, sanitary latrines, and other structures. This co-operation usually takes the form of labour contribution, but frequently it also involves monetary donations. In many parts of the North East this form of village co-operation is becoming more prominent under the influence of the national community development programme.

Reference will be made to the village-wide co-operative arrangements for feeding the monks, maintaining the temple buildings and related structures, and generally underwriting the cost of operating temple activities during the entire year, in part two.

In many villages there is a Co-operative Credit Society to which many villagers belong. Initially promoted by the former Ministry of Co-operatives, it now comes under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of National Development.

This society, which has not been very effective in terms of its stated objective, confines its activities to extending small loans to its farmer members.

In addition to the Co-operative Credit Society there is in some villages a Farmers' Association, an organisation promoted by the Department of Rice of the Ministry of Agriculture. Although conceived as an all-purpose co-operative, this farmers' group today is primarily established for the purpose of purchasing Government-subsidised chemical fertilizer, the usage of which in rice cultivation is gaining popularity.

Finally, in many villages there is an informal funeral association to which all resident families tacitly belong. When a death occurs every village family is expected to contribute a small sum of money to the family in bereavement. The minimum amount of the funeral contribution in the villages studied was generally agreed to be five Baht. The Pooyai Ban generally serves informally as the head of the village funeral association. In some villages other individuals may be designated as accountants responsible for collecting the funeral donations which are turned over to the family in grief. The association members assist in various ways in arranging the funeral rites, including the construction of the coffin.

These, then, constitute the major forms of economic co-operation operating at various levels in the village social structure, with the household at the base, the extended family and neighbourhood group a step above, and the community representing the highest level. As one radiates outward from the household to the community-at-large the frequency and intensity

of involvement in co-operative enterprises diminish.

Upon the impetus of the national community development programme and other Government-directed rural development efforts, village-wide co-operation is being intensified and accelerated, particularly in the North East. The co-operative undertakings include the construction or repair of communal roads, bridges, wells, ponds school and other public structures. Yet, in a special survey conducted in 1964 among community development workers in nine provinces in the North East, these Government workers complained that one of the most serious obstacles in promoting village improvement projects was the lack of co-operation among the villagers being helped.

These and other studies point out the apparent difficulty of eliciting villagers' co-operation at the community level. Even where the co-operation is designed to provide obvious economic benefits to the farmers, appearing in such organised forms as a co-operative credit society or a land co-operative, the villagers' response at best has been lukewarm and, worse still, the results in terms of achieving the stated objectives have been most disappointing. The finding of this study is that economic co-operation based on kinship or close friendship ties, and restricted to the household, extended family, and neighbourhood level, tends to be more successful and effective than co-operation involving the entire community. Kinship and friendship ties, in other words, represent a powerful force motivating people to action in economic or other endeavours. Another powerful motivating force, of course, relates to religion, a matter that will be discussed in part two.

In brief, then efforts to elicit the co-operation of the entire village community in conection with any development programme must be based on the motivational structure of the village culture if they are to achieve any degree of success. Such a structure includes not only those values mentioned above but also the established village practice in handling problems affecting the entire community. The latter includes, for example, the established leadership/authority system and the status/prestige system.

Educational and Status-Prestige Systems

These two aspects of the village culture are combined in one section since these topics will be dealt with very selectively and briefly.

Educational System

In practically every village today there is a Government-operated primary school that extends from the first to the fourth grades. And practically all of the school age youngsters- around eight to twelve years - are enrolled in the school. The number of teachers attached to the village school will naturally vary according to the size of the school population. A small village school may have as few as one or two teachers.

Although the older villagers do not attach any great importance to education as a whole, they want to have their children attend the local village school. Villagers are sufficiently interested in their local school to contribute labour and even money towards its construction or repair. The large majority of the village youngsters usually complete four years of primary schooling and are immediately enlisted for

work on the family farm. Only few of them continue their education in junior school.

The school teachers are generally highly respected by the village people, young and old alike. The principal, especially if he is a native of the village, is usually active in village affairs generally not merely restricted to educational matters. Frequently he is a member of various village community. In some instances school teachers operate their own farms in addition to teaching regularly. This places them on a common footing with the local farmers, resulting in extending their sphere of influence among the latter. If the school teacher, particularly the principal, is not a native of the village and has no sizable number of close relatives in the same village, as is frequently the case, his extensive influence cannot be expected.

Status-Prestige System

Since this topic has been touched on in one way or another in the preceding sections of this chapter, the effort here will be restricted to presenting a brief summary.

In his study of the Central Plains, village of Bang-khuad, Kaufman observed that the "abbot is undoubtedly the most influential, the most respected, and this the most important individual in the community". Ranking next to the abbot and senior monks are the following individuals: Village Headman (Pooyai Ban), school principal, village elders who are heads or senior members of influential extended families, former monks, wealthy farmers, and those with special talents, such as the commune doctor. No more need be said about first class which will be discussed in part two and the next two classes, of

individuals, since they have already been described. A word, however, may be said about the last three.

Former monks, especially those with long years of service, are highly respected by the villagers. As for those possessing special talents, the commune doctor is perhaps the most notable example. Carpenters represent another case in point. It is not difficult to understand why such persons would be regarded by the villagers with some degree of respect.

The status system in any society tells much about that society's basic values and attitudes. Thus, the village monks are regarded highly because they are instrumental, nearly indispensable, in the fulfilment of one of the most fundamental needs of the people, namely, the acquisition of religious merit. The village Headman is respected because in addition to performing a useful group function and personifying the supreme sucular authority in the community, he embodies in himself some of the most desired personality attributes. These qualities include honesty, loyalty to the village people, generosity and helpfulness, general knowledge, ability to get along with all kinds of people, and fairness in village dealings.

The school principal and senior teachers are respected principally because it is believed that they possess special knowledge and wisdom. The village elders, as senior representatives of influential extended families, are highly regarded because kinship relations play an important role in village life generally.

The village quack and others with special talents assume some measure of importance in the community since they dispense unique services vitally needed by the people.

In the status-prestige system of the village culture, then, is lodged some of the most powerful motivating forces of a positive nature, which stimulate individual action and group behaviour generally.

The Religious System

If the amount of resources and efforts expended in connection with some activity can be taken as a measure or index of the latter's relative importance in the cultural life of the village people, then there can be little question that religious concern ranks unchallenged at the very top. Among other sources providing substantial documentary evidence for this observation, four of them may be significant. They are Howard Kaufman's Bangkhuad, A Community Study in Thailand (1969), John deYoung's Village Life in Modern Thailand (1966), William Klausner's Popular Buddhism in Northeast Thailand (1962) and S.J. Tambiah's Buddhism and the Spirit Cults in Northeast Thailand (1970). This in essence forms subject matter of part two to which attention may now be directed.

FOOTNOTES

* "Commune"here refers to a group of villagers, usually from five to fifteen in number.

(*) The status of midwife is governed by the length of her training. "Third-class" implies a one year course of instruction.

1. "Village Health and Sanitation Project", Thailand Year Book, 1968, p. 247.

2. ibidem p. 235.

3. Record of the Midwifery Centre of Ban Phai Yai, 1971.

4. ibidem

5. Kaufman, H.K., Bangkhuad: A Community Study in Thailand, Locust Valley, N.Y.: J.J. Augustin, 1969.

6. "Village Government", Thailand Year Book, 1968, p. 18.

7. Kaufman, H.K. Bangkhuad: A Community Study in Thailand, Locust Valley N.Y.: Augustin, 1969, p. 23.

8. ibidem

9. ibidem

10. John E. deYoung, "Family and Household", Village Life in Modern Thailand, University of California Press, Berkeley and Loss Angeles, 1966, p. 25.

11. ibidem p. 24.

12. ibidem

13. ibidem p. 24-25.

14. ibidem p. 61.

15. ibidem p. 64.

16. Kaufman H.K., Bankhuad: A Community Study in Thailand, Locust Valley, N.Y.: J.J. Augustin, 1969, p. 22.

17. ibidem p. 64.

18. ibidem

19. ibidem p. 31.

20. ibidem

PART 2

THE MOTIVATIONAL QUALITIES OF BUDDHISM

CHAPTER III

The Behavioural Consequences of the Concept of Merit

In investigating whether religious motivation can be effectively manipulated to bring about social and economic change in Thai rural districts we need to scrutinize the behavioural consequences of the concept of "merit" (boon) which is the operational principle of Thai Buddhism. The concept of "Merit", in religious terms, can best be understood against the background of the notion of Karma, the Buddhist law of cause and effect, that states that every act has some ultimate reward or punishment attached to it, either in this life or in the next. This is succinctly expressed in the following quotation:[1]

> Our merit is the result of what we do, say and feel. The good that we may do and the reward that we may receive is merit (boon). Evil choices and the punishment they bring us is demerit "Baab".

In general it can be said that all actions taken in accordance with the Buddhist Teaching (Dhamma) result in merit. Merit, therefore, is more than a concept. It is a way of behaviour and an abstract good that can be acquired by appropriate action, resulting in a feeling of cultural and psychological well-being.

According to the monks, ten ways of acquiring merit are recognized, of which the first three, "the Great Law",

encompass the others. In order of increasing difficulty these three are: to give alms (thaan); to respect the religious rules (sila) to cultivate, control and develop the mind; meditation with the purpose of understanding the Dhamma (paawanaa), which is mental culture in the full sense of the term. The meditation aims at cleansing the mind of impurities and disturbances, such as lustful desires, hatred, ill-will, while increasing effort to do good, the analytical faculty, confidence, joy, tranquility, leading finally to the attainment of highest wisdom, which sees the nature of things as they are, and realizes the Ultimate Truth, Nirvana. The lesser ways are: to have reverence for and to pay respect to elders; to help other people; to share merit with others; to strive after the knowledge of good and evil, and the truth.

But whatever the learned monks may hold merit to be, we will have to investigate what merit means in behavioural terms and how merit is understood by the society and the individuals who live within it. To acquire or to make merit (tham bun) is certainly one of the most frequently heard phrases in Thailand. Without doubt, merit and its Karmatic consequences constitute a salient element in the Thai cognitive system. Moreover, there is no doubt that these concepts are important elements of the Thai motivational system. A meritorious life means a gratifying life, whatever the Karmatic consequences. Merit resulting from the right behaviour is a goal in itself, but the interpretation and understanding of merit vary widely throughout society.

At the national level, members of the Sangha (governing body of the monks), members of the Government and members

of the influential Buddhist Association now often interpret merit and merit making behaviour as conducive to nation-building and modernization. Social and humanitarian service is interpreted as morally good and compatible with the Dhamma, and meritorious as such. Thus it is argued that community development activities, such as the building of schools, wells and roads, earn as much merit as the construction of temples, because they bring about progress and call for co-operation.

Both high-and-low ranking monks are actively engaged in and prepare for social welfare activities; an example of this is found in the course syllabuses and the activities carried out under the guidances of the Buddhist Centres in the North East.[2]

The Buddhist Studies Centres and their community development programmes undertaken by Buddhist monks in various provinces in the North East bear similarities to the many voluntary service programmes is existence today. The main difference would seem to be that the Buddhist Studies Centres have more clearly defined administrative systems, and the objectives of each programme are more specific. In the provinces where there are Buddhist Studies Centres the monks have three major areas of duties, namely the regular provincial Sangha administration, the Buddhist monks' traditional duties towards the people, and the Centre's social service programmes.

To make clear the major areas of duties of the provincial Sangha we have to discuss what actions it is engaged in. Prior to the Sangha Act B.E. 2485 (1942) the Sangha administration was clearly divided into four branches, each branch being the responsibility of a Sangha Minister at the national

level, and at the provincial level there was an officer in charge of each branch. Under the provisions of the present Sangha Act B.E.2505 (1962) , all the administration falls on the shoulders of the Supreme Patriarch who administers through the "Mahathera Samagom" (the Sangha Supreme Council), while at the provincial level all responsibilities rest upon the Provincial Chief Monk, who very often is of an advanced age. It is true, however, that Clause 22 of the Sangha Act, B.E. 2505 makes provisions for the appointment by the Sangha Supreme Council of deputy chief monks - at the regional, provincial, amphur and Tambon (district and commune) levels - in order to relieve the chief monk of some of the burden of his work. In practice it often happens that the deputy does not have clearly defined responsibilities and as a rule only has occasional tasks to do when called upon to help by the Chief monk.

Apart from the official matters mentioned above, Provincial Sanghas are engaged in traditional duties towards the people. This aspect of Buddhist monks' work has been handed down through generations of men without any formulated system. Monks simply oblige when asked to attend various functions. All the year round townspeople or villagers have such functions as housewarming, weddings, business inaugurations, and so forth, and one of the essential features of such functions is the presence of Buddhist monks who undertake the religious part of the function. They usually recite a Buddhist chant, give a sermon, or else supervise religious rites. When inviting monks to attend these functions people's first choice would be some well known and highly esteemed monk. Failing

this they will choose the monks they know well personally, who may even be related to the family. Some, however, leave the choice entirely to the abbot.

Because most people like to have well known and highly respected monks for their functions, the provincial Chief Monk and those with administrative responsibility tend to be in great demand. This is particularly true of those monks who are both senior Sangha officials and good preachers. Often they are invited to distant villages, which means spending the night away, in order to give sermons.

There are no rules or regulations laid down as regards this aspect of monks' work. If they can they usually are glad to comply with people's wishes, because they feel that in so doing they gain merit for themselves and achieve some good for the people.

Most monks can recite Buddhist chanting, but there are few who can deliver an extempore sermon effectively. These monks are not only very much sought after as preachers but they often have administrative and teaching duties as well.

Apart from attending ceremonies of various kinds senior monks with administrative responsibilities often have to spend a great deal of time receiving people who come to them for advice. Some monks have visitors all day long, but others , to ensure that they get some rest, put up a notice of their counselling hours. Receiving visitors may not seem to be such hard work, but it can take up a great deal of time and be very tedious.

With such chores all the year round, drawing on his time and energy, the Provincial Chief Monk inevitably finds his official duties - in Sangha administration, education,

propagation of Buddhism and controlling Wat (monastery) property - a great burden, which requires more personnel than is available at present.

As it is generally known, rural development has been one of the major efforts of the government in recent years. Villages in remote and depressed areas have been the main target in the government's community development project, and government officials have been sent out to help people in faraway villages. These officials always make a point of contacting the local monks, especially the Tambon Chief Monk or the abbot of the Village Wat, at least to pay their respects according to the Thai Custom, but more often in order to gather information and seek advice.

Monks are in a position to understand the villagers at least as well as government officials at the village level -- such as the Kamnan, the village headman or the schoolteachers. This is because villagers go to the monks with their problems, and also because the village wat often serves as the community centre where people gather and discuss village affairs. If development officials want to familiarize themselves with the problems and affairs of the local people, they can do no better than meet and have discussions with the monks.

In addition to supplying information to government officials, the monks can also sometimes help to initiate development programs themselves. Good examples are the abbot of Wat Ban None Lan, Utoompornpisai, Sriskes, and the abbot of Ban Phai Yai, Muong Samsib, Ubolrajdhani, without whose initiative and support the greater part of the various development schemes for the villages would not have been possible.

It must be mentioned, however, that monks vary in their attitudes to community development. There are a small number who feel that monks should not be involved with government development activities, but even these, though they do not want to be involved, do not obstruct. It has been estimated that 25% of all monks can be fully relied on for active support, 50% can be moderately relied on, and 25% cannot be expected to help at all.[3]

The proportion of monks who help in development work, given at 75% is high, considering the fact that they do so of their own accord without any clearly defined policy from the central Sangha Administration.

As for the monks who do not as yet participate in community development activities, it is probably because they feel uncertain as regards the Sangha towards the social changes taking place in their respective community first. There may, of course, be some personal reasons behind it as well.

What is worth noting is that monks have become involved in village development schemes of their own accord, without any formal decisions on the part of the Sangha Administration. This surely shows that the Sangha and the lay society are in fact inseparable, and any social changes brought about inevitable affect the Sangha as well.

The First Buddhist Studies Centre in the North East

In discussing the Buddhist Studies Centres in the North East which are new Sangha organizations concerned with rural development, the Centre in Ubol will be taken as an example.

Second only to the Twin City of Bangkok and Dhonburi, Ubolrajdhani is the province with the biggest population in the country. After observing relations between government officials in charge of development progremme and monks in the villages for some time, the Sangha of Ubol felt that there was a need to help local monks and novices to arrive at a better understanding of the government's aims and methods. It was strongly felt that such understanding on the part of local monks and novices was essential for the government's efforts to have good results and for the villagers themselves to achieve progress. The question to what extent and in what way monks whould help in community development projects, however, was one that called for careful consideration, and Theras of the provincial level felt obliged to give advice and guidance to local monks and help them to participate in development activities within the bounds of the Vinaya Rules. As Ubol was a province in the Accelerated Rural Development Program, the need to ensure that monks understood the government's objectives and were ready to give co-operation was all the greater. The Sangha at the provincial level consequently felt that there was a need to lay down principles of co-operation, formulate practical rules and provide guidance to monks. Such a step, it was felt, would help monks to work with a clear understanding of what they were doing, and the result would be beneficial both to the monks themselves and the community.

Such a step, however, would involve a great deal of manpower in order to be really effective. It could not be attempted as part of the normal course of Sangha administration, because the Provincial Chief Monk of each province was already overburdened with routine duties. Also, to be part of the

official channel of operation, the scheme would have to be directed from the central administration and the result sould be a great waste of time and a feeling among the local monks that the work was something ordered from higher levels and not their own work, and they would react to it as they do to all routine Sangha instructions, working only and when they receive an order. In the proposal of the two Buddhist universities, Mahchulalongkorn -rajavidhyalaya and Mahamakut, to have graduate monks do two years' practical work in the provinces prior to receiving their bachelor's degree, Phravirojratanobon, the Vice Sangha-Governor of Ubol saw an excellent opportunity of combining the two schemes. If these graduate monks could be involved, there would no longer be a personnel problem.

In B.E. 2507 (1964) a request was sent to each of the two universities for a graduate monk to work on the new project. Two monks, one from Mahachulalongkornrajavidyalaya one from Maha makut, were assigned to Wat Thung Srimuang, Ubolrachdhani. However, admirable though their work proved to be, it was clear that the two graduate monks alone could not operate a full Sangha guidance programme for the entire province. It was then that the Sangha of Ubol decided that a new unit, designed specially to provide guidance to monks in the villages and this help them to give the right kind of support and co-operation to government officials, should be formed.

In that year, B.E. 2507 (1964) a meeting of the Provincial Sangha was held at Wat Manivanaram, chaired by the Provincial Chief Monk of Ubol, and attended by the Amphur (district) Chief Monks, Tambon (commune) Chief Monks, Sangha

School Principals, and their representatives. At this meeting it was decided to establish an experimental centre to be called 'Ubol Buddhist Studies Centre'. It was further decided that the two graduate monks should help to organize and run the centre, and as they were already stationed at Wat Thung Srimuang this Wat should house the centre.

Objectives of the Centre

Becuase it was conceived as a special unit of work designed to help relieve the burden on the Provincial Chief Monk, and to alleviate the shortage of personnel, care was taken to avoid overlapping with regular Sangha activities.

Broadly speaking, the Centre's objective is twofold: to promote major Sangha programmes, and to promote Sangha's contribution to the government's and the people's development efforts.

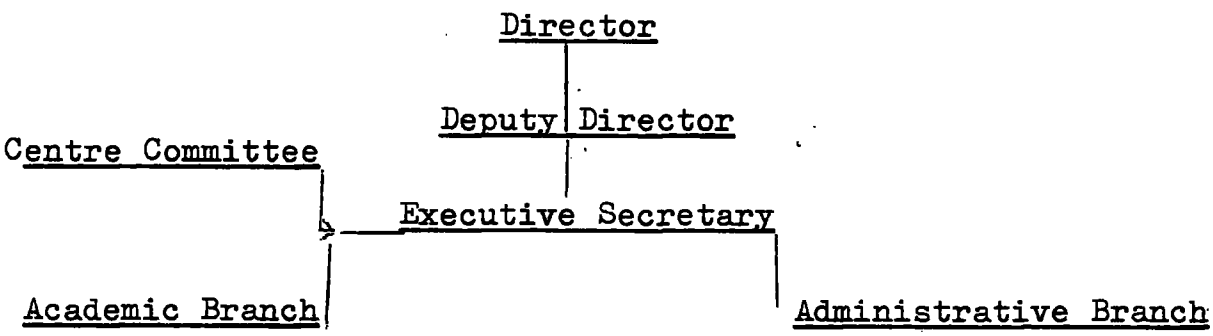
With regard to the promotion of Sangha programme, the Centre has adhered to the principle of not interfering with the Sangha's regular activities. The effort on this front, then, has been directed mainly towards better understanding and a higher standard of education for monks in administrative and teaching positions. Arrangements have been made to have qualified instructors, mainly from the Department of Religious Affairs, to give talks to monks at various levels. Pariyattidharm (Buddhist Studies) teachers have benefitted from training courses and grants to purchase educational aids and equipment.

As regards promoting the Sangha's contributions to the government's and the people's development efforts, the centre's main aim has been to work closely with government officials and to give all possible help to government officials

who try to help the villagers. At the same time efforts have been made to supply government officials with accurate information pertaining to the needs of the people. To ensure that the monks' effort to liaise between government officials and the people remain within the bounds of the monkhood, the centre arranged to have talks on the subject by eminent authorities, such as the Regional Chief Monk, the Director-General of the Department of Religious Affairs, at a number of meetings.

It should be emphasized that the Centre's programme was conceived as an experimental one, and it was based on the principle of not interfering with either the Sangha or the government activities, but aiming chiefly at bringing about co-operation and a working relationship which is beneficial to both parties and at the same time staying within the limits of the Vinaya Rules.

Organizational Structure



Publication Section	Public Relations
Library Service	Registry
Training	Procurement

The Provincial Chief Monk is the Director of the Centre ex-officio, and the Deputy Chief Monk the Deputy Director, likewise ex-officio. The Committee is composed of all Amphur Chief Monks, while the Executive Secretary and heads of the two branches are individual monks with suitable qualifications. For the experimental stage of the project the two graduate monks were appointed heads of the Academic and the Administrative Branches. The Executive Secretary has authority to administer and delegate work in accordance with the provisions of the Centre Rules.

With the exception of the library service, with its very inadequate stock of some 500 books, all the sections have carried out fairly substantial programs of activities. The Training Section in particular has been operating with especially impressive results.

At the beginning it was a policy of the Centre not to have long-term planning, but to keep watching and studying current problems and plan short term programmes to suit. These

programmes were one year in duration, or even shorter.

The first pilot project of the Centre was a one-year undertaking. It involved the training of 120 Paryat-tidharm (Buddhist teaching) teachers from remote areas. After the training course which lasted 30 days the trainees were expected to return to their villages and make use of what they had learnt during the course in their effort to help the people and co-operate with government officials. The second phase of the project was an evaluation of the trainees' work. 21 three-strong teams were involved in this part of the project. Before sending out the evaluation teams the Centre contacted all the District Officers of the Amphur to be covered through the governor, sending them credentials of the evaluation team members, complete with photographs. At the same time the monks themselves carried a copy of the letter of credentials which they showed to their respective District officer upon arrival. This proved to be a successful approach, for all the monks were warmly received and generously helped by the District Officers and other officials. The monks moved from area to area according to plan, collected the information needed and returned to the Centre to prepare their reports. The third phase of the project, which we called 'An Assistance Programme for Pariyattidharm Teachers', involved a careful study of the findings of Phase Two and an attempt to solve the problems found by the evaluation teams. Thirty-nine monks, or 'Pariyattidharma Teachers', who were all good preachers and were held in high regard by people in their own villages, were selected and subsequently trained in three subject areas: social studies, development and religion.

Instructors were from the two Buddhist Universities and the Department of Religious affairs. After the training the thirty-nine trainees returned to the thirty-nine chosen areas in the province and operated along the lines suggested to them during the training course. It must be mentioned at this point that the monks were warned against inflicting information or knowledge upon the people directly but were urged to take special care to infuse the knowledge and information they wished to impart in their sermons or conversations with the villagers. At the same time they were expected to gather information of the people's condition and report back to the Centre.

The pilot project took nine months to complete. Every three months the monks on assignments were required to send reports to the Centre. It was found that the reports were very satisfactory and their summary is presented below.

A summary of the Reports from the 39 Monks on special Assignments[5]

1. The monks contacted and enlisted help from 94 Government units.

2. The monks consulted government authorities on 84 matters.

3. The areas of operation covered 19 Amphur and 188 Tambol (commune).

4. The monks on assignments have regular positions and duties as follows:

- as Pariyattidharm teachers - 32
- as Tambol Chief Monks - 9
- as Abbots - 8
- as Secretaries to Amphur Chief Monks - 3

- as ordination officiating monk - 1
- teaching Dharma classes all through the 3 month period on an average of 18 hours per day, or 1620 hours altogether;
- teaching Pali on an average total of 43 hours per day, or 3870 hours altogether;
- teaching Pali Matayom (the Buddhist secondary school) 3 hours a day, or 270 hours in all.

5. The monks held 279 training sessions which were attended by 1871 monks and novices, 552 of whom were people already under their supervision.

6. The following is a list of subject matter covered in the training sessions:

- The Vinaya Rules	190 sessions
- The Dharma	111 sessions
- Monks' attire	82 sessions
- Social behaviour	83 sessions
- Cleanliness	106 sessions
- Keeping order	87 sessions
- Education	105 sessions
- Public Service	74 sessions

7. No obstacles were met with during the training sessions.

8. Training sessions were organized for school children in 97 schools.

9. The subject areas covered were:

- Education	29 sessions
- Health	30 sessions
- Development	46 sessions
- Culture	34 sessions
- Religion	39 sessions

10. The 178 sessions (above) were attended by a total number of 22,195 school children and 596 teachers.

11. 176 training sessions were organized for 24 government departments.

12. The subject areas covered were:

- Development 24 sessions
- Health 20 sessions
- Education 34 sessions
- Culture 8 sessions

13. 2,069 government officials attended the sessions.

14. Training sessions were organized for 237 villages.

15. The subject areas covered were:

- Religion 104 sessions
- Customs 64 sessions
- Culture 69 sessions
- Development 84 sessions
- Health 71 sessions
- Vocational occupations 54 sessions
- Illnesses 55 sessions
- Mutual co-operation 91 sessions
- Local social situation 57 sessions

16. The 649 sessions (above), were attended by 16,659 men and 20,530 women.

17. On 24 Buddhist religious days customary religious rites were observed. The occasions were attended by 6,052 men, 6,028 women and 2,255 youngsters.

18. Into the 600 sermons given teaching on the following subjects was infused:

- Better living 77 times
- Health 67 times
- Morals 107 times
- Community Development 61 times
- Drinking water 64 times
- Peace 82 times
- Illnesses 63 times
- Superstition 80 times

19. Special activities undertaken included ten 'Candle Presenting' Ceremonies and forty 'Cloth Presenting' Ceremonies, attended by a total of 12,221 people.

20. The monks accepted invitations to give sermons at 98 villages. The sermons were attended by 17,606 people.

21. The sermons, 181 altogether, were on the following themes:

- Sila (precept) and alms 70 sermons
- Concentration 44 sermons
- Panya (wisdom) 47 sermons

22. In the sermons was interspersed teaching on the following subjects:

- Illnesses and how to deal with them 39 times
- Superstition 54 times
- Health 58 times
- Drinking water 43 times
- Development 60 times
- Unity 66 times
- Education 74 times
- Self-help 51 times

The Centre's Projects

After the completion of the Pilot Project, the Centre Committee held a meeting at which the Secretary submitted an evaluation report on the Pilot Project and asked the Committee to consider what steps the Centre should now take. After considerable discussion the meeting agreed that the achievements of the Pilot Project far outweighed its weaknesses and that the Centre should proceed to undertake new programmes, bearing in mind shortcomings of the past attempt which needed correcting. Between B.E. 2508 (1965) and B.E. 2513 (1970) the Centre of Ubol undertook eighteen major projects. They were all training projects, although they varied in objectives and syllabus content and aimed at different levels of trainees.

Subjects covered in the Centre's Training Program

The subjects covered fell into three main groups:

Religion;

Social Studies;

and Development.

In the selection of subjects within each main group, consideration was given to the level and general background of the trainees and to the findings of the evaluation surveys. If, for instance, a course was being planned for a group of abbots, the subjects in the Religion Group would include Sangha Law, Regulations of the Sangha Supreme Council, Sangha Administration, and other subjects which would be of the greatest use to abbots in discharging their duties.

For the Social Studies Group the selecting of training matter is largely determined by the problems in existence which had been listed and studied previously by the evaluation teams.

As regards 'Development' the three main subjects covered were health and hygiene, wat organization and administration, and co-operation with the government in community development. It should be mentioned, however, that in drawing up this part of the course syllabuses the Centre made a point of consulting relevant government agencies and officials.

It should perhaps be emphasized that special efforts were made in drawing up course syllabuses to tailor the courses to suit prospective trainees, their background and their needs, to ensure maximum end results.

Course Syllabuses:

A Course for Pariyattidharma Teachers:

Religion Group	Methods of teaching Pariyattidharma
General psychology	
Principles of Buddhist propagation	
Social Studies Group	History of foreign relations
	History of the Thai Nation
	Social psychology
	Social Welfare
	Principles of public relations
Development Group	Contributions of the Dharma to Development

Methods of helping the public to understand Government policies;

Methods of enlisting support for activities initiated by the abbot;

Treatment and prevention of contagious diseases;

Practical training in development work.

A Course for Monks officiating at ordination ceremonies ("the Uppachaya")

Religion Group:	History of the Buddhist Religion;
	Security and stability of the Buddhist Religion;
	Religious Community Administration;
	Dharma and government.
Social Studies Group:	Methods of promoting traditional practices;
	Buddhist Guidance methods;
	Methods of solving village social problems;
	Methods of promoting social stability in the village.
Development Group:	Development and Dharma Principles;
	Cleanliness and hygienic living;
	Wat care and art preservation;
	Co-operation in Community Development schemes.

The above course syllabuses should serve to show that the content of each training course was selected in such a way as to be of maximum benefit to the trainees. As a result the courses were very successful. Some trainees who were both Paiyattidharma teachers and ordination Officiating Monks joined both courses and they found it all interesting and useful.

Instructors

It goes without saying that the success of any training programme depends first and foremost on the quality of the instructors. The Centre had some difficulty in recruiting instructors for the courses, largely because the people the Centre wanted to invite were usually either full-time senior government officials or senior Thera with regular duties. On the whole it was found easier to recruit monk instructors. A regular feature of each course was a lecture by the Regional Sangha Superintendent (Chao Gana Pak), who was always willing to accept the centre's invitation to speak except on the very few occasions when he had some other important engagement. The two Buddhist Universities, particularly Mahachulalongkornrajvidhyalaya, readily provided many instructors. In addition, the Thera of the province, from the Provincial Chief monk down, were always willing to participate in the training programme as instructor, and most of them proved to be very stimulating lecturers.

On the lay side, the Centre Dirictor enlisted assistance from such government agencies as the Provincial Development unit, the Rural Technical Assistance Centre, the National Security Council Unit, the Provincial Police Force, the Provincial Health Authority. These units sent representatives to give lectures on their special fields. Because of the stimulating diversity of subject matter, the interest and enthusiasm of the trainees were kept at a high level all the time.

Co-operation

Throughout its training programme, the Centre received willing co-operation from the Sangha, the government circles and the public.

Form the Sangha

Sangha members of the provincial and the Amphur levels all joined in enthusiastically and helped with the organization and operation of the training programme. The abbots also helped in various ways: some organized meals for course participants, some helped to disseminate information to monks in their charge, and some made donations towards programme expenses.

At the Tambol and village levels the training programme was well received by the monks from the very beginning and enthusiasm for it increased as the programme proceded. There were even suggestions that courses should be organized for individual amphur or even tambol in order to afford greater opportunity of examining local problems.

Co-operation from Government Departments

In B.E. 2510 (1967) a message from General Prapas[6] Charusathien, Minister of the Interior, was sent to the Centre through the governor. The message was read at the opening session of a training course.

Nai Pat Bunyaratapan, Governor of Ubol, gave enthusiastic and unfailing support to the programme all through. Apart from acting as an instructor himself the governor made a personal donation towards the cost of the organization, provided transport facilities and paid regular visits to Centre functions.

Other government agencies likewise were very co-operative. Their contributions included instructors' service, loans of equipment for demonstration purposes and donations.

Co-Operation from the Public

Through the "Wat Committees" (each composed of representatives of the community and serving as a liaison body between the people and the wat) the Centre received very strong support from the public. Meals were provided for the trainees all through the programme. Necessary equipment was loaned, transport provided, etc.

With such full support from the three sectors, the Buddhist studies Centre of Ubol, with its very small office, proved itself to be an institution of voluntary service with far-reaching beneficial effect.

Programme Expansion B.E. 2508-2510 (1965-1967)

Encouraged by the success of the Ubol Centre, and considering the fact that other provinces in the Northeast, similar to Ubol, in their poverty, were receiving government's full attention and therefore their Buddhist monks were probably in the same situation as those in Ubol, the Centre at Ubol decided that efforts should be made to organize similar centres in those provinces. Invitations were then sent to Chief Monks of Nongkai, Sakolnakorn, Nakornpanom, to send representatives to study the programme of Ubol Centre.

As a result, Nongkai established a Buddhist Centre at Wat Srisakes in B.E. 2508 (1965) along the same pattern of administration as that of the Ubol Centre. Nongkai Centre in turn invited Srisakes, Surin and Burirum to send representatives to observe their programme. The Sangha of those provinces,

after their representatives had observed activities at Nongkai and Ubol, took steps to establish their own Centres.

Thus, by the end of B.E. (1967) Buddhist Studies Centres had been established at Ubol, Nongkai, Nakorn Phanom, Sakolnakorn, Surin and Burirum.

These centres have been operating programmes with encouraging results and have enjoyed continued support from their respective governor, government officials and the public.

Co-ordination Centre For Sangha Social Service in The Northeast

In B.E. 2510 (1967) the Directors and officials of the six Buddhist Centres in the Northeast, altogether fifteen monks, undertook an observation tour of Buddhist activities in the North. They were greatly impressed by the programme of the Centre in Chiengmai, and upon their return to the region decided that they should, learning from the example of Chiengmai, make efforts to co-ordinate the programmes of the centres in the Northeast.

A meeting then was called at Nongkai, attended by the Directors and Centre officials from Ubol, Sakolnakorn, Nongkai, Surin and Burirum, and chaired by Phrathep Ratanamoli, Director of the Nakornpanom Centre.

The meeting took two days, ending with the appointment of a working committee charge with the drafting of rules for the proposed Co-ordination Centre. After one and a half months the finished draft was submitted to the Chairman, and another meeting was called, at Wat Phra Dhatu Coengchoom, Sakolnakorn. At this meeting it was decided to organize a co-ordination Centre is at present at Wat Thung Srinuang, Ubol. Phrathep

Ratanamoli, Chief Monk of Nakornpanom is the Centre Director, with Phrathep Monggolmethi, Chief Monk of Ubol and Phraraj Vimolmethi, Chief Monk of Sakolnakorn, as his deputies. The Centre Board of Directors included Chief monks of Nongkai, Surin and Buriram Phra Virojratanobol, Deputy Chief Monk of Ubol is the Secretary-General.

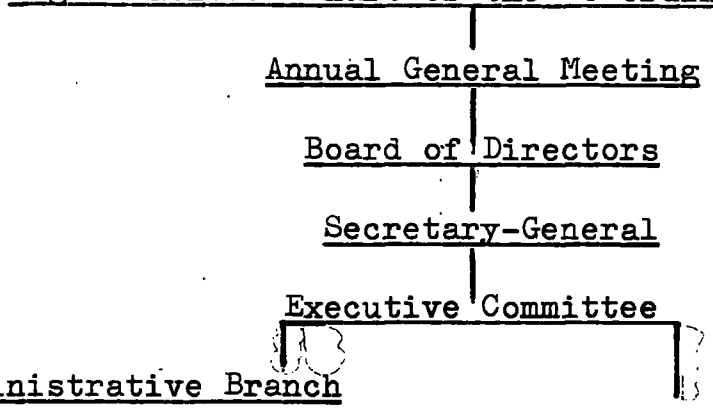
The Rules of the Co-ordination Centre require that the Centre hold a general meeting once a year in order to plan its annual programme of activities and approve the annual budget.

The duty of the Secretary-General is to ensure that the Executive Committee carry out the resolutions of the General Meeting. The functions of the Executive Committee are diveded into two branches: the Academic and the Administrative Branch.

The Academic Branch has a chief who reports to the Secretary-General. This Branch is responsible for the Drafting of course syllabuses, evaluation, publication, documentation and research.

The Administrative Branch likewise has a chief who works directly under the Secretary-General. This Branch is responsible for the general administration of the Centre, finances, accounts, supplies and premises.

Organizational Chart of the Co-ordination Centre



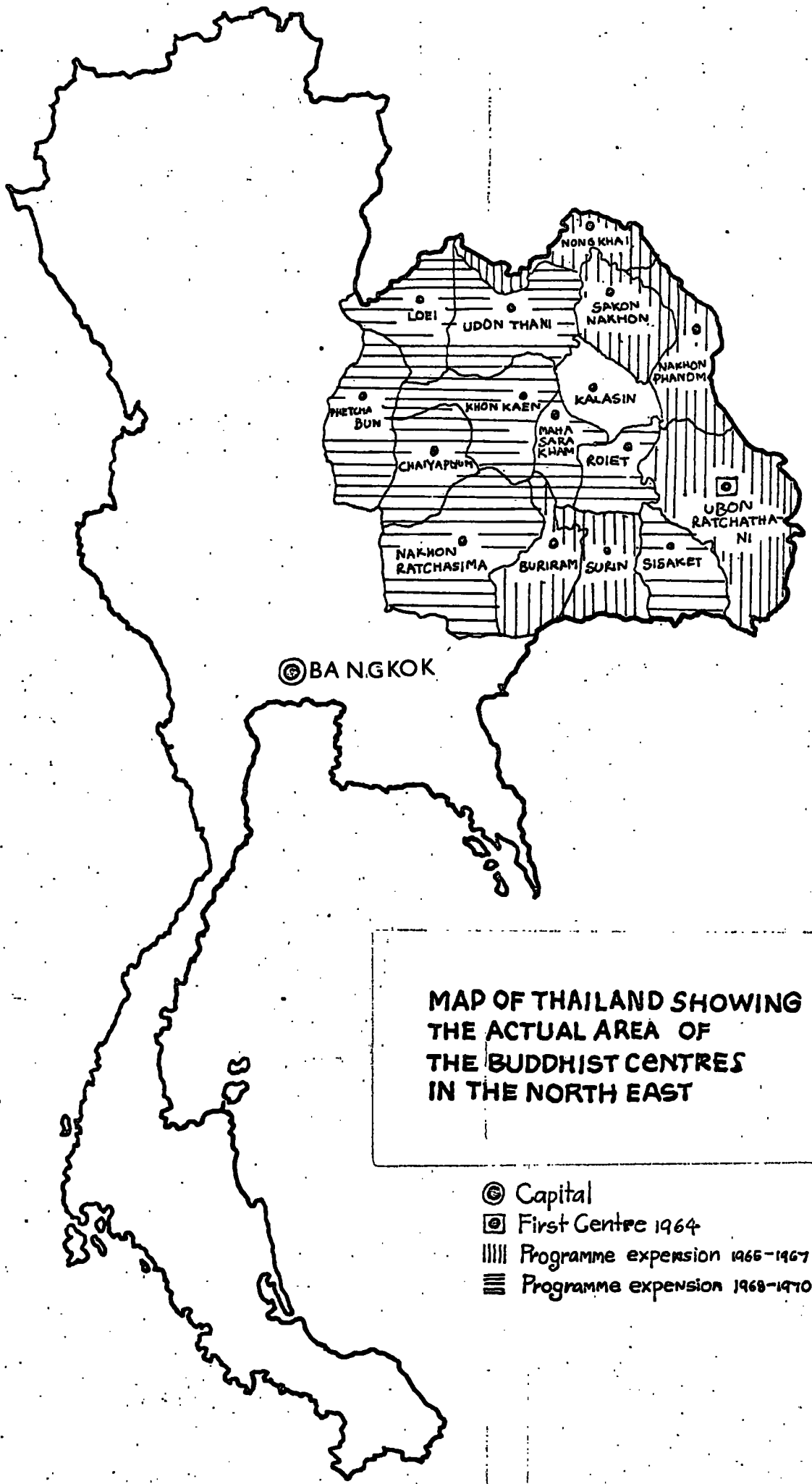
Through the Co-ordination Centre the provincial centres were able to co-ordinate their activities, enlist each other's assistance and operate more efficiently.

During B.E. 2511 (1968) and 2513 (1970) seven more Buddhist Studies Centres were formed: in Udorn, Loey, Konkaen, Roy-Ed, Mahasarakarm, Jaiyapoom and Srisakes. (See the map showing the actual areas of the centres).

These centres have been operating with the assistance and guidance from the co-ordination Centre. In the following paragraphs I shall give an evaluation of their programmes based on information gathered from discussions with the Centre Directors.

Relations with Government Officials

Most of the Centre Directors feel that activities of the centres promote closer relations between the Sangha and government officials, and consequently better understanding and



MAP OF THAILAND SHOWING THE ACTUAL AREA OF THE BUDDHIST CENTRES IN THE NORTH EAST

- Capital
- First Centre 1964
- Programme expension 1965-1967
- Programme expension 1968-1970

greater co-operation.

Training

Buddhist monks and Novices have a direct duty to teach the people and lead them along the path of virtue towards a happy existence. The Centre Directors are agreed that the Centres' training programmes help to equip monks to discharge their duties more effectively. The monks who have benefitted from training programmes have been able to teach villagers to live better, more hygienic, more productive and generally happier lives.

Development

The Centres enable monks to participate in government development schemes in productive and effective ways and at the same time keeping within proper limits, and their activities have very satisfactory results. In addition, the visits of these monk trainees to people in depressed areas, who live in the fear of danger from subversive elements' have proved to be of great solace to them.

Also, through the training programme monks from distant areas have had the opportunity of coming to observe Sangha activities in towns, and of meeting other monks and establishing close contacts with each other. Indeed it could be said that the Centres help greatly to foster unity among Buddhist monks in the region.

Obviously before 1965 none of the 15 Changwat (provinces) had a permanent office for the Buddhist affairs. Some of the Changwat Head Monks worked in their kutis (living quarters), some in the preaching hall, and some underneath the

kuti, or preaching hall. Stationary and equipment had to be kept in their kuti. Such lack of organisation and facilities limited the progress and quality of the work. Fortunately the situation has now changed and in 9 of the 15 Changwats in the Northeast proper offices concerned with the Sangha Social Activities have been set up. In each office there are from 3 to 7 young monks working in various capacities. This means that within 7 years through the activities of these Centres the Sangha Social work in the Northeast has been much improved.

During my tour of the North East of Thailand I visited these Centres and interviewed various officials, such as the Directors, Secretaries or others, depending on availability. From what I saw and heard it is clear that the work in Sangha Social Services done by the Buddhist Monks in these areas has much improved. The monks seem more committed to activating the Sangha authorities. The Centres enable them to have a better understanding and unity among themselves regarding Sangha Studies and their responsibilities to secular affairs. The relationship between the monks and the people has clearly improved; they are able now to meet on a closer level and in a more satisfactory way. With such an official set up the people may be more easily involved in the activities carried on by the Monks. It is also easier now for the monks to contact and co-operate with Government officials. Some of the officials thus contacted become involved to some extent in the Sangha Social work and become valued middlemen helping the monks in their relationship with the Government departments. The special work in secular affairs for which the monks are needed may then

be successfully carried out with such aid. The tradition of respect for the Buddhist monk through the high ideals to which he is supposed to conform make him a trusted and natural leader in the community.

The Centres all seem to run quite smoothly but there seems to be a lack of ambition which may be partly due to lack of financial support. No effort is being made to introduce extra activities or to cause the Centres to grow. Perhaps at the moment they are at a stage where they need to collect themselves and consolidate their gains. But some problems are remaining unsolved and it may be such difficulties which are retarding progress. One problem which the Centres are facing is staffing: at the moment the staff are all temporary which means there is a big step back every time someone leaves to be replaced by another who has to learn the job, and this happens too often.

Chou Khun Phra Virotratnobol claimed that he needed a qualified secretary to help him in the secular affairs of the Sangha Social Service. His discussion of a scholarship for monks to enable them to complete their studies and return to work for the Centre is interesting. It should be said that the work of the Centre depends very much on the quality and capacity of the Secretary, for it is he who is most directly involved in the Centre's activities and it is he whom the people must contact.

All those interviewed felt the need of technical supervision to aid the work of the Centres. Some officials of these Centres may not have sufficient experience of Social work

and especially in such cases technical supervision is necessary.

In most cases it seems that the Centres' Directors try to teach the people to help themselves. There may be some aid with large constructions but the principal policy seems to be a slower long term investment designed to enable the people to help themselves. In most cases this begins with the education of the village monks in Social work who then return to lead the development in their areas. Annual seminars are held which include instruction in their programme. Other subjects concerning Buddhism also make up the programme. The Centres may also assist the village monks assisting them in their relations with Government officials, sometimes by contacting the Government office for them and sometimes by taking them to the office and helping them with their business.

Although the Centres are principally concerned with education a certain amount of construction work and the like is carried on; details of these material results may be found in the following table.

Table No. 3.1.

Numbers of Trainees at The Centres

(all are monks)

1965-1969

	Centres	Trainees
	Ubol-Rajdhani	196
	Srisaket	514
	Loey	393
	Nong Kai	2,295
	Udorn Dhani	450
	Khorn Kien	400
	Maha Sargam	400
	Roi-Ed	280
	Buriram	590
	TOTAL	5,518

Table No. 3.2.

Financial Support to the Buddhist Studies Centres in Northeast Thailand

1965-1969

Centre	Financial Support (in Baht)	
	From the Asia Foundation	From the People
Ubolrajdhani	177,547	87,860
Srisaket	62,000	34,085
Loey	170,405	7,795
Nong Kai	146,000	26,000
Udon Dhani	63,500	9,271
Khon Kien	78,000	10,985
Maha Sargam	68,000	11,500
Roi-Ed	74,000	35,550
Buriram	132,300	12,914
Total	971,752	235,960

TABLE NO.3.3.

Roads, Wells and Toilets Conctructed Under the Supervision of the Trained Monks

1965-1969

Centre	Roads		Wells	Toilets
	Length(Km.)	Width(M.)		
Ubol Rajdhani	29	8	8	4
Loey	90	6	193	617
Roi-Ed	12	6	22	156
Buriram	40	4	63	189
Srisket	69	6	14	92
Maha Saragam	16	3	26	18
Khorn Kien	-	-	-	-
Udorn Dhani	102	4	83	138
Nong Kai	-	-	5	20
TOTAL	358	37	414	1,234

Yet this sort of active involvement in the sphere of nation-building is a neologism in Thai Buddhist history, and almost contrary to the traditional and orthodox idea that monks should be far apart from mundane affairs, practicing the holy life and striving for Nirvana, and in that way contributing to the merit and the welfare of society. This issue is far from clear, however. There are discussions and great differences of opinion among the higher Sangha members, among higher civil servants and also within the Buddhist Association.

Many of the monks with whom I discussed the role of Buddhist monks in development work - including junior, learned, and both provincial and Bangkok-based Sangha members, but by no means a representative sample - felt amazed by my interest in their potential social welfare activities, and most were vehement in denying that the monkhood should engage in such activities, with the exception of helping to build hospitals and to increase education. They viewed their roles as religious per se, and their task with respect to the laity as religious teachers and specialists. In their eyes the promotion of Buddhism should be their central concern. They argued that a pure Buddhism would operate as an important moral force in Thai society, inducing the people to make merit and to care for each other's welfare, thereby promoting the welfare of the country and the prosperity of religion. They were opposed to the idea that monks should operate as teachers of secular subjects or as practitioners of modern medicine, since they viewed such activities as being incompatible with the discipline of monks

(Vinaya) that would lead to the moral degradation of the monkhood. It should furthermore be recognized that most of these junior professional monks had entered the monkhood at a very early age, sometimes as young as eleven, and that their lives were really divorced from the lay world; yet among them are those who may rise high in the ranks of the Sangha through their commitment and high degree of learning.

A majority of the leading senior monks in Bangkok, however, appears to be very interested in a more active engagement of the monkhood in Sangha social activities. They claim that the social welfare policy of the Sangha predates that of the government and that nowaday they should actively support the Community Development programme of the state.[7] All that has been said is not new to the monks. Everything has been tried by the monks, and in some places is still practised nowadays. But these ideas have been neglected for some time and may be new to some people.

Monks used to have a hand in national education, in being both teachers and course organisers, to satisfy the need of the country, even though there was no National Education Plan, and it was well thought of at the time.

Monks indirectly help the nation through their traditional duty of preching the Buddhist law of cause and effect (good deeds lead to good, and wrong deeds to evil). They brought to the people's attention a variety of good actions, like the construction of roads, wells, preaching halls, and so on. The people were willing to give labour and money for community development, thereby follwing

Buddhist teaching. For centuries monks have carried out Sangha Social Services, planning development projects and organising village groups to carry them out.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that since 1963 both Buddhist universities have run programmes for the training of monks who are to be assigned to the country and who will engage in social welfare activities and teach the provincial monks the techniques of modern welfare work. Moreover since 1968 there has been a similar programme for the training of Buddhist nuns at Mahamongut Buddhist University.

The line of argument employed by senior monks in Bangkok is that monks should be well trained and conversant with modern subjects if the monkhood is to remain respected; next to being spiritual leaders, they also should be intellectual leaders. (continue on page 101)

The village Wat should remain the social centre of the village communities, and the monks should therefore co-operate with the secular provincial and district authorities. They stress that the people will trust the monks more than the secular authorities, that the government programme is for the good of all concerned and that the monks should play an important role in the modernization of the country by enhancing its welfare. Rather than accentuating a concern with the Vinaya rules, they emphasize the Dhamma and the merit making principle of giving. The monks should give knowledge to the people and show them, by example and by teaching, that to give to a community effort is as good as giving for purely religious purposes. By enhancing the welfare of the people, the prosperity of religion and the state will be furthered too.[8]

Among the higher civil servants opinions are also divided. At the Department of Religious Affairs people seem to fear an increasing encroachment of the state on the autonomy of the Sangha. Although the Department is by its very nature in no position to keep the affairs of the state and church separated, there is a distinct fear that the pressure on the monkhood to co-operate in government welfare programmes will reduce the status of religion to being a mere tool of the government, which can hardly be desirable. But the Department of Community Development likes to see Buddhist co-operation with their programme. But there are also quite a few civil servants who deny that there is religious merit involved in their programme, since they would like to see themselves as

being successful in their work whether or not the local monks co-operate with them.

Evers has some information which pertains to this question, insofar as he was interested in the reinterpretation of Theravada Buddhist values in modern society. He interviewed a representative sample of 25 higher Thai civil servants about the question of merit in modern society, and noted important differences in opinion. Although 14 found development programmes to be meritorious, (while one rejected this idea completely), the number who found certain activities meritorious decreased according to the job. Only nine thought the construction of roads and canals to be merit making, while four rejected this idea. Nobody could discern any merit in the construction of factories, for instance.[9]

Among members of the influential Buddhist Association of Thailand, opinions seem to be equally divided and sometimes confused. In one and the same article, Princess Poon, Vice-President of the Association, argues first, that:

> They (the monks) are regarded as one of the Triple Gem (Buddha, Dhamma and Sangha), which we have to respect and worship every morning and evening. They have personally renounced the detestable world and followed the Buddha's footprint, but they look back toward the worldly affairs on account of their loving kindness and compassion only....He (the monk) should not lower himself to interfere with us who are lay-people.

> For, if he wishes to do so, he can leave the Order and come to an equal level with us at any moment.

But a little later she argues, that:

> Monks can help much both in the administration and education of the country if they have enough knowledge about the work and sincerely love their country.

She further argues that the active social involvement of the Buddhist nuns would be desirable and meritorious to themselves and society alike.[10]

At the village level, regardless of the views of important people, religious and lay alike, to the common man in the village merit is a rather tangible item and a practical way of behaviour. To make merit may be good in itself, it may be a means to an end, or it may just be part of a social situation. While some people may consciously strive to acquire merit, to most it is an unquestioned ingredient of life, giving reason to moral codes and shaping one's relationship to relatives and the community. It is a way to achieve a feeling of well-being. In itself comulative aspect of merit may serve to explain social inequalities, success or hardships.

Next to these general notions, which will be discussed in some detail later, common people in the town or village have their own precise ideas about the ways to make merit; but individual motivations to acquire merit may vary widely. While many of these motivations can be explained in social terms, a few others should be explained in terms of individual religiosity. The socially meaningful motivations, which are most conspicuous and most common, will concern us here.

It is useful to review a few individual cases of merit making behaviour, as I observed them, and to briefly discuss the collective aspects of merit making in the communal setting.

Merit-making as seen by various people

Nang (Mrs.) Apson Sripa is 45 years old and the youngest daughter of a middle-class Ubol family. She works at the Ubol Civil Servants' Club (an eating and meeting place for government officials only) serving food prepared in her home. According to Northeastern custom the youngest daughter is the heiress to the largest proportion of family properties, and Nang Apson inherited three acres of land from her parents, and when her mother died she encountered serious financial obligations. As the youngest daughter and the heiress, she had to make sure that the preparations for the ceremony concerning her mother's cremation were acceptable to her status and were to the satisfaction of her relatives and neighbours. That entailed considerable expenditure, for when somebody dies merit should be made on her behalf, and a measure of the merit is the lavishness of the appropriate ceremonies. Of course, in actual fact it is not the youngest daughter only who pays for these ceremonies. Relatives and neighbours will also contribute, and so make merit for themselves and the deceased. But Nang Apson was personally responsible for the appropriate rites and cremation. The seventh, the fiftieth and the hundredth day ceremonies were celebrated with increasing elaboration. Finally, some ninety eight monks were invited to chant at Wat Tungsrimuang and several hundred neighbours and relatives paid their last respects to the deceased while

making merit for her by the fact of their presence, and their show of respect for the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. After the monks had chanted, they, and later the guests, were treated to a costly meal.

By all this, Nang Apson made merit for her mother and for herself, and raised her status in the eyes of her relatives and neighbours but incurred some debts. She mildly regretted the expenditure, but could never have avoided it. She behaved like a good Buddhist, a good daughter, and also acted under the pressure of an unavoidable situation.

Phra Maha Srita Yasindlo is a professional monk who has already spent some twenty five years in the monkhood and has achieved the Fifth degree of Pali learning and gained an M.A. in Sanskrit from Baranasi Hindu University, India. He was born in a village in Ubol, but made his way to Bangkok as a bright student. When I met him, he was furthering his knowledge at Maha Makut Buddhist University, studying English, Buddhist philosopy and secular subjects. To him, merit was a clearly understood phenomenon, and he did not doubt that he was acquiring a lot of it. As a monk, his position in society carried the highest possible status. Moreover, as a religious man he was in the most favoured position to make merit by simply carrying out his duties and by studying. He noted that when he preached his audience acquired merit, but he acquired even more. On his early morning rounds he offered the pious an occasion to make merit by accepting their gifts. As a consequence his room in Wat Raja-Oros, Dhonburi was literally packed with detergents, cigarettes, matches, coffee, cloths,

books, and a considerable amount of money, most of which he spent on books.

It was obvious to him, as it appears to be clear to the rest of Thai society, that to be a monk is to make merit. And though he was dubious about the possibility of the transfer of merit to the living or the dead, there was little doubt in his mind that his parents benefitted by the fact that he was a monk.

Phra Maha Srita was not unconscious of social values. He recognized that merit involved giving to others and being good to others, but he could not find merit in social involvement of monks other than in preaching, teaching and attending merit making ceremonies, such as cremations.

Nang Tonggam Sangchart, wife of Mr. Duen Shangchart, a former school teacher, is of Ban Phai Yai origin. She works in the market of Khemaraj, a district in Ubol Province, about 60 kilometers North of Ban Phai Yai, selling live fish collected from Ban Phai Yai and neighbouring villages. To her, merit is any form of Buddhist religious behaviour. When she comes home from the market, she buys some flowers that she offers to the Buddha in her home. Her Buddha has to favour of the flowers; before she goes to work she bows down before him and asks for success in her business.

Whenever she has saved some money, she buys a lottery ticket, and then goes to the temple to offer a baht (about two new pence) or two, hoping that the merit she so makes will enhance her chances in the lottery. As a form of merit making, she is fond of travelling to any of the religious

fairs in the district or neighbouring villages around Ban Phai Yai. There she will first go to the temple, spending her ten Baht or so wisely: splitting one Baht pieces into fifty Satang pieces, offering them one by one in the appropriate alms' bowls; buying flowers, a joss-stick and a candle for one Baht, and offering them to any of the officiating monks in return for his blessing; finally, buying a one Baht piece of gold-leaf to stick on a Buddha statue. With the rest of the money she will enjoy herself at the funfair surrounding the temple.

Nang Tonggam is also curious about her future. Therefore she often goes to a neighbourhood temple to donate a few joss-sticks or flowers to an older monk who has some local fame in astrology. Her future is invariably a blessed one, and again she feels she has killed two birds with one stone. Or one might say three birds, because she also takes a bottle of lustral water home and carefully mixes it into the Sianghai Jar where she stores water that she needs for bathing and cooking.

Nang Cham Nien who is thirty years old, is more interested in merit for its own sake. She is a cook in a Kindergarten in Ubol, and manages to save some money which she spends on her children who are in the care of her mother. With whatever little money she has left, she manages to pay for a number of pilgrimages each year to holy places like the temple of Phra Tatuphanom which is over a hundred miles North of Ubol. Upon returning home from such occasions, she would complain and then praise herself for having gone through such hardships - she believes that these should earn a great

deal of merit. Furthermore she often goes hastily into temple to donate a small sum as a contribution to her store of merit. She obviously feels well on such occasions. When her Father died she desperately wanted to travel back to her native village in Kam Cha-E (a district in Nakorn Phanom province) to attend the 100th day ceremonies, to make merit on her behalf.[11]

Nai (Mr.) Smat Chan-ngam is 42 years old from Mahasaragam, a Province about 200 miles North-West of Ubol, and claimed not to be interested in merit. He believed that merit was only a way of saying things. When he heard that his grandmother had died, he felt obliged to go to his native village to make merit for her, he said. But when he arrived there he had run out of money, and during the ten days that he was there he only visited the temple once when a movie was shown there.

This was also true for Nai Kiew, a twenty five year old man. Once he had been a novice in a temple for two weeks, although not of his own choosing and he had accomplished what was expected. His parents, at least, had earned merit by ordaining a son, but he could not care less. The next time he would be in a temple probably would be on the occasion of a cremation or an ordination among his relatives or friends, and his closest contacts with monks would be at the opening of an enterprise or the blessing of a home. To him, merit and religion were reduced to polite social form and ritual.

These few, rough sketches suggest the wide range of behavioural consequences which may flow from personal concepts of merit. A woman like Nang Apson acted under social pressure,

and certainly also because of filial piety. But she did not convey the impression that she enjoyed the opportunity to make extensive merit. For a simple woman like Nang Tonggam there was a little bit of religion in every aspect of life. It was an unquestioned way of behaviour, affording some cultural and psychological security. With the exception of Phra Mha Srita, for whom religion was a way of life, Nang Chamnien was the most conscious of the religious overtones of merit. For Nai Smat merit was a way of expressing a vague consciousness of the way of his native village that no longer held much reality, and for Nai Kiew, merit had become an empty social form sometimes required in terms of polite behaviour.

In the villages much of the merit making ritual takes the form of collective rites. Of course, individual merit making is important too, such as the daily food offerings to monks, but the real occasions to make merit are communal and intercommunal in nature, and tend to coincide with the slack seasons in agriculture. These larger merit making festivals not only offer the opportunity to make and to share in merit, but they also provide very welcome "counterpoints" in an otherwise dreary and frugal existence. (see table no. 3.4-5)

Important cremations, like the cremation of a well-known abbot or monk, tend to take place after harvest in the dry season, and are celebrated on a subdistrict-wide or even larger scale. Though the host village does most of the preparation and makes the greatest contribution for the event, surrounding villages contribute also (see table no. 3.6) - so that everybody may earn merit. Monks from surrounding Wat

7

Table No. 3.4.

*Rice Contributed to the Wat (Wat Weluwan), Ban Phai Yai, Ubol Rajdhani

1966-1971

Year	Villages			Total (*) Miun of Rice
	Village No. 1	Village No. 8	Village No.10	
1966	66	51	88	205
1967	71	61	91	223
1968	69	57	69	195
1969	44	55	60	159
1970	59	36	65	160
1971	75	49	86	210
TOTAL	384	309	459	1,152

* Record of Wat Weluwan, Ban Phai Yai, Moung Samsib, Ubol Rajdhani, 1966-1971

(*) One Miun = 12 kilogrammes

TABLE NO. 3.5.

Frequency of Alms Giving by Villagers.

No.	Frequency	Number of villagers
1	Twice a day (morning meal and lunch)	51
2	Once a day (morning meal)	15
3	Once a day (lunch)	21
4	Twice a week (morning meal and lunch on the *Buddhist Holiday)	11
5	Once a week (morning meal or lunch on Buddhist Holiday)	2
6	Never	-
	TOTAL	100

* The Buddhist Holiday; this is used by the people in the North East, and is the equivalent of the sabbath falling on the four phases of the moon.

TABLE NO. 3.6.

*Monetary Donation for the Abbot Funeral Ceremony

No.	Village	Amount of money (Baht)
1	Village of Nongpling	2,400
2	Village of Dong Noi	4,475
3	Village of Non Kadou	1,014
4	Village of Nang Yai	3,211
5	Village of Kia Dam	776
6	Village of Vieng Nang	24,045
	TOTAL	35,920

* The Wat record of Wat Vieng Vang, Maha Sargam, Thailand, 1967.

will be present, and the continuous preaching (if possible by loudspeaker) transmits the Dhamma to everyone present. Offerings can be made and blessings received. There is an abundance of food, and usually there also are competitions, like the shooting of rockets at a target, between the several groups of villagers present.

More communal in nature are the yearly ordination ceremonies when one or a few of the village's young men temporarily enter the monkhood. This is a festive occasion towards which everybody should contribute, and so share in the merit.[12] Most of the merit goes to those relatives, fellow villagers or parents, who make the largest contributions to the event, while the parents acquire extra merit by having a son ordained in the monkhood. It appears that the merit for temporarily entering the monkhood is essentially earned by the sponsors of the event and the parents, while the young monk basically serves a debt of gratitude towards his parents and goes through a rite marking his transition towards adulthood.

Here may be the place to briefly discuss what I have called the self-cumulative aspect of merit. In general, all association with the Wat or with the Sangha results in merit. It can also be stated that merit is related to prestige.

As a rule, status positions in Thai society are explained in terms of merit. The more meritorious a previous life, the higher the position in this life. Social equality as well as social mobility therefore find an explanation in religious terms. Furthermore, the relatively well-to-do, the higher placed, also have the opportunity to make more merit than others, because a hundred Baht make more merit than one providing that the intention is the same and the source of money respectable.

It is expected that the richer man makes more merit. His ability to engage in big merit making ceremonials, such as large cremations, the sponsoring of an ordination, or the financing of a building of a temple, should also enable his less fortunate fellows to share in the merit by their presence and money contributions. Of all the laymen, the king is in the most favourable position to make merit, and his subjects are thought to share in the merit he makes. At the village level, the more affluent villagers are in the best position to occupy the prestigious and meritorious positions - by serving on the Wat-lay committee or by being appointed Wiyawatchakorn or Wat-lay accountant (monks are not supposed to handle money). To get such an appointment is not only honourable and meritorious; it also shows that one has already acquired considerable merit, and places one in a position to obtain even more.[13]

Having discussed some of the social patterns and motivations underlying merit making behaviour, we shall now investigate what the Thai villagers themselves have indicated as merit making behaviour. There appears to be a more or less general consensus among anthropologists who have done research in Thai villages as regards this matter. Two of them have investigated the ranked order of merit-making activities. According to Kaufman, who did research in the Central Plain, the most meritorious acts are, in descending order of importance:[14]

1. Becoming a monk.
2. Contributing enough money for the construction of a Wat.
3. Having a son ordained as a monk.

4. Making excursions to the Buddhist shrines throughout Thailand.
5. Making contributions toward the repair of a Wat.
6. Giving food, daily, to the monks and giving food on holy days.
7. Becoming a novice.
8. Attending the Wat or all holy days and obeying the eight precepts on these days.
9. Obeying the five precepts at all times.
10. Giving money and clothing to the monks at the Kathin festival. (offering robes to monks after a lent)

Tambiah's listing for the Northeast shows some differences in emphasis.[15]

1. Completely financing the building of a Wat - this is the act Par excellence that brings most merit.
2. Either becoming a monk oneself or having a son become a monk.
3. Contributing money to the repair of a Wat or making Kathin gifts.
4. Giving food daily to the monks.
5. Observing every Wanphra (Buddhist Holiday)
6. Strictly observing the Five Precepts.

From these listings three conclusions can be drawn. First, in terms of merit acquired, joining the Sangha rivals in significance the giving of large sums. Second, that throughout, giving receives great emphasis. Third, when only religious duty is involved, the amount of merit received tends to be of relatively minor importance. In Tambiah's terms,

such activities have no scarcity value.[16]

Moveover, there appears to be a shift in emphasis, in the sense that giving is becoming more important, at the expense of joining the monkhood or becoming a novice. From 1927 to 1966 the number of Wats increased from 16,502 to 24,105 (45.5%), the number of monks during Buddhist Lenten period on from 129,698 to 151,560 (35.1%) while the number of novices remained fairly constant at approximately 85,000. It now seems to be at least slightly easier to donate toward the construction of a Wat than to join the Sangha and to follow the path of the Buddha. Under influence of increasing modernization and the subsequent decline in functions of the monkhood, the Sangha has difficulty in attracting a sufficient number of young men to its ranks; also potential novices are no longer dependent on the Wat for an education.[17]

The number of young men who temporarily join the monkhood each year had remained fairly constant at 50,000 to 60,000 during the past ten years.[18] On view of the rapidly increasing population, this means that there is less attraction than formerly as far as temporary service in the Sangha is concerned. Moreover the period for which one joins has also been decreasing. Ideally one should stay for the three months of the Phansaa (Lent), but nowadays two or three weeks, sometimes even a few days, seem to be quite acceptable. It has been suggested that the king's short stay in the monkhood (two weeks in 1956) has reinforced this tendency.

It has also been observed that the number of the faithful flocking to the Wat to make merit has been declining over the past decade and that the number of deserted Wats has

—risen rapidly.[19] Furthermore, the people who seem to be most interested in making merit at the Wat tend to be women and the older people of both sexes who have retired from active life.

The practice of giving as a regular merit making activity seems also to be waning. The Director-General of the Department of Religious Affairs reported that "at present the well-being of the monks in Bangkok and Thonburi has been adversely affected in terms of their securing their everyday meals."[20] But this is not true for Bangkok only, where the situation is of course different from the countryside, in view of the heavy concentration of monks in Bangkok who come there to study and in view of the secularization of city life in general. Research in certain areas of the Northeast has also revealed a lack of interest in the Buddhist church, especially in those areas where the villagers live at a subsistence level and where it sometimes has become economically impossible to pay for the upkeep of a Wat and the maintenance of the local Sangha. Some Wats have thus been deserted. Local interest in religion has dwindled and life without monks has become a distinct possibility.

There seems to be a general decline in the vitality of[21] Thai Buddhism, and in this process the Wat seems to be changing from a religious and social focal point to an exclusively social centre of the communities, while merit making has become less personal and more business-like. The focus is on giving, and it is parochial. To make merit is often motivated in the community.

It is here that we return to the question that has brought about our interest in the phenomenon of merit as religious motivation, namely, whether the manipulation of merit can be effectively used to bring about social and economic development in the Thai countryside.

Among the educated elite in Bangkok it would seem to be easy to agree that merit can be attached to community development activities. Merit can be made by giving and by helping other people, so why would giving to a modern community effort not be meritorious? Yet many of these elites appeared to be uncertain about this, and quite a few were directly opposed to the idea.

To the villager merit appears to be part of the traditional way of life and of doing things. Wat-centred activities make merit especially contributions towards collective religious ritual and more so towards the building of temples. It is in and by means of the Wat that merit can be made. Besides, not all the people are really interested enough to make merit of every occasion. Traditional religious and collective expression offer an opportunity to acquire all the merit desired. When one grows old and more interested in consciously building his store of merit, he is certainly beyond the stage where he builds roads or schools or engages in the digging of wells and latrine-pits, however meritorious such activities may be considered by outsiders.

When main roads must be built, they will be built, and villagers will co-operate, because people have recognized their interest in better communication with the outside world.

Abbots and monks may help to motivate such activities because of their positions of leadership, not by declaring such activities as merit making. When latrines were built in one Northeastern village, it was not for the merit attached to such activity but clearly because of the pressure applied by the district officer who wanted a show-piece. Therefore these latrines, when completed, nearly lined the new feeder road at the entrance of the village. In the same village, a well was dug by the monks. Nobody else was interested enough to help with it, nor in the merit attached to this particular enterprise. Moveover, the kind of activities that might be construed as meritorious in programmes of village development would be of minor importance in terms of merit made: such activities would by their very nature lack the scarcity value that is attached to the main merit making enterprises.

Moerman has reported an enlightening instance. In the village of Ban Ping (Northern Thailand) the people were unwilling to help construct a new school building. Hence the district abbot accompanied the district officer to the village to explain to the villagers that the building of schools and roads made as much merit as the construction of temples. The response was as follows:[22]

> Afterward, some villagers admitted that a road might make merit but their explanation was that without one people could lose their way or be attacked by thieves. Some admitted that a school might make merit but their explanation was that only after passing the fourth grade can a boy become

ordained. All insisted that nothing makes as much merit as a temple and since a new Vihara was then under construction in Ban Ping they could not afford to divert any efforts for the benefit of the school.

One further question might be raised at this stage; namely, what are the economic consequences of merit making behaviour? Is merit a value conducive or neutral to economic development, or is it an impediment to economic growth? Such a question, raised in the fashion of today's interest in economic progress and its supposed relationship with religious values, should be analysed at the behavioural level if an answer is to make any sense at all.

It has already been stated above that it is almost senseless to try to motivate actions conducive towards modern ideas of welfare in terms of merit. I have also hinted at the "counterpoint" function of merit making ceremonies in Thai life. Important religious spending more often than not provides the Thai village community with the necessary "breaks" in an otherwise dull and hard existence. The villages, where organised religion has more or less disappeared for reasons of poverty, are socially and physically in a deplorable shape indeed. Men often need the little luxury of some display spending in order to lead any kind of satisfying life. But the villager often does not have enough left after his expenditure on merit making to satisfy material wants beyond the absolute necessities.

Thai peasants, like anybody else in this world, are fascinated by items such as a better dress or a transistor radio. But to many of them, these things are simply not a realistic possibility. For them, merit making or religious

spending is a much sounder and much more profitable investment than saving funds in order to later purchase material goods which are not locally deemed as essentials; it means investment in a next life in which their merit will be rewarded by more desirable social position and where they will be free from the toil and the poverty of the present existence. And sometimes it may lead to substantive rewards in their present lives.

It is here that the self-cumulative aspect of merit begins to operate. It is traditionally believed that the size of a farmer's harvest is a function of his merit. Wealth, therefore, is a sign of merit made, as well as an indication of the possibility to acquire more. The wealthy also are in a better position to make merit because a gift of ten Baht earns more than one. A wealthy man has options, and he will invest in merit and in economic opportunity. He need not spend the total of his riches in merit making display. He will spend some on merit, he may even become a temple builder, but to achieve that goal he must show common sense in his economic behaviour. His expenditures for merit making purposes will be a result of his economically sensible manipulations. If Nang Apson ran into debt, it was an entirely temporary affair. She did not eat less, she would not suffer more. She had enhanced her prestige in this life and better her chances for the next, but the amount she spent was basically a surplus and the result of saving and investment in property that would soon repay her; and for that matter she did not need to wait until the next life.

Following this reasoning I would like to observe that while merit making does not contribute to economic saving and investment of the poor and the less well-to-do, it does so in the case of the economically more powerful, whose savings and investments are, most important anyway. The question that is more crucial is whether they will invest in opportunities that will enhance per capita production, and that has very little to do with Buddhism or merit. On the whole it would seem that the economy of merit making provides Thai society with a model that stresses the usefulness of savings, investing and achievement - merit is therefore becoming, if anything, a value that is potentially conducive to economic growth.

FOOTNOTES

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3. Phatya Saihoo, "Development Workers and the Village Monks", in Sociology of a Northeast Village, Thailand, (in Thai) Bangkok, 1969, pp. 296-298.

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7. Thirayana, Phra Maha Sathien, "Seminar in Buddhism and Thai Society", in The Social Science Review, No. 2, Vol. 7, Sivaphorn Limited Partnership, Bangkok, 1970, p. 153.

8. See for instance, Phra Maha Prayudha Payutto, Assistant General of Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University, "Problems, Status and Duties of the Sangha in Modern Society", Visakha Puja 2511 (Bangkok, May 1968), pp. 58-72.

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10. Diskul, Princess Poon, "The Four Groups of Buddhists", in Three Articles Published in Memory of the Cremation of the Late Lady Mahaisawan, Bangkok: The Buddhist Association of Thailand, 1964, pp. 2-4.

11. This is also the season during which some people go on pilgrimages involving visits to Buddhist shrines throughout the country.

12. See, Moerman M., "Ban Ping's Temple: The Center of a 'Loosely Structured' Society in Nash, Manning (ed), op.cit.

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18. An interview with Colonel Pin, Director General of the Department of Religious Affairs as reported in the Bangkok World, March 19, 1964, p. 4.

19. Wells, K.E., Thai Buddhism: Its Rites and Activities, Bangkok: published by the author, 1960, pp. 26-27.

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22. Moerman, op. cit., p. 256.

CHAPTER IV

THE POSITION AND THE FUNCTION OF THE SANGHA

Sangha Organization

A major question to be investigated is whether the Sangha by virtue of its strategic position and its great prestige, can be used as an effective agent for carrying out national policies at the village level. Therefore we have to analyse the position and the functions of the Sangha at the national and village levels. Only then will it be possible to determine whether monks are in a position to motivate villagers to participate in community development activities, the construction of roads and other nation building enterprises.

The structural focus of Thai Buddhism lies clearly in the national Sangha. With a permanent membership of approximately 120,000 ordained monks and an additional 85,000 novices, the Sangha constitutes one of the largest national group and is visibly omnipresent in Thai society.

While Thailand has encountered several crises through the centuries, Buddhism has never once suffered any ill fate in this country. On the contrary, it has flourished here from the earliest times. It has had a profound influence on the Thai arts, culture, tradition, and learning; more important still, it has dominated the character of the vast majority of the Thai people. The Buddhist way of like is an integral part of national life. In view of this, the Government deems it a duty to give protection and encouragement to Buddhism.

The Administration of the Sangha

Although the religious authority of the Sangha, or the Buddhist Order, rests with an administrative body in the Sangha itself, the Government is also responsible for the affairs of the Sangha, but it confines its responsibility to the matters connected with the State and laity. Its aim is to promote unity and joint action between the Sangha and the State, and to provide a channel through which the Sangha can communicate with government authorities. In reality, there has always been harmonious co-operation between the Sangha and the State.

Because the prosperity or stagnation of the Sangha depends mainly on its administration, the system of administering it claims the first and foremost attention.

In former days, the King of Thailand, as the Upholder of Religion, regulated and supervised the Sangha himself. As the Sangha became bigger and better established with a large body of learned Bhikkhus, (monks), it became more autonomous because the King let it run its own affairs via administrative body called the "Thera" or the "Elders". However, to achieve perfect harmony between the Sangha and the State, the "Constitution" of the Sangha, which consists of a series of laws, was enacted by the state. Furthermore, the state supervises these laws, and has from time to time brought them up to date.[1]

The laws relating to the Sangha that have been passed are:

a. The Administration of the Sangha Act, 1902;

b. The Sangha Act of 1941; and

c. The Sangha Act of 1962.

Under the Sangha Act of 1941, the organization of the Sangha was patterned after the parliamentary government adopted by the state. The doctrine of the separation of powers was applied and a balance of powers was designed to be attained by the methods of governing the three organs of the Sangha, namely, the Sangha Sebha as the legislature, the Sangha Montri (Executive Council) as the Executive, and the Vinayadhara (Assembly of Buddhist Monkjudges) as the Judiciary. Although the system worked with some degree of success, a discordant note was sounded in some quarters to the effect that ecclesiastical matters should not fall within the sphere of politics. These matters should, it was suggested, be left entirely to the administrative body in the Sangha, known as the "Thera" or the "Elders" as they were in the days gone by. As a result, a radical change in the organization of the Sangha was made by the Sangha Act of 1962 which come into force on the 1st January, 1963. And consequently the Mahathera Samagom, the Sangha Supreme Council, was established.

At the opening ceremony of the first session of the Mahathera Samagom on the 21st January, 1963. Field Marshall Srisdi Dhanarajata, the late Prime Minister, mentioned in his message to Somdej Phra Saangharaj, the Supreme Patriarch, its President, that it was the intention of the Government that the Sangha Act of 1962 should be passed in order to re-organise the Sangha so that it would be as similar as possible to that pertaining in the Buddha's lifetime, and that it was the intention of the Government to give support in every possible way to Buddhism which has been the State Religion from time immemorial and whose culture is deeply ingrained in the national character.

Under the Sangha Act of 1962, the administration of the Sangha is carried out as follows:

a. The central administration of the Sangha.

b. The local administration of the Sangha.

Central Administration of the Sangha

The king appoints a selected "Thera" or "Elder" who is highly qualified to be the Supreme Patriarch, Head of the Buddhist Order.

Under the Sangha Act of 1962, the Sangha Supreme Council, the Mahathera Samagom, serves as the Consultative Council, to the Supreme Patriarch who, according to the law, possesses absolute power. In reality, he never makes use of such power, but listens to every suggestion presented by members of the Council and calls for votes if the matter is controversial. The Council consists of Somdej Phra Sangheraja, the Supreme Patriarch, as its President, all Somdej Phra Raja Ganas (i.e. high dignitaries in the hierarchy of the order next in rank to the Supreme Patriarch) as ex officio members, and four to eight nominees nominated by the Supreme Patriarch from Phra Raja Ganas (i.e. high dignitaries below the rank of Somdej Phra Raja Gana) to hold office as nominated members for a term of two years. Both the ex officio and nominated members act as advisers to the Supreme patriarch in the Council.

Members of the Mahathera Samagom, 1969[2]

1. Somdej Phra Sangharaja, Somdej Phra Ariyavongsagatayan
2. Somdej Phra Vanarat
3. Somdej Phra Buddhaghosacaraya

4. Somdej Phra Buddhacaraya
5. Somdej Phra Mahaviravong
6. Phra Sasanasobhon
7. Phradhammavarodom
8. Phradhammapanyabordii
9. Phraprommunii
10. Phradhammapidok
11. Phradhammabandit

The Director-General of the Department of Religious Affairs is the ex officio Secretary-General to the Mahathera Samagom.

Local Administration of the Sangha

The Local Administration of the Sangha is divided up into regions, provinces, district, and precincts, corresponding to the divisions of the country by the State for administrative purposes. The Chao Kana Yai, Sangha Governor General, supervises the assigned regions which are under the control of the Chao Kana Pak, Sangha Regional Supervisors.

The Chief Monk in Changwat is the Sangha Governor (Chao Kana Changwat) who is appointed by Chao Kana Pak and is responsible to him. In addition to being generally responsible for administration in accordance with the Sangha Act, the Sangha Governor is also the supervisor of all Sangha services performed by Sangha officials in Changwat (Province).

The primary function of the Amphure, district, is to facilitate the administration of the Changwat. Chao Kana Amphure or district head monk, is the administrative head of each Amphure.

Amphure are further divided, however, into Tambol (commune) and villages, Chao Kana Tambon or Commune Head Monk is responsible to the office of Chao Kana Amphure while an Abbot is considered to be most important Sangha authority liasing between Sangha, monks and people.

In Buddhist thinking the survival of the religion is dependent on the survival of the Sangha, while the prosperity of society is thought to be related to the prosperity of Buddhism. It is the task of the monks to preserve the Dhamma through study, instruction, and dissemination of the teaching. It is the task of any Buddhist society to free a number of its men to join the Sangha in order to enable them to tread the path of the Buddha and to perpetuate his Teaching. In exchange for their support of the Sangha, the laymen acquire merit and assure the welfare of society and religion alike. Religion, Sangha and society are thus intimately interwoven.

In Ban Phai Yai religion has always been an integrated part of personal life. The Wat is the focus of religion, and also of recreation and social cohesion, and is one of the most important village institutions. Kamnan, Commune headman, although a political officer, is the head of the Wat committee which plans ceremonies, manages Wat funds, arranges Wat repairs and construction, and cares for the meterial needs of the monks.

For its survival the Thai Sangha is heavily dependent upon the material support of the general population and the active interest of the government. For its spiritual guidance the society depends upon a sound and uncorrupted Sangha.

Almost all Thai governments have been aware of the importance of a prosperous Sangha as a necessary moral, though still subordinate, force in Thai society. Traditionally the government has always actively influenced the Sangha. Well's observation that "the government expects the Monastic Order to keep out of politics, yet to operate within the administrative system as a moral and religious force",[3] is as valid today as it ever was. Each major governmental or policy change, the Cakri Reformation of 1782, the early modernisation efforts of King Mongkut and King Chulalongkorn, the revolution of 1932, or Sarit's policy of national development through strong leadership, has been accompanied by efforts to reform and reorganise the Sangha and attempts to redefine its functions in society. The successive laws relating to the administration of the Sangha bear witness to this.[4]

The traditional and most viable collective representations of the Thai are the monarchy and Buddhism. Buddhism therefore can serve as a means of political integration. It is the unifying ideology of all classes within Thai society, excluding of course the relatively few minority peoples who do not subscribe to Buddhism. Therefore being a Thai is almost synonymous with being a Buddhist. Accordingly not only control over, but also the quality of the Sangha and religion, are of vital concern to the Thai government. A well respected Sangha, co-operating with the government, not only sets the moral tone of the nation but may also serve as an effective communication channel between the highest national level and the great mass of population who live in the villages.

The early concern of the government, in this respect, was noted by one Thai scholar when he wrote:[5]

> In 1782.....King Rama 1 set hemself to cleanse the moral tone of the nation which had been neglected in the past half-century of internal jealousies and revolutions and then the Burmese wars resulting in the unsettled condition of the country and its population. Among the first problems he tackled with was the Monastic Practice of the Clery and the consequent moral degradation of the laity especially those armed with official privileges.

The first Cakri King also laid down "regulations for identification papers of individual members of the holy Brotherhood," in order to avoid the possibility that the Sangha would become a place of refuge for wanted criminals and other undesirable elements.[6]

It is interesting to note that the issue of identification papers had continued to be a problem for the successive Thai governments. In 1938 a similar proposal was made.[7] In recent years there has been increased discussion about the desirability of identification papers, not only to bar criminals from entering the monkhood but also to provide a measure of control over communists who might operate under the guise of the yellow robe.

In 1932 it was decreed that monks who are by status and seniority monastically allowed to ordain new monks(Upachachaa) should be licensed by the Department of Religious Affiars before they are allowed to admit new members to the order.[8] The Act on the Administration of the Sangha of 1962 tightened government

control still further. The reason for the enactment of this law was described in the following note that was appended to the Act:[9]

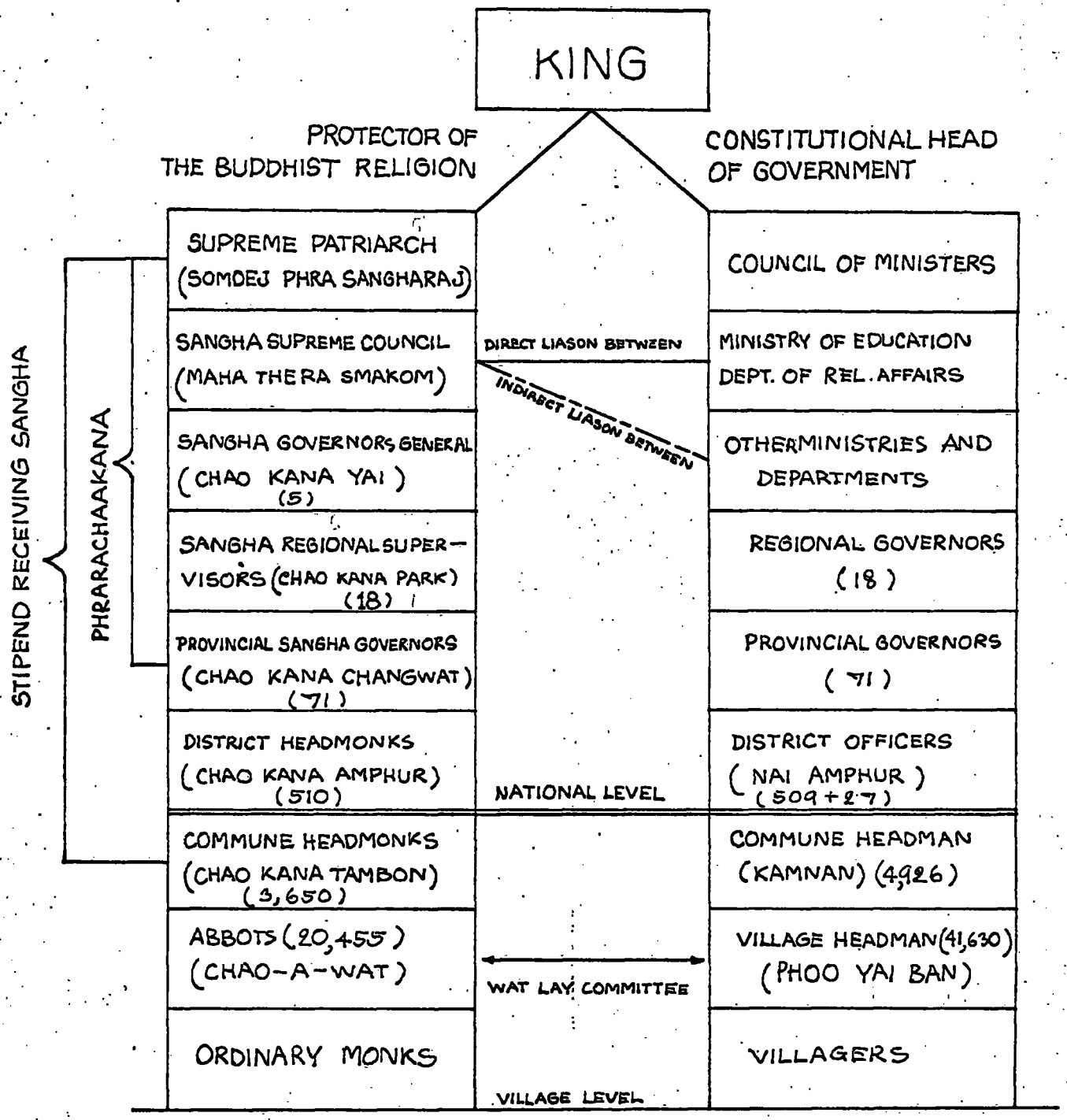
> "The reason for enactment of this Act is that the administration of the Buddhist Church is not a matter to be based upon the principle of separation of powers for the sake of balance among them as in the case under the current law. Such a system is an obstacle to effective administration. It is therefore appropriate to amend the existing law so that the Supreme Patriarch, head of the ecclesiastical community, can command the order through the Council of Elders in accordance with both the civil law and the Buddhist disciplines, thereby promoting the progress and prosperity of Buddhism."

As a hierachically organised body the Sangha's administrative structure now parallels that of the civil government at all levels.[10] Though the Department of Religious Affairs in the Ministry of Education, whose Director-General is ex-officio the secretary of the Sangha, the religious organization can be closely supervised by the government. The close integration of religious and political institutions gives the Sangha at the national level a public or official nature. It is also at these levels that the ranking clergy, and particularly those with special duties, receive monthly stipends from the Sangha treasury.[11]

Since Buddhism is a religion which formed its roots deep in Thailand, people hold that it is their traditional and

(See: Structure of the Sangha and Relationship to Government and village population)

STRUCTURE OF THE SANGHA AND RELATIONSHIP TO GOVERNMENT AND VILLAGE POPULATION



THAILAND

national religion. The Constitution of the Kingdom even stipulated that "The King shall profess the Buddhist faith and is the upholder of religions", which means not only that the King must be a Buddhist but, as there are some Thai who profess other religions, the King, being King of all Thai must therefore be an upholder of all religions. Since the Revolution of 1932 every Constitution of Thailand has recognised religious freedom.

Furthermore the Kings of Thailand have always been guided by the ten principles of Buddhist teaching which, for the kings, are:[12]

1. Dana - Almsgiving
2. Sila - Observance of the five precepts.
3. Parricchaga - Liberality
4. Ajjava - Justice
5. Maddava - Kindliness
6. Tapa - Destruction of Vice
7. Akkodha - Freedom from anger
8. Avihimsa - Tolerance
9. Khanti - Patience
10. Avirodhana - Freedom from enmity, good will

The King also presides at all principal Buddhist ceremonies. In the national flag, which is composed of three colours, in five bands, Viz, Red, White, Blue, White and Red. Red stands for Country, White for Religion as a symbol of purity, and Blue for the King.

Nowadays the King still plays an important, albeit mainly symbolic role in Thai Buddhism. He is at the same time the protector of the Buddhist religion and the constitutional head of government. In the traditional Thai view of the world, religion and kingship cannot be separated and are interdependent. In exchange for protection and encouragement of the Buddhist religion, the Sangha sanctions and recognises the Thai Buddhist Kings. Traditionally the Kings have been deeply involved in matters regarding the Sangha and religion. The Kings have been active in promoting higher standards of learning and behaviour throughout the monkhood and have stimulated translation and systematisation of the Buddhist scriptures.[13] The best known example is probably King Mongkut (1851-1868), who resided twenty-five years in the monkhood before becoming King and who created a reformist group of monks in some Bangkok monasteries - this group later becoming the strict Thammayut chapter within the Thai Sangha.[14]

Royalty and the higher echelons of the Sangha hierarchy seem to be closely associated. It has always been and still is the prerogative if the King to appoint the Supreme Patriarch (Somdej Phra Sangharaj) of the Buddhist Order. Of the last eight supreme Patriarchs, three were sons of Kings and three others were of royal descent. The King also confers the prestigious honorary titles which are essential for holding high office within the Sangha, such as the Somdej and Raach-aakhana titles.

Such monks are collectively known as the Phrarachaakhana. They numbered 438 members in 1966, 144 of whom were located in the Bangkok region (Phaak 1), while the others were more or less evenly distributed over the remaining seventeen regions.[15] According to the present Act on the Administration of the Sangha, Phrarachaakhana rank is essential for membership in the Council of Elders. Members of this group furthermore tend to hold the positions of Regional and Provincial Ecclesiastical governors.

In spite of the King's prerogatives however, the actual supervision of the Sangha has now become a concern of secular Thai government. As a constitutional monarch, the King acts in accordance with the wishes of the Council of ministers.

National Policies of Development and Role of the Sangha

In the preceding paragraphs it has been noted that the various Thai governments have always been very conscious of the potential role that the Sangha and religion can play in policies of national integration.

That the Sangha should play an active role in programmes of development is a new concept, however, but if such programmes are to be successful it would seem that the co-operation of the monks at village level is necessary.

In Ban Phai Yai, for example, the answers given by those interviewed favoured the monks very much. They claimed that the monk assisted in development work and development work

depended heavily upon the monk. Almost all felt that the monks led the way and that it was necessary for the development workers to seek their co-operation in order to be successful. The monk is well known and is traditionally respected so that he is in much the better position to lead the development work.

The development worker has better technique and it is after all his job to lead the development work, but he, however, had a big disadvantage as an outsider. The development worker has knowledge of how to help the people directly, and, by co-operating with the monks they may be successful. It was said that those development workers who consulted and co-operated with the monks were successful while those who did not were not.

The Abbot, in particular has considerable power in the community. As examples of the mutual devotion of the Abbot and the people it was said that if the Abbot wished to travel anywhere to help development or for personal purposes through difficult country, the people are happy to carry him; and during the building of the new road he camped on the site moving as it progressed.

In view of the direct help by the Wat those interviewed said that money, materials and labour were offered and sometimes the Abbot would send all the monks in the Three Wats in Ban Phai Yai, perhaps 100 monks, to help the villagers.

At least this is what would seem logical on the basis of the following observation by De Young.[16]

> "The Wat (meaning its resident Sangha) is politically and socially important in the new as well as in the

> old type of Thai village. No community program can succeed without its approval. Some sort of religious service accompanies the announcement of any new measure by the central government to gain for its decrees and programs the aura of the Wat's sanction.....Every national holiday program includes a religious service, not only because the Thai are devout Buddhists, but also to give an air of religious approval to even the most Chauvinistic program."

Moreover the monks often seem to be in a position where they can give active leadership to programs of development.[17] For these reasons the government requested the blessing and support for its program of community development from the Executive Council of the Sangha in the early 1960's.

This community development program seems to have been instigated by more than an active concern for the welfare of the villager , however. It appears that the main reasons for its implementation are political and are part of a larger scheme of counterinsurgency measures designed to fight unrest and political dissent in outlying border areas in the Northern parts of the country. On the other hand, the revolutionaries have been equally fascinated by the possibility of capitalising on the influence of the monkhood, as may be clear from the following statement by a senior Thai official: "provincial folk in the Northeast may not have then been in a position to easily distinguish between the authentic evangelistic (Buddhist) mis-

sionaries and the disguised communist propagandists.[18] To counter this threat, specially trained monks are now sent on a kind of moral rearmament mission in those areas which are threatened by subversion.

Maha-chulalongkornrajavidhyalaya, Buddhist University, has initiated training programs in which special interest is paid to remote and border areas, and has also begun a project for encouraging the participation of monks in community development.[19] The objectives are described as follows:

1. To maintain and promote the monk's status as the refuge of the people by providing them with religious education and general knowledge concerning community development.
2. To encourage monks and novices to participate in community development and thus help existing community development programs to achieve their aims.
3. To promote national and religious security.

These programs, supported and strongly encouraged by the Asia Foundation, are based on the following philosophy:

> In rural areas, the people put their trust and confidence in the monks; obedience and co-operation in any activity becomes automatic if the request comes from the monks. In an age of accelerated rural development, community development programs are sure to be effectively accomplished with monastic help and co-operation. Having this in mind and in line

> with the national development policy of the Government, the University deemed it advisable to initiate a project for training monks for the promotion and coordination of community development activities, with an aim to contribute to the Government's efforts in raising the standard of living of our rural population.

Out of 47 graduated working in rural areas in the first half of 1967, 22 were working in the threatened North-eastern part of the country and 11 in the equally threatened North.

Besides participating in these community development and missionary activities, some monks are encouraged to study for a teacher's certificate. Since 1960 they have taught in government school, thus receiving their old teacher's role. So far the Sangha Supreme Council has restricted this activity to the teaching of religious subjects only, but there are strong pressures within sections of the Sangha to allow monks to teach secular subjects also.

From the foregoing, it is clear that the Sangha and religion have always been integrated parts of the Thai political system. The political involvement of the Sangha, though previously considerable, is now revitalised and acquiring new dimensions. At the national level the Sangha is stimulated towards a new professionalism and has already accepted an active role in programs of national development.

Sangha, Wat and Village

Over eighty percent of the Thai population lives in villages where wet rice agriculture is the primary means of

subsistence. For the purposes of this study we will concentrate mainly on this part of the population and its relationships with the Sangha. It has already been indicated that the Sangha is almost totally dependent on the general population for its material support, with the exception of the higher hierarchical levels which today seem to depend primarily on the active support of the government. For the recruitment of its personnel and the continuity of its very existence, the Sangha also relies on the large reservoir of rural population. Although it appears that in recent years it has become increasingly less popular to join the monkhood temporarily or permanently,[20] the Thai monkhood still constitutes by far the largest Sangha in any country where Theravada Buddhism prevails.

In the countryside, the monks are generously supported by the villagers. Even if by joining the Sangha one ideally renounces the world and concentrates on following the path of the Buddha, in practice many ties bind Sangha and lay community together. Worshippers tend to be relatives of the monks, and both are related by ties of custom and reciprocal service. Monks are traditionally deeply involved in village affairs. Therefore religious and secular activities can scarcely be separated in a society that lives so intimately with its religion.

In discussing villages and monks being related by ties of custom and reciprocal service in Thai society, the relationship between monks and the laity in Ban Phai Yai should be considered.

The Monks and the Wat

The Sangha, or monks, who number 120,000 for Thailand as a whole (54,696 for the North East) and an additional 85,000 novices, is one of the most important, influential, and visible national groupings in Thailand. Monks are considered to be[21]

> "The living embodiment of Thai social ideals and values....the religious and social life of village centres around the Wat and its resident Sangha....the monks are spiritual leaders of village community....and have a decisive influence on social action in the village."[22]

In the North East there are 11,676 Wat, the total being 23,700 for all Thailand.[23]

Living in each Wat are temple boys, novices, monks and the head monk or Abbot.

In Thailand, as mentioned above, there are 85,000 novices. From one to four novices serve in each Wat, with the exception of Bangkok, Lampoon and Cheing Rai, where are more novices per Wat.

There from one to seven monks live in 12 of the Changwat (provinces) and from 8-15 in 3 of the Changwat in the North East.[24]

Service to the Wat is the obligation of every Buddhist family and individual regardless of sex or age. Villagers make monetary and material contributions to Wat and

religious-related causes, as well as devoting considerable time and labour. De Young, for example, reports that in one Northern village that he studied, the cash outlays for merit-making activities ranged from 7 percent to 84 percent of the total cash expenditures of each family for the year.[25] In the village studied by Kaufman, the Wat received a wide variety of individual donations in the form of money, food, or gifts, ranging from one to 20,000 Baht in cash, to a single portion of rice.[26]

In addition, villagers regularly help build or repair the Wat or other buildings in the Wat compound. Other services include a housewife's contribution: a portion of the family's food each morning; preparing for and participating in numerous religious festivals and ceremonies throughout the year; and service in the monkhood by the men.

The Wat

The Village of Ban Phai Yai has three Wats - Wat Weluwan, Wat Singthong and Wat Swang Vanaram. The largest of the three is Wat Weluwan. It is located in the East of the village, while Wat Singthong is in the North, and Wat Swang Vanaram is in the West.

Wat Weluwan has a boht, the place where the monks are able to practice their ceremonies, a preaching hall, five kuti (living quarters), a small vipassana (meditation) section, and a building for the Sopon Vidya School, a private secondary

school run by a committee chaired by the Abbot. The areas under the Kutis are used as classrooms for the Buddhist school. The Sopon Vadhya School has additional classroom area under the preaching hall. There are also toilet and bathing facilities, but no kitchen as the people contribute the food and bring it already cooked.

The largest of the five kutis which is about 9 metres by 18 metres cost 40,000 Baht and took two years to build. About ten monks can live in this Kuti. Of the other 4 Kutis the smallest cost 1,000 Baht and each of the other three 3,000 Baht. The monks built these themselves.

The Vipassana quarter comprises two small Kutis, both very new. One was a village house which the owner contributed and for the other the Abbot gave 4,000 Baht for materials. The architect contributed his services free of charge.

The Baht is quite small, only 7 metres by 14 metres found by a travelling monk from Vientien in Laos. The 73-year-old Abbot said that no one knew when the Boht was built and that it was a very old ruin. The renovation of the Boht was begun in 2490 (1947) and took three years to complete. The extent of the work was a new roof and some redecoration. The total cost was 20,000 Baht which was spent on materials with planning free. According to custom free labour was given by the villagers and the monks. The money to pay for this work came from two sources: - 10,000 Baht from the government and 10,000 Baht from the people. Although it is such a small building the

Abbot claimed that it was large enough for the Sangha Kamma i.e. the ceremonies of the monks. The present condition of the Boht, it should be mentioned, is not too good. The corrugated metal roof is deteriorating and the whole building is plainly in need of further restoration.

In 2511 (1968) work was begun on the provision of a new preaching hall. The old one was demolished and the building of the new one commenced. The area of this building measures 11 metres by 21 metres and is raised high off the ground. Being very tall and new it is quite an impressive sight. Although still not finished it is already in use. So far the cost has been 250,000 Baht and the Abbot expects to need at least another 100,000 Baht in order to complete it. The Government has not made any contribution to this project and the money has had to be raised by the villagers and supporters in Bangkok who have collected money at Ghattina and Papa ceremonies (offering of robes after the Rains Retreat and the collection of money for a specific purpose) for this purpose. In this case it has been necessary to pay for the architect and labour. A committee composed of villagers with the Abbot as Chairman manages the building work but Mr. Boontahm from Bangkok is the architect in charge of the construction. The only problem is the lack of money and so it is not possible to predict the date of completion.

Wat Swang Vana Ram was built in two acres of land surrounded by rice farms and is half a mile to the west of the village. It has a small Boht, one preaching hall, and two kuti's.

Wat Singthong has one boht, three small kuti with no preaching hall, and is located in about half an acre of land. These two smaller Wats seem in comparison very quiet and tidy, and at the time of visiting few monks were in residence.

It is somewhat unusual for a village of 150 households to have three Wats, but the Abbot explained that previously the village was much bigger and it was decided in 2434 (1891) to split Ban Phai Yai into three sections. The people in new sections wanted a wat and so in 2434 (1891) Wat Singthong was built and in 2444 (1901) Wat Swang Vana Ram followed.

The Abbot

The earliest information that the present Abbot could give regarding the history of Wat Weluwan was the name of the Abbots who held office during previous years. The first abbot came from Vientien in Laos and was named Ya Kusaa. Ya Than Siew followed and then another whose name the Abbot didn't know. Later, about 2412 (1869), came Ya Than Songlab; then about 2442 (1899) Ajan Son, who was followed in about 2449 (1906) by Ya Ku Lon. Next came Ajan Kampa in 2454 (1911), then Ajan Unjai in 2457 (1914) and following him was Ajan Unn in 2466 (1925).

Having been in Bangkok until 1935 for his studies, the present Abbot Prakru Sopondhammaporn returned to his village and became Abbot after the Rain Retreat of 1936 when Ajan Unn disrobed.

During his incumbency, as described above, the Boht has been renovated, the old Kuti have been demolished and the five present ones built; the Vipassna centre has been constructed and the old preaching hall has been replaced by a new one as yet incomplete.

According to Sangha law an Abbot may only be in charge of one Wat, but as the two smaller Wat in Ban Phai Yai do not have any Abbot, Phrakru Sopondhammaporn is in effect Abbot of all three Wat. He is Chao Kana Tambol (commune headmonk) of Ban Phai Yai. In 1945 he was appointed a preceptor, a monk appointed by the Department of Religious Affairs to ordain new monks, and he has also held the office of Vice Chao Kana Amphur (vice district chief monk) Muong Samsib since 1969. The Abbot of Wat Weluwan is now 73 years old and actively carries out his duties. As he is too old to walk long distances, he is carried in a carrying chair from village to village to perform religious ceremonies, conduct seminars of both religion and Sangha Social Service, which is carried out by Buddhist monks, and to chair the meetings for community development.

The Abbot and The Village Committee

It has been mentioned that Ban Phai Yai was divided into three sections and each section has its head man and committee. The three village committees are helped by the monks, especially the Abbot with whom the committees consult over matters concerning village donations of both labour and money. Frequently the Buddhist monks are responsible for telling the

people about the contribution levied on them by the village committee. When it is necessary the Abbot gathers the villagers in the preaching hall by sounding a large gong, and announces the contribution which has been levied on them.

During my observations, the committee of Section No. 8, chaired by Nai (Mr.) Lee Kunmee, (the village headman) held two meetings in the office of the village headman, and at the same time a meeting of village Section No. 10 lead by Nai Tin Lacktong, the commune headman took place in his office. After both of these meetings the gong of Wat Weluwan was beaten for the assembly and the villagers were informed by the Abbot of the opinions of the village committee.

Nai Lee Kunmea and three of the five members discussed and planned the raising of money from the villagers for the renovation of the small Boht of Wat Singthong and improving the path to the well in the North. In this meeting two monks, one from Wat Weluwan and one from Wat Singthong, were present as observers. They were asked about the situation of the Boht, the money and labour required, and how long the renovation would take.

They decided to collect money at a "Papa" ceremony, (the collection of money for a special purpose). The two monks then returned to the wats and discussed these things with the Abbot on the following day.

Two days afterwards the signal gong was beaten to announce the "Papa" ceremony and about 80 people, both men and women (the women were small in number) assembled in the preaching hall of Wat Weluwan.

According to the plan of the Abbot, the villagers in the three sections were divided into three groups - one group for collecting from the neighbouring villages surrounding Ban Phai Yai, one for preparing the place for the Papa ceremony and collecting in the village of Ban Phai Yai and one for looking after a group of people from Ubol who would come to Ban Phai Yai for the Papa ceremony. The Papa ceremony was to take place on 7th January, 1972, one week after the New Year Festival which is an occasion for merit-making as well. The procedure of the Papa ceremony is not detailed.

Nai Tin Lakthong, the commune headman, who is also Pooyai Ban (village Headman) of Section No. 10. He conducted a meeting of which 6 of the 7 committee members were present to discuss the construction of a new bridge as part of the improvements to the old road which links Banan Phai Yai, Ban Korh and Don Deang. This road is three kilometres long and 8 metres wide and they were at the time trying to improve this road as well. So far they have had 40,000 Baht from the government. They would need 2,000 Baht more for petrol to drive the tractor lent by the community development unit. In order to raise this, they were to ask for 20 Baht from each family, and in addition they were also to request each villager to contribute 5 days' labour.

In the following day, Nai Tin Lacktong, on behalf of the committee came to Wat Weluwan to consult the Abbot about what the village committee hoped to do. It seemed that the Abbot was in a difficult situation. He pointed out that the

villagers would be asked to make a contribution at the Papa ceremony and it would be hard for them to make another contribution. The Abbot, in turn, was told that the money from the government might be recalled if the improvement was not started within that year. Then the Abbot and Nai Tin Lacktong, the Kamnan, came to an agreement and they planned to tell the villagers on 9th January, 1972, two days after the Papa Ceremony. Consequently the villagers were brought together in the preaching hall by the signal gong of Wat Weluwan on that date.

In the meeting five or six villagers disagreed with the Kamnan about the 20 Baht contribution. The villagers argued that 20 Baht donation was too much for them. While the argument was going on the Abbot, who had kept quiet for nearly an hour, stood up and the both sides stopped arguing immediately. The Abbot then suggested a seven day labour contribution for those who could not pay 20 Baht, while those who could would make a five day labour contribution. This suggestion was agreed to and 16 villagers signed for a seven day labour contribution. The meeting then ended.

The Abbot and the Wat Committee

The Wat committee looks after the financial affairs of the Wat and together with the Abbot plans the Wat construction, festivals and ceremonies. Each Wat throughout Thailand has a committee and the lay people and the monastic community may use such a committee as a go-between.

Each of the Wats in Ban Phai Yai has its committee. The Wat Weluwan committee is composed of the Kamnan, two Pooyai Ban (village headman) and one school teacher. One Pooyai Ban, one school teacher and three villagers sit on the committee of Wat Singthong and the committee of Wat Swang Vana Ram has six members - there are two school teachers and four villagers including Nai Paiboon Khunmee, who is the chairman.

No monks sit on the committee but they must co-operate with the Abbot of Wat Waluwan in every way. No decision may be implemented without the Abbot's consent. The Abbot said that although they served separate sections there was no rivalry between the Wats. When each Wat has its festivals all the monks and villagers are happy to join together.

The committees have the duty of taking an active interest in the up-keep of the Wat and coordinating Wat and village functions by creating interest among the villagers for all Wat activities. The committee is in charge of all contributions made to the Wats and makes all decisions on Wat expenditure.

The meetings are only held for particular purposes - they are not held regularly. All issues are discussed by the members and then voted upon. The Abbot does not vote, but he acts as an arbiter whom the members refer to when they argue with each other and cannot agree themselves. Contrasting with this is what Kaufman said:

The Abbot is the chairman and also votes.....[27]

During my observation the committee of Wat Swang Vana Ram held a meeting in the Abbot Kuti. They discussed the construction of a fence round the Wat. They might have to move six bamboo trees to the west of the Wat. Three of the six members said that the bamboo trees should remain because they cast a shadow over the ground and the monks could rest in the shade. The other three members explained that bamboo leaves fell on the ground and made the ground untidy and it took more time to clean. They wanted to move the bamboo trees and grow "Asok" trees instead. They continued by saying that if the bamboo trees remained the fence would have to go around them. They could not agree and asked the Abbot to give a decision. The Abbot suggested that the bamboo trees should remain and that the villagers should make a fence behind the bamboo trees. Although the Abbot was not a member of the committee, he influenced the committee and his suggestion was accepted. So it is not surprising that Kaufman cited in his Community Studies in Thailand that:[28]

> Because of his (The Abbot's) status in the village, it is difficult for laymen and monk members to argue with him. Consequently he more often than not makes the decision, thereby rendering the committee rather less important.

The Abbot and the Buddhist School

To view the influence of the Abbot on the Buddhist school of Ban Phai Yai I shall now briefly discuss the Sangha Education system.

The Sangha Education, or general Buddhist studies, is divided into two groups, Nakdham and Pali study. The Nakdham syllabus may be said to consist of four parts. Pupils are required:[29]

1. to show competence in writing essays in the Thai language,
2. to study the life of the Buddha (as embodied in the story of his life),
3. to know the essentials of the Buddhist doctrine (Dhamma) and
4. the 227 rules of Vinaya, which are the rules of conduct which apply to monks.

The Nakdham examination ranges from grade 3 to grade 1. The Study of the above syllabus for the lowest grade is begun at an elementary level and in the next two grades more advanced study is made. The Nakdham Study is not only for monks and novices, but also for lay people. The Nakdham examination for the laity is called Dhamma Suksaa which excludes the rules of the Vinaya.

Organisation of Nakdham Examination

The Nakdham examination is held once a year in mid-December and it takes four days, one subject a day, to complete, and a four hour period of time limited for each subject.

Miekong Dham Snamloung (executive body of Nakdham Education) is responsible for the organisation of the examination. In practice the head of the Miekong Dham Snamloung is under the supervision of Mahatherasmakom (the Sangha Supreme

Council). The organisation of the Nakdham education system is divided into two parts, the central and regional parts, for the convenience of both the students and the official monks who organise the examination.

In the central part, Bangkok and Dhonburi, the examinations are held in the large Wats. The students from the schoold in the area surrounding the Wats come to the examination at one o'clock.

In the regional part the examinations for Nakdham Toh (grade 2) and Nakdham Ehk (grade 1) are held in the Wats in the main towns of the Ampur (district). The students from distant schools cannot return to their own Wat from the examination on the same day.

They have to stay in the Wats within the town throughout the four days of examinations. The Abbot of the Wat in which the student monks stay takes responsibility for them and prepares rooms, food and other facilities for them. Chao Kana Changwat (the Privince chief monk) and the Abbot in the town must plan these facilities before the examinations start. In practice the Abbots ask the people to make a contribution of food for the student monks on this occasion.

Apart from the examinations in the towns the examinations for Nakdham Treeh (grade 3) are held in the villages by dividing the Ampur into several areas. There is one examination centre for each area. The students come from the schools in the area and come together in the Wat, where the examinations are conducted. The villagers offer food to them through the sessions.

Kammakan Sob Nakdham (the committee for the Nakdham examination)

There are three levels of Mammakan. The monks who are appointed by the Chao Kanapak (regional supervisor) to observe the examination in the Changwats are called "kammakan pak monks". The Kammakan pak committee is at the highest level of all the Kammakan.. Chao Kana Changwat appoints one Kammkan for each examination centre in his province. The number of monks on the Chang Wat Kammakan is dependent upon the number of examination centres. These monks are called "Kammakan Changwat". They are sent to different examination centres in towns and villages in the Ampur to help the Abbots.

The Kammakan who watch over the examination classrooms are appointed by the Abbots and are called "kammakan pracham hongsob" (invigilators). This is the Kammakan at the lowest level. Normally two of these kammakan are needed for each classroom.

During the examination the Kammkan must watch over the class and not go out of the classroom. In case he cannot remain in the classroom until the examination is over, the other monk must be asked to take his place. The kammakan also can punish a student who breaks the rules of the examination by taking his examination papers and expelling him from the classroom. His examination papers are crossed with a red pencil and handed to the head of the Kammakan who usually sends the papers together with a detailed report of what the student has done against the rules, to the Mie Kongdham Snamloung. The student is not allowed to continue his examinations and he may receive a punishment of 5 years prohibition from examinations.

There are between 20 and 50 students to a room. One of the two invigilators sits at the table at the back of the class while the other one sits at the front. After the students have entered the room the examination questions are given to the students by the Kammakan.

The Nakdham Examination Questions

The examination questions are compiled by the Mie Kongdham Snamloung. Having sealed many sets of questions the Mie Kongdham Snamloung sends them to the Department of Religious Affairs. Then the Division of Religious Education in the Department of Religious Affairs, forwards them through the Section of Education in the Changwat (province) and from there they are sent to the Ampur Office (District office), and then to the headmaster of the government primary schools in the villages where the examinations are held.

In the Ampur one or two government officials from the Section of Education bring the envelopes of the questions to the examination centres while the headmasters of government primary schools do the same in the villages. The envelopes must be opened in front of the three Kammakan and one government official about 15 or 20 minutes before the examinations start (at one 1:00 p.m.). These envelopes must be signed by the Kammakan and government official before they are opened. These signed and emptied envelopes are returned together with the examination papers to the office of Mie Kongdham Snamloung. The Kammakan and the government officials are also requested

to certify that the envelopes are in good condition before they are opened by signing a special book.

Evaluation of the Nakdham

About one week after the examination, the examination papers for Nakdham Ehk (Nakdham grade 1) and Nakdham Toh (Nakdham grade 2) are collected in the office of Mie Kongdham Snamloung. Here about 500 monks who hold the certificate of Nakdham Toh and Nakdham Ehk or pali grade 3 or 4 are appointed members of the committee which marks the Nakdham papers.

They are divided into many groups; each group has three members who sit face to face at tables which are placed in several lines in the big hall. After the examination papers are supplied to the tables they start to mark the papers. A pass or fail mark is awarding without percentage calculation.[30]

After the completion of marking the Mie Kongdham Snamloung sends the examination results to the Buddhist schools throughout the country and the total number of students who have passed the examination is announced on the radio by the Department of Public Relations.

Having received the list of students who have passed the examination from the Mie Kongdham Snamloung the Department of Religious Affairs issues the Nakdham certificates which the General Director of the Department of Religious Affairs signs at the left hand side while the signature of Mie Kongdham Snamloung is on the right. The certificates usually are handed to the students by the headmasters of the schools in May.

The marking of the Nakdham Treeh is similar to that of Nakdham Ehk and Nakdham Toh, but it is conducted in the Changwat. Certificates for Nakdham Treeh (Nakdham grade 3) are provided by the Department of Religious Affairs as well.

Pali Studies

Apart from the three Nakdham grades the students can continue their higher Buddhist Education by studying Pali, the language of Buddhist doctrinal texts. Pali studies are conducted separately and the relevant examinations are called "prayog" which have nine grades.

The syllabus of Pali studies consists of:

1. Pali grammar and translation of Pali into Thai for Prayog 1, 2 and 3;
2. translation of Thai into Pali and Pali into Thai for Prayog 4 to 7 and
3. the students who continue their higher Pali studies in Prayog 8 and 9 are requested to write poems in Pali as well.

Pali examination

The examination for Pragog 1 to 5 is conducted in February and the examination for Prayog 6 to 9 is held in March. The executive body of Pali Education (Mie Kongpali Snamloung) organises these examinations once a year as mentioned above. The procedure of the Pali examination is similar to that of the Nakdham.

Pali certificates issued by the Department of Religious Affairs are signed by the Minister of Education on their left side while the signature of Mie Kongpali Snamloung is on the right. The number of students who pass the examination is small - only 24 percent of Nakdham students and 8 percent of Pali students passed the examination in 1962, while 33 percent of the Nakdham students and 11 percent of the Pali students passed the examination in 1958. The number of the students who pass the examination declines yearly (see table No. 4.1 and 2). This may be caused by the Buddnist Education system, which Phra Maha Sathien Thirayana makes reference to below.[31]

> On the education of monks, Nai Sulak Sivaraksa said that the present system of the monks' education bears no relation to the modern needs. It also creates many difficulties because it does not suit the needs of the learners. Some subjects are so difficult to understand that they are not suitable for the learners at that particular level. Learning is mainly concentrated in memorising. The teaching is also aimed to help in memorising the lesson. Explanation is based on the traditional way. The evaluation of results is only possible by measuring the amount remembered and by examination questions that cannot cover the whole subject. The students will become bored with trying to memorise all the time. Only a few will have enthusiasm.

Table No. 4. 1

Data for Nakdham Studies**

Cases	1958	1959	1960	1961	1962
Buddhist Schools	6,285	6,238	6,503	6,294	6,572
Teachers	12,229	13,060	14,461	13,639	14,184
Students	183,236	171,232	170,112	160,316	159,049
Applicants	129,374	119,120	116,491	106,530	140,282
Students who passed examination	60,404	37,505	33,859	38,611	38,342

** Annual report of religious activities for 1963, the Department of Religious Affairs, Ministry of Education, Bangkok, 1963, P. 118.

Table No. 4.2

Pali Studies*

Cases	1958	1959	1960	1961	1962
Pali Schools	602	549	611	619	590
Teachers	1,661	1,801	2,022	1,930	1,934
Students	21,505	22,142	23,029	20,621	17,748
Applicants	9,327	9,676	18,691	10,023	9,931
Students who passed examination	2,394	2,028	1,584	1,053	1,410

* Annual report of religious activities for 1963, the Department of Religious Affairs, Ministry of Education, Bangkok, 1963, P. 124.

The important thing is that the students see no purpose in their study. They will not think of learning for the sake of gaining knowledge or carrying on the religion. But they will always ask themselves what they will become afterwards. In the end there will be bad attitudes toward learning. Furthermore, at present worldly education offers many alternatives. There is, therefore, much distraction from this field. Learning to be a proper monk is only halfheartedly.

The study for examinations in the Buddhist Holy Order is mainly concentrated in Pali language with the aim that the graduates from advanced study will be able to translate the Tripitaka. However, the methods are not appropriate. The curriculum of study is, in fact, the instrument for learning more vocabulary. Consequently a student becomes similar to a walking dictionary.

The measurement of results is by language tests rather than by examination on how to use the language. Mark awarding is very strict without percentage calculation. This sort of thing is discouraging to students. Repeated failure which ought to help to intensify knowledge, in fact creates more cloud. In the end, instead of being students they are mere candidates for examination, because the right to

sit for an examination can be attained without any study. Moreover, the students will adopt an unkind attitude towards the organisers of education".

The Buddhist School of Ban Phai Yai

Wat Weluwan of Ban Phai Yai has a Buddhist School which consists of two branches, Nakdham and Pali Studies. The Buddhist School was opened in 1935, and is conducted in the area under the monastic buildings of Wat Weluwan. The places where classes are held were visited and photographed and three monks closely connected with the school were interviewed. The three monks included Phra Maha Chalee, a teacher and organiser at the school and Phra Maha Sawat, a teacher.

All those concerned with the school, students, teachers and administrators are Buddhist monks. The students, whose ages range from 12 years to 45 years, there being no age limits, are either samnaras (novices) or Bhikkhus (fully-ordained monks more than 20 years old). The teachers and administrators are all monks, the Principal of the school being Phra Khru Sopondhammaporn. All these monks live in the Wat or Temple and classes are conducted below the monks' quarters. The buildings in which the monks live are termed Kuti, and are built on platforms raised approximately 10 feet from the ground. In the area sheltered by the kuti a few rough benches and tables are placed and there, under 4 kuti, classes are held. In all there have been 66 studying Nakdham, who at the time of the study had

already completed their course, with eight teachers making a ratio of approximately one teacher to eight students. The situation in the other branch of study, Pali, is not so good - 77 students and 2 teachers, a ratio of approximately 38 students per teacher. Not surprisingly the examination results in the Nakdham section have been much better than in Pali; last year about 82 passed the examination in Nakdham but only 2 students passed the Pali examination.

The students all come from areas near to Ban Phai Yai and since the recruitment of teachers is conducted amongst those ex-students who have furthered their studies in Bangkok or elsewhere they too are native to the area.

The little money necessary for the support of the students is usually offered them by their parents and each teacher receives a small annual allowance. The students have no fees to pay either for tuition or accommodation. As monks they may live in the Temple free of charge and receive food and support from the people. They have only to pay for their books and writing materials and of course they will require a little money for a few other necessities. In all their parents need to offer them about 600 to 700 Baht for the year (about £12 - £14), that is approximately 150 Baht for books etc., and the rest for general maintenance. The allowance received by the teachers is 200 Baht (about £4) or less per year.

As no tuition or any other fee is charged the school depends for its income on a small Government allowance and the support of the local people. Finance then is the major problem faced by the school and one which seems to have always been present, always as insoluble as it appears to be now. The

Department of Religious Affairs offers just 200 Baht per year - the cost of one teacher only, and the local people about 2,000 Baht per year. With 10 teachers to maintain at an annual cost of 200 Baht per teacher there is only 200 Baht left for any other expenses. As this is an agricultural community which is rather poor obviously the contribution by the people may vary according to the quality and value of their produce. Hence some years the teachers may be asked to take less than the normal 200 Baht but like the students they live in free accommodation and receive the food and support offered by the people as do all Buddhist Monks in Thailand.

Shortage of teachers is another problem but this they say could be overcome with more money. The monks interviewed reckon that the school requires 5,000 Baht per year to function properly but it seems that it is unlikely that they will ever be able to have such an income. The local people seem to be very interested in the school and contribute what they can in the way of materials as well as finance but they can never be expected to contribute sufficient and their contribution is, as mentioned, necessarily unreliable which makes any attempt to plan ahead very difficult. Both Phra Maha Chalee and Phra Maha Sawat saw no hope of improving the school's income. They believe that the Government isn't interested in helping a Buddhist School - this belief seems to be borne out by the present nominal grant of 200 Baht per year. Living as they do in a village they have little chance to contact any potential benefactor and of course the rich people of the towns know little of the conditions of a small Buddhist school in a village of North East Thailand. So it seems that this

school must always be poor.

The lack of funds is also the reason for the poor school accommodation. The Abbot explained that with little money it was better to concentrate on building kutis in which the monks could be housed with rough open classroom accommodation below, rather than to attempt the expense of a proper school building. In a hot country as Thailand this is probably alright. The class is sheltered from the rain and sun. Unfortunately the condition of the classroom area is otherwise not too good - a little dirty and the benches and tables are obviously not properly looked after. The fact that classes are not now in progress may account for the apparent neglect.

The school does have one room belonging to it; this has been built under one kuti and houses the school library. It would seem that they have no real idea of what a library should be. There are only a few books in two cupboards and none of these books is in very good condition. There is a set of the Pali Tipitaka in Thai - the Tipitaka is the collection of 3 sets of books which make up the basic Scriptures of Buddhism. Three other cupboards are packed tight with wrapped palm leaf books of the old type. Otherwise this room houses all manner of things and has more the appearance of a store room than a library. Lack of funds again obviously contributes to the inadequacy of this library.

As stated, on completing their course the students leave, the majority disperse and return home but a few continue

to further their studies in Bangkok or another town. Ten or more go to Bangkok each year but not more than 7 go to study in towns. Having passed the examination which is set by the Administrative body of Buddhist Education and having received the certificate issued by the Department of Religious Affairs, they then have the right to go on to study other subjects at university. Alternatively they may train as school teachers, as many do. Others study further and continue to some kind of government post.

The teachers too often leave to further their studies, they are often students as well. This means that the shortage of teachers particularly on the Pali side is considerably aggravated by a fairly high turnover.

The Abbot explained that the Buddhist School is of considerable value to the village. As a centre of learning it attracts a great number of outsiders and this has a very healthy effect on the community. It encourages the villagers to take notice of what is going on elsewhere, other methods etc., and to be more adventurous, they learn about trade and are able to set up very good little shops. In many ways they benefit by the presence of the outsiders.

Before he came here and set up the Buddhist School in 1935 only Pali Grammar was taught at Wat Weluwan. This was a rather difficult and old fashioned course taking the good student two years to complete. Afterwards the students would study Abhidhamma (the higher teachings of Buddhism). This system had been in operation for a very long time but Phra Khru

Sobhan Dhammaporn decided that it should be improved. Under the present system the student can take an examination and is able to further his studies if he likes.

Phra Khru Sobhan Dhammaporn is now 37 years old and is the principal of the school. He now lives in a kutis away from the main Wat on a small spit of land extending into a lotus-covered lake. He is a native of Ban Phai Yai but from the age of 26 he spent 13 years studying in Bangkok and afterwards 2 years in Chiengmai before returning to set up the Buddhist School.

Despite being very poor and ill-equipped the school is very active and is an obvious asset to the community. It provides contact with the outside world and the presence of an active Buddhist Centre has a good effect on the people of the village. Their continued support and interest in the welfare of the monks, teachers and students bears witness to their appreciation. It has also benefited other areas where ex-students have been able to set up schools of their own, such as Phra Maha Pom, at Khemarat. But unless the school's income is increased it may never be able to develop and may well decline.

The Abbot and the Private School (Soponvidhya School)

The substantial contribution toward secular education was one of the most outstanding activities of the Buddhist monks in Thailand. The monks used to have a hand in national education by being both teachers and course organisers. Since the Thai countryside has been opened up by secular schools and secular teachers since the end of the nineteenth Century, only

a few monks have been teaching in schools and the number of Wat schools has fallen. However the majority of schools are still attached to the Wats. In 1965 the Department of Religious Affairs made a general survey and found that 9,035 schools were attached to the Wats.[32]

All private schools come under the jurisdiction of the Department of Secondary Education, within the Ministry of Education. Some of them are on the kindergarten level, others on the elementary and secondary levels. Generally, private secondary schools offer only an acedemic curriculum. A few, however, have been offering some vocational courses such as watch repairing, radio and television servicing, hair dressing, dress making, shorthand-typing, car maintenance, driving, printing and so on.

To encourage private schools to do a still better job, the Government has given quite substantial assistance to them. The aid usually comes in many forms, such as subsidies to the school budget for teachers' salaries with the intention that qualified teachers may be employed, special annual bonuses for outstanding teachers, and construction of school buildings. Only private schools owned by bona fide persons are entitled to receive aid for construction of school buildings. Such organisations as foundations, Wats, organizations or government agencies are eligible. These schools sometimes pay a nominal rent to the Government.

Private schools meeting these criteria may be accredited by the Ministry of Education. Accredited private schools have been allowed to conduct their own examinations in the terminal grades up to Grade 10 (the last grade in secondary school). On Grade 12 (final grade for pre-university) level, the Ministry of Education has always conducted the final examinations for all schools, government and private.

Soponvidhya School

Up to 1966, out of the 2,099 provate elementary and secondary schools, 558 have been accredited. Soponvidhya School is a private school which has not been accredited.

Soponvidhya School, which was started in 1962, consists of three sections, primary, junior and secondary. Classes were first conducted in the area under the preaching hall of Wat Swang Vana Ram. However, in 1965 when the number of students increased, Wat Swang Vana Ram was not suitable (as there was insufficient accommodation available) and the school was moved to Wat Weluwan.

Like the Buddhist School, Soponvidhya School has no proper school building and the lack of funds is the reason for the poor school accommodation.

The classes for primary and junior schools are conducted under a shelter in the Wat compound while the secondary school classes are held in the area under the preaching hall of Wat Weluwan.

The school committee has Phrakru Sopondhammaporn as chairman and Mr. Sanguon Sondee as Vice Chairman; 10 villagers

and 16 teachers also sit on the committee, making a total of 28. Nang Sao (Miss) Boonlai Kunmee, the school manager, who was interviewed, said that the school committee had more than 28 members in previous years, but some had resigned. The reasons for each resignation were different; some had no money to invest, as each committee member has to invest some money; some objected to little or no profit being made and some were too busy. The committee holds an annual meeting, and is responsible for everything concerning the school.

Mr. Sanguong Somdee, vice chairman, is also the present principal and there are 16 teachers - 8 for the primary and the Junior school and the other 8 for the secondary school of which six are women. The principal is paid 750 Baht a month while the others are paid from 50 Baht to 750 per month.

Like the other private schools in Thailand, finance is the major problem faced by this school, a problem which always seems to have existed. The government offer 28,800 Baht a year, they earn 25,000 Baht from tuition and the school committee contributes 150 Baht per person per year. Nang Sao Boonlai Kunmee reckons that the school requires 100,000 Baht per year to function properly, but it seems that it is unlikely that they will ever be able to have such an income.

In 1971 there were 65 students in the primary school, 119 in the junior and 53 in secondary school, making a total of 237.

The majority of the pupils come from Bah Phai Yai and the rest from the 7 villages which surround Ban Phai Yai,

the furthest being Ban Seng which is about 3 kilometres away. When asked how the pupils travelled to the school, it was said that some came by bicycle and some walked and in most cases they carried containers of sticky rice and food for lunch, as well an any school equipment that might be necessary.

Junior and secondary school pupils pay tuition fees but not primary school children. Junior pupils pay 120 Baht a year, while secondary school students pay 150 Baht per year, and if more than one pupil comes from the same family then that family pays the fee for only one.

It was claimed that the school was successful in examination, and the reason given was the close interest taken by the villagers. Such a claim appeared to be justified but probably the reason lies more with the school itself. In the absence of sophisticated equipment it must be that the success of the school depends heavily on the teaching staff. It was impossible to gauge accurately how competent the teachers were, just as it was impossible to examine the work, but the impression given was that it was a neat and happy school in very competent hands. It may be that the villagers desire for education is yet another factor or perhaps they are very quick to appreciate the benefits offered by this school. The result of the examinations may be seen in table No. 4.3.

Phrakru Sopondhammaporn fears that after his death it may not be possible for the school to continue at the Temple. The school depends heavily on the Abbot for organization and classrooms. If they have an Abbot with no interest or idea about the school it will decline.

TABLE NO.4.3

Data for Soponvidhya School

1966-1970

Year	Students	Students who passed the examination	Students who failed the examination
1970	205	205	-
1969	165	161	4
1968	148	145	3
1967	132	122	10
1966	126	122	4

Mie Ohkkam System of Supporting Monks.

The villagers of Ban Phai Yai exist on a very simple diet of locally produced food. Naturally the monks, who depend on the villagers for their food, receive the same simple diet.

The village of Ban Phai Yai has only 150 households and yet day by day they feed over 100 monks. One household provides food for a monk or novice twice a day. A young couple may help their parents to look after a monk. The householder is usually termed "Mie Ohkkam", the supporter. A container filled with sticky rice and other food for the morning meal is usually brought to the Wat at 7.30 by small girls aged between 9 and 14 and some old women. Having returned from collecting alms the monks and novices sit separately in two groups, each group in two parallel lines facing each other, on the mats prepared by the novices. After the blessing in Pali the novices take the containers, hand one to each monk, and take one each for themselves, then they start the morning meal. The procedure for lunch, at 11.00 a.m. is similar to that of the morning meal. In the evening the novices return the cleaned containers to the correct Mie Ohkkams' houses.

The Visit to the Mie Ohkkam's House (Khiun Hien Mie Ohkkam)

It is a custom for every monk and novice of Ban Phai Yai to visit his supporter's house onee a week. This custom is termed "Khiun Hien Hie Ohkkam" and the Khiun Hien Mie Ohkkam occurs on the evening before the Buddhist Holiday.

In the village of Ban Phai Yai the villagers who do not observe the eight precepts[34] on the Buddhist Holiday (which

observance is known as "Wan Silyai" literally "the day for the great precepts"), observe the five precepts on "Wan Silnoi" ("the day for the small precepts") on the day before the Buddhist Holiday.

A monk or a novice of Ban Phai Yai goes out to his supporter's house to give the five precepts at about 8.00 p.m. on the Wan Silnoi.

The Five Precepts (Silnoi)

To invistigate the "Khiun Hien Mie Ohkkam" custom of Ban Phai Yai the ritual of the five precepts in rural Thailand should be discussed.

The first mention of the five precepts (Pali: panca sikkhapadani or panca silani) is found in the canonical texts of the early Buddhist tradition.[35] Originally these precepts seem to have been "a sort of preliminary condition to any higher development after conforming to the teaching of the Buddha and as such are often mentioned when a new follower is 'officially' installed...."[36] When Buddhism spread over various nations, the use of the 'panca silani' must have gradually diversified. In areas where Buddhism co-existed and competed with other religious disciplines, the link between the five precepts and official installation could well have remained or have become even more pronounced. In China, for example, up to the present time, the five precepts have been taken as a solemn lay ordination.[37] In regions where Buddhism has been the State religion for many centuries, such as Thailand, asking for the five precepts may no longer be linked with an installation into

the Buddhist faith.

In rural Thailand, the ritual of asking to receive the five precepts is a common event. Any person who takes part in the usual communal religious services, which are held in private houses as well as in the monasteries, will have the opportunity to receive the five precepts many times a year. During special days, when a major religious festival is celebrated, the precepts can be given as often as several times a day, each time at the beginning of a new ceremony. Whenever a chapter of monks and a group of laymen assemble for a religious service, the five precepts can be given, and the order of events at the commencement of the service seldom varies.

In all Buddhist ceremonies, before the monks arrive, the laymen prepare the dais on which the members of the Sangha will sit, and place an image of the Buddha at the far end of the room and arrange mats and cushions in single file on the left hand of the image. When the monks enter, the senior monks will sit nearest to the statue of the Buddha, and the junior monks further away. Where possible they will be seated in single file, facing the laymen. However, in the case of the Khiun Hien Mie Ohkkam ceremony of Ban Phai Yai the Mie Ohkkham prepare only two cushions, with no statue of the Buddha, for the Lugkam monk and his accompanying novice both of whom, afterwards, will go to the novice's Mie Ohkkam house which is nearby to perform the same ceremony. When the elder of the household feels it is time to start he will call everyone to attention by asking three times in Pali in a clear voice:: "mayam bhanta visum visum rakkhanatthaya tisaranena saha panca silani yacama". The

three words "visum visum rakkhanatthaya" are translated as: "Each person for himself, in order to obtain protection." Presently, after considering some Thai data, we will suggest an alternative translation of these words.

In Central Thailand the five precepts can also be asked for using the formula: "mayam bhante tisaranena saha panca silani yacama".[38] This second formula differs from the first one mentioned only in that it omits the words "visum visum rakkhanatthaya". At first sight we would expect that this more compact formula is used in preference to the first formula, it being easier to memorise. However, it appears that the second formula is used only rarely in rural Thailand. During my observation, when the elder of the household accidentally proceeded to ask for the precepts with the second formula, the Lugkam monk interrupted him and made him recite the first formula. According to this monk, the difference between the two formulas is substantial. After receiving the precepts by way of the formula with "visum visum rkkhanatthaya" there will come a moment when the layman who received them breaks a precept. If that happens, he still retains four of the five precepts; if he breaks another precept, three remain, etc. If a person takes the precepts without the words "visum visum rakkhanathaya" he is in a position where, if the breaks a precept, all five are broken. The reason why the second formula should be avoided in most circumstances is therefore because it is believed that the promise resulting from the second formula is much more difficult to uphold than the promise resulting

from the first formula. It is only in exceptional cases, when all laymen agree that a solemn promise is warranted, like on the day that Kathin robes are offered, that the second formula should be used.

Being aware of this Thai interpretation of the difference between the two methods of asking for the five precepts, a re-examination of the words "visum visum rakkhanatthaya" is warranted. The words "visum visum" mean: "each on his own", but can also be translated as: "one by one, separately"[39] and "rakkhana" has, apart from the meaning "keeping, protection, guarding", also a second meaning: "observance (especially with relation to the 'sila')".[40] Instead of translating: "each person on his own for the sake of protection," the alternative can be: "for the sake of observing them, one by one, separately." This alternative translation corresponds closely with the beliefs of the Thai.

In answer to either of the formulas, the monks will recite in a clear voice the sentence: "namo tassa bhagavato arahato samma sambuddhassa", three times. This sentence is followed by the Three Refuges; after each sentence the monk halts in order to give the laymen occasion to repeat after him. When the three refuges have been said three times, the five precepts are prompted and repeated:

Panatipata veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami
Adinnadana veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami
Kamesu micchacara veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami
Musavada veramami sikkhapadam samadiyami

Surameraya majjapamadatthana veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami.

They can be translated as:

I undertake (to observe) the rule of abstinance from taking life

I undertake (to observe) the rule of abstinance from taking what is not given

I undertake (to observe) the rule of abstinance from wrong sensuous pleasure

I undertake (to observe) the rule of abstinence from false speech

I undertake (to observe) the rule of abstinence from intoxicants which cause a careless frame of mind.

When the fifth precept has been prompted and repeated, the monk solemnly recites the following Pali words, while all laymen show great attention: "imani panca sikkhanadani silena sugatim yanti silen bhogasampada silena nibbutim yanti tasma silam visodhaye".[41]

While these words are proclaimed, some laymen will softly murmur some Pali formula which are known to be suspicious, while some others remain quiet. At the last syllable, which is usually drawn out, all laymen bow their heads and raise their joined hands to the forehead.

While the ritual of promising to adhere to the "pancasilani" appears to function in a manner intended to bring the laymen temporarily out of the secular world, it seems warranted to ask whether the Thai farmers know the importance of their

promise to adhere to these rules. In theory, the people could utter Pali sentences without realising that they are committing themselves to precepts, or without being aware of what the precepts entail. It will become clear that this is not the case.

Children, although they have learned in elementary school the meaning of each precept, are not expected to understand the implications of taking the five precepts. Adult laymen, especially the men who have spent at least one rainy season in the monkhood, can usually give a coherrent picture of the precepts. Among the old people, those who consider themselves to be devout, men as well as women, can give elaborate exegetical details. The views of some of the older people on the subject of the five precepts can be summarised as follows:

The first precept is broken when life is taken; human life as well as animal life. Slapping a mosquito or killing a germ in an egg by boiling it are certain branches of this first rule. Torture, of lesser forms of inflicting pain, is considered to fall under this rule by those who are most knowledgeable about ritual affairs.

Any form of stealing, whether it be taking of material goods against the rightful owner's wish, or borrowing without taking the trouble to ask the owner's consent consists of a breach of the second precept. It is generally conceived that gambling falls under this rule.

The third precept does not only forbid the obvious breaches of proper conduct like adultery, incest and rape, but also forbids acts showing intention to behave in a licentious manner, such as flirting with a woman who is already married to another person.

The fourth precept is very easily broken. Abstinence from false speech is seen to cover a wide range of untruths, like exaggeration, insinuation, abuse, gossip, unrestrained laughter, deceitful speech, joking and banter. This precept can often be broken together with another precept; a breach of promise involves the second precept and the fourth, flirting with a married woman involves the third and fourth.

The last of the "pancasilani" forbids the use of alcoholic beverages, and all other stupefying substances like opium and drugs, unless taken for medicinal purposes. A well-known story illustrates the evil of the fifth precept, and at the same time throws light upon the attitudes towards the "pancasilani" as a whole.

Once upon a time there was a man who was thoroughly good; he lived an exemplary life. One day he was challenged to break just one precept for once. The good man thought: "The first precept I cannot break, having great compassion for all beings. With regard to stealing, no, I cannot take what is not mine, that would hurt the owner's feelings. The third precept is out of the question, as it would upset my wife whom I dearly love. As to false speech, I abhor it. However, the fifth precept does not harm anybody but my own brain, so if I have to break

a precept, I had better take some alcoholic beverage."

The man took a bottle, and pouring himself a drink he felt rather curious as to the taste of this forbidden liquor. When he drank the first glassful he considered it rather innocent and tasted a bit more.... When the bottle was empty he noticed his neighbour's wife looking amazed at his behaviour. He staggered towards her and tried to rape her. When her husband came to help, a fight resulted in which a man was killed. In order to escape revenge, our 'good' man had to flee and became a robber. Thus breaking the fifth precept had awful results.

It seems plausible to draw the conclusion that the people in rural Thailand are usually well aware of the importance of the promise to adhere to the five precepts.

The *Lugham Monk or novice and the Mie Ohkkams are closely tied by this custom. Phakru Sopandhammaporn, the Abbot, claims that the "Mie Ohkkam" system both maintains the monks and keeps a close relationship between the Wat and village. The Mie Ohkkam system in the North East can be seen in the villages in which the Wat has a Buddhist School.

It also should be noted that after the completion of the examinations, the monks and novices return to their own Wat for two months and come back again to Wat Weluwan to continue their studies in Mid-May; they usually bring some gift for their Mie Ohkkam and having returned to the Wat they go to visit the Mie Ohkkam immediately. In this way the Mie Ohkkam see he has returned and send container of food to him on

the following morning. The Abbot said that most of the Mie Ohkkam families look upon the Luhkkam monk or novice as their own son and are willingly to look after him and even to care for him when he is sick.

The close relationship between the Lugham monk or novice and Mie Ohkkam family plays an important part in the social life of Ban Phai Yai and it is essential to the maintenance to the Wat and the Buddhist School of Ban Phai Yai.

In view of these aspects I shall discuss the relationship between the Wat and the village in rural Thailand. In earlier times the Wat represented a centre of culture for Thai peasant society. The Wat was the centre not only of religion, but also of literacy, knowledge and science. A man was not considered mature if he had failed to spend a period in the Wat, preferably as a monk, otherwise as a novice. The Wat with its resident Sangha was the source of education and served as a school for the village youth. As teachers, the monks were held in high esteem; they were the intelligentsia of the nation. The monks served the community as practitioners of traditional medicine, as astrologers and as advisers in all realms of life. They were often skilled in crafts, like architecture, sculpture and the digging of wells, too.

Under the influence of increasingly rapid communications and modernisation, however, the functions of the monks have declined; indeed, some of these functions have even been lost. Since 1932, especially, the secular Thai school system expanded at a rapid pace and the monks soon lost their most

vital function a teacher of the young. With the loss of their teaching function, they also lost part of the prestige that is associated with teaching and knowledge in Thai society. Moreover, it also meant that they lost some of their contact with the young members of the village communities. While the Thai countryside was being opened up by secular schools and secular teachers, it was also opened up for new ideas and practices. Soon the monks were no longer the best educated group in Thai society. Also modern medicine competed successfully with traditional practices and the expanding government bureaucracy and communications network opened up new markets and new horizons for the peasant. At present, economic behaviour and modern education are completely divorced from religion.

In spite of the loss of these functions and with the exception of those places where organised religion is disappearing for reasons of poverty, religion still appears to be a vital and trusted institution in Thai rural society. Religion offers the most important forms of village society's collective expressions. The Sangha and the temple represent the trusted and time-honoured truths of Thai village life. For the villager, Sangha, temple and religion are a purpose in themselves, belonging to a way of life. People are only vaguely aware that their local Sangha also belongs to a hierarchy that extends into the nation and up to the Bangkok government and the King.

The Abbot of the village Wat tends to be a local man, selected by the villagers from within their district. Although village communities may hold somewhat different opinions about

the qualities that an abbot may possess, abbots will generally be selected primarily on the basis of their religious reputation and merit making capacity. Besides this central quality, a potential abbot may have other skills that attract the villagers such as his reputed capacities in meditation, his knowledge of the Buddhist scriptures, his qualities as a medical practitioner, or his command of astrology and horoscopy. Altogether, he will be selected because of his expected qualities as the spiritual leader of the village community and because the villagers feel that they can put their trust in him. The abbot is formally part of the national Sangha hierarchy that has to make the appointment; but according to the regulations of the Sangha, abbots are always appointed in consultation with the influential local laymen.[42]

In view of the decline in functions of the Sangha and the decreasing interest in religion for religion's sake in the villages as elaborated in the section on merit, it might be expected that the position of the Sangha in the villages will be less important today than it has been formerly. This certainly seems to be true for the rank and file of the village monks, but at the same time this is generally not true for the position of the abbot. Almost all village studies acknowledge the great importance of the position that a fully qualified abbot holds in the village. Such a man is often well read and, by virtue of his training, he has some familiarity with the outside world. Because of his stature as a religious man, villagers and ranking outsiders alike show reverence to him.

As a specialist he may command some esoteric skill, Moreover, as the keeper of the Wat he is not only in the centre of all relevant religious expression, but he is also placed directly in the centre of all social and communal-ritual village activities. To understand, therefore, his unique position in the village we have to understand the importance of the Wat as the foremost associative institution for the village community.

Almost all the Thai village studies by anthropologists agree that the only sociologically meaningful definition of a functional village community in rural Thailand is through the clientele of a Wat. The parish defines the village as a community much better than the rather arbitrary administrative boundaries. A second factor that confirms the position of abbot and Wat is that much of the influential village leadership is concentrated in the Wat lay-committee and the Wat lay-accountant (wayawatchakorn), selected and appointed by the abbot, in consultation with the village community, to assist him in his dealings with the secular world.

The Wat constitutes the vital focus of community life in the village. A most varied array of secular activities take place in the Wat compound. The great funfairs that surround the Wat occasionally have been mentioned previously. When Nai (Mr.) Smat Chan-ngam had returned to his native village in "Mahasaragam", he visited the Wat compound on the evening that a film was shown there. And what a film! The villagers had been told that a motion picture would be shown, and shortly after seven almost everybody had gathered in the front yard of

the Wat. Many women and a few men had prepared sweets, snacks and other delicacies which they sold to the crowd. The centre of the happening was a loudspeaker-equipped van with a little platform in front of it. About a quarter to eight, a man appeared on the platform to make a speech to the crowd. He was quite witty, and as everybody was eager to be amused, told them that he had come from far away places where he had discovered treasures that he would like to share with the honoured ladies and gentlemen in the audience. These most valued treasures were: bottles of medicine which would prevent pregnancy, headache, constipation, menstrual pains and sore legs; other bottles of medicine were said to make hair and beard grow, to stimulate sexual activity, while at the same time taking care of tired backs, toothaches and swollen feet; there was medicine for the young, for the old, for the middle aged; medicine for women, medicine for men, all in bottles and in prices ranging from two to twenty Baht.

The performance of the salesman was excellent. They sold a great deal, while the crowd was entertained. Although people became tired after two or two and a half hours of witty sales talk, they still stayed, anticipating the showing of the film. Finally, by ten thirty, a movie screen was set up and the show began. It was made of clippings from old news-reels: there were scenes of the London Olympics, boxing matches, unknown heads-of-state making visits to unknown capitals, and many other oddities of days long past; the sound track was a variety of languages, always loud, seldom in Thai. The show lasted

some twenty-five minutes, and the audience left for home. Everbody was happy: the abbot had received some rent, the salesmen had sold a carload of coloured water, and the people had been entertained and also had obtained all kinds of cures, handily packed in bottles, for all kinds of ills.

The Wat is the centre of communal life, much more so than the coffee shop or the market place. Kaufman has listed an impressive list of functions of the Wat in Bangkhuad, where the Wat not only served as a community centre, but also as a meeting place where news and gossip were exchanged, a counselling centre, a hospital, a school for religious training, the community chest and storeroom, a free hotel, a news agency for the district office, a charity employer, a bank, the clock, a sports centre, the morgue, the poorhouse, a landlord, a home for the aged, a reliable water reservoir, an asylum for the psychotic, a music school, and formerly even as a refuge for criminals.[43]

It is obvious, then, that the abbot occupies a very significant position in the village by virtue of his being head of the main centre of religious and social activities. This position is often reinforced by the fact that the government school tends to be located in or next to the Wat compound. His recognised religious status, together with other attributes, adds considerably to his prestige, and he may be expected to be one of the most influential village leaders.

FOOTNOTES

1. The Mahamakuta Educational Council, "Acts on the Administration of the Buddhist Order of Sangha", (Bangkok: 1963), P.(a)

2. The Department of Religious Affairs, Ministry of Education, "Patitinsaasanaa", (Bangkok: 1969), PP. 15-16

3. Wells, op.cit., P. 256 (Wells, K.E., Thai Buddhism: Its Rites and Activities, Bangkok: published by the author, 1960)

4. The Mahamakut Educational Council, "Act on the Administration of the Buddhist Order of Sangha" (Bangkok: 1963); also see Ishii, Yoneo, "Church and State in Thailand", Asia Survey, VIII, 10 (October, 1968), PP. 864-871

5. Dhaninivat, H.H. Prince, Monarchial Protection of Buddhist Church in Saim (Bangkok: The World Fellowship Buddhist 1964) P.1

6. ibidem. P. 5

7. Landon op. cit., P. 131 (Landon, P., "The Monks of Modern Thailand," Asia, XL 1964)

8. In 1966 only 2,466 monks out of 25,782 who would qualify according to the rules of the Sangha are allowed to ordain new monks

9. The Mahamakut Educational Council, "Acts on the Administration of the Buddhist Order of Sangha, (Bangkok: 1963), p. 58.

10. Structure of the Sangha and Relationship to Government and village population in this Thesis, P. 134A.

11. Wells op. cit., P. 191.

12. Jayanam, Derek "The Influence of Buddhism on Thailand" in Thailand the Land of the Free, Germany, 1960, PP. 11-12.

13. Dhaninivat. op. cit.

14. Ratanakornkosol, Luong, "The Sangharaja of the Holy Thai Order", Three Articles published in Memory of the Cremation of the Late Lady Mahaisawan (Bangkok: The Buddhist Association of Thailand, 1964), PP. 7-14.

15. Raai-ngan Kansaasanaa Prachampii 2509 (Bangkok: Kromkansaasana Krasuong Suksaathikan, 1968), PP. 98-107

16. deYoung, J.E., Village Life in Modern Thailand (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1958), PP. 148, 156. Similar statement can be found in the writing of most village Anthropologists. See for instance, Klausner, W.J., "Popular Buddhism in Northeast Thailand", in Northrop, F.C.S. and H.H. Livingston (des.), Cross Cultural Understanding: Epistomology in Anthropology (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), P. 75

17. Ingersoll, op. cit, P. 62 (Ingersoll, J., "The Pries's Role in Gentral Village Thailand, " in Manning Nash 'ed.', Anthropological Studies in Theravada Buddhism "New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966")

18. An interview with Colonel Pin, op. cit.

19. See Mahachulalongkornrajvidyalaya, Buddhist University, Catalogue 1967-1968 (Bangkok 1967)

20. The Department of Religious Affairs, Ministry of Education, "Annual Report of Religious Activities for 1963, (Bangkok: 1963), PP. 85-103

21. The Department of Religious Affairs, Ministry of Education "Annual Report of Religious Activities for 1964, Bangkok, 1964. P. 269

22. J.A.N. Mulder, "Sociology and Religion in Thailand: a Critique" Journal of the Saim Society, LV, Part I, (January 1967), PP. 101-111

23. The Department of Religious Affairs, Ministry of Education "Annual Report of Religious Activities for 1964", Bangkok 1964, P. 249-259, 273

24. ibidem

25. deYoung J., "Cost of Maintaining a Monastery", Village Life in Modern Thailand, University of California Press (Berkeley, California, 1966), P. 130

26. Kaufman, H.K., Bangkhuad: A Community Study in Thailand, Locust Valley, N.Y.: J.J. Augustin, 1969, P. 186

27. ibidem P. 112

28. ibidem P. 112

29. Tambiah S.J., "The Education of Monks", Buddhism and the Spirit Cults in Northeast Thailand, Cambridge University Press 1970, P.127.

30. Thirayano, P.M.S. "Seminar on Buddhism and Thai Society", The Journal of Siam Society, (Bangkok: 1970) P.327.

31. ibidem. PP.326-27.

32. Thailand Yearbook 1968, (Bangkok: 1969), P.540

33. The term "Mie Ohk" is used by the monks and novices to mean "mother" or "woman" while "kam means "supporter"; so the words "Mie Ohk" and "Kam" when used together give sense of "mother who looks after".

34. (*) The Eight Precepts:
    1. Panatipata veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami
    2. Adinnadana veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami
    3. Abrahmacariya veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami
    4. Musavada veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami
    5. Sura-meraya-majja-pamadathana veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami
    6. Vikala-bhojana veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami
    7. Nacca-gita-vadita visukadassana-malagandha-vilepana-dharana-mandana-vibhusanatthaana-veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami
    8. Uccasayana-mahasayana veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami.

    They can be translated as:
    1. I take the precept to abstain from killing.
    2. I take the precept to abstain from stealing.
    3. I take the precept to abstain from incelibacy.
    4. I take the precept to abstain from lying.
    5. I take the precept to abstain from liquor that cause intoxication and heedlessness.

6. I take the precept to abstain from taking food at an unseasonable time.
7. I take the precept to abstain from dancing, singing, music, and unseemly shows; from the use of garlands, perfumes, and unguents; and from things that tend to beautify and adorn(the person).
8. I take the precept to abstain from (using) high and luxurious seats (and beds).

(*) Narada Thera & Bhikkhu Kassapa, The Mirror of the Dhamma, (Candy-Ceylon: 1970), PP. 2-3

35. Majjhima-nikaya, 1, 345; 1, 521; Samyutta-nikaya, II, 68; II, 167; Anguttara-nikaya, IV. 10,97.

36. Pali-English Dictionary, Pali Text Society, London, 1966, P. 712b

37. Holmes Welch, "The Practice of Chinese Buddhism 1900-1950", Cambridge University Press, 1967, P.361-365

38. If only one person asks for precepts "mayam" is changed into "aham" and "yacama" into "yacami".

39. Pali-English Dictionary, Pali Text Society, London, 1966, P. 640b

40. ibidem P. 560b

41. Although many Thai do not understand the exact meaning of these words, it is interesting to record the translation: "These five precepts lead, with good behaviour to bliss, with good behaviour to wealth and success, they lead with good behaviour to happiness, and therefore (will) purify my behaviour."

42. Thaleangkan Kanasong (Official Announcements of the Sangha) Chabab Phisead, Vol. 50, Part 12 (Bangkok 1963), P. 569

43. Kaufman H.K., Bangkhuad: A Community Study in Thailand, Locust Vally, N.Y.: J.J. Augustin, 1969, PP. 113-115

* Lugham literally means "The son who is looked after".

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The primary purpose of this chapter is to provide a summary of the entire study and it is the purpose of the following section, which is the final one, to reach some conclusions about the leadership potential of the monkhood in policies of national development.

Summary

1. The interview survey results indicate that the major needs of the Northeast villagers are basically three in type, as follows:
   a. Agricultural and general economic improvement, effecting generally an increase in farm income and including specifically a better water control and supply system to facilitate farm irrigation, bathing of draught animals and jute soaking during the dry season;
   b. Better village roads, and bridges;
   c. Improvement of health and sanitation conditions, especially the installation of a safe drinking water supply system.
2. There is no single village pattern for solving group problems or resolving common needs; nor is

there any singular village leader. In both instances there are several. Which problem-solving pattern or what village personalities appear as leaders depends on the problem at hand.

3. Problems of a religious nature, or related matters, call to the forefront religious leaders, the monks in particular, but lay members of the temple committee as well.

4. Official matters that affect the entire community are the primary concern and responsibility of the village headman, who in turn usually seeks the counsel of the village elders. If the matter pertains to education, the school principal and teachers are also consulted. If necessary, a mass meeting is called by the village Headman to inform the people of the official matter in question.

5. Secular matters strictly of a local nature involving, say, some village improvement project, such as the construction or repair of a village road or bridge, are reviewed first by the Village Headman and elders, who together form a kind of "village committee". The matter is then brought up for general discussion at a community meeting. At such a meeting or series of meetings, often held in the preaching hall of the Wat compound,

agreement is reached as to the course of action the group should adopt. The Abbot and possibly other senior monks are usually present, not only to give their blessing to the meeting and insure the success of the project, but also to assist in formulating a group concensus.

6. The effective implementation of any group decision affecting the entire community usually requires the assistance of the local Abbot and other senior monks, who by their mere presence at the work site or by their active participation in the work itself stimulate the villagers to collective action.

7. As basic socio-politico-economic units, the extended families serve as multipurpose problem-solving entities as well. The members of these units practice mutual aid among themselves, helping each other in farming, house-building, financial and personal matters, and numerous other activities.

8. Group co-operation in the form of mutual exchange of labour in farming, house-building, and other activities may also involve village units larger than the household and extended family. For example, the neighbourhood group or a circle of close relatives and friends may function as the co-operating unit. This latter unit, which

is activated only when the need arises, is not formally organised and has no permanent set of officers.

9. A village usually has several standing committees, each with a different function. These include the Wat and school committee, both of which have been in existence for some time. In any case the members of all these committees can be considered as representing a very important part of the real leadership in the community. Many of the same individuals, such as the Village Headman, school principal, and certain influential village elders, tend to serve on all or most of these village committees, with the Abbot regarded as an ex-officio member.

10. The villages resolve the problem of feeding the local monks by the use of "the mie ohkkam system of supporting monks".

11. Inter-personal Quarrels or inter-family disputes are usually settled within the village with close relatives or friends, respected village elders, the Village Headman or senior monks intervening as mediators.

12. Personal problems are frequently solved by seeking the counsel of the local Abbot or a respected senior monk, in addition to discussing the matter

with close senior relatives and friends.

13. If there is any individual or class of individuals who stand out as most important and influential in the village society, it can be no other than the Abbot or the senior monk of the local Wat. Acknowledged as spiritual leaders, their influence nevertheless extends deeply into the secular realm of village life. Nothing of any real importance can be accomplished without the active support of the village clergy.

14. The greatest motivating force in the village culture, if such can be identified, must be the concept and practice of merit-making. Activities that bring the participants religious merit, such as feeding the monks and making donations to the Wat, elicit the warmest and most enthusiastic response from the people.

15. The villagers are familiar and closely identified with local Government officials, such as the Village Headman and Kamnan, but generally speaking they are unacquainted with officials at the provincial and national levels, particularly the latter. By and large the National Government appears to the Northeast villagers as a remote entity that in the distant past has never taken a genuine interest in their welfare. These considerations will be examined in a part of the conclusions.

Conclusions

Although on the basis of the extended discussion earlier concerning the leadership rendered to the community by the Abbot and senior monks, Village Headman, school principal, family head and village elders, the members of different village committees and organisations, it can be stated that the Abbot, the Village Headman and the principal of the government primary schools are regarded as being influential and of the three the Abbot is the most influential.

To measure the leadership potential of the monks, particularly that of the Abbot, it will be sufficient to compare those who are formally village leaders and to achieve a genuine understanding of this, regarding the above, we will firstly consider the aspects which have direct relevance to the position of the last two leaders, which has declined in effectiveness.

It is generally known that the villagers in the Northeast, the depressed region of the country economically, have very little identification with the Government. The attitude of these people may be described as negative. But this is perfectly understandable for until very recently they have for the most part been ignored. The Northeast was viewed by many Government officials as the "Siberia" of Thailand. The people's only contact with the Government was through the local officials, whose primary function in the past was to enforce restrictive laws and collect taxes. If the villager manufactured home-made beer to celebrate an occasion, the police were there to arrest him. If he wanted to cut down trees, even those on his own farm land, the forestry officer was there to prevent him from

doing so. He cannot even slaughter his own livestock for family consumption without government permission. And the revenue officer was ever around. Whichever way he turned there was some restrictive Government regulation. What hurt most, however, was that he received practically nothing in the way of benefits from the Government in the past. There is the superior and paternalistic attitude characteristic of many Government officials, of looking down on the village people and their way of life, treating them as immature children or servants, and demanding that they be treated as Chao Nai (masters).

The only reason for inserting the above here is to emphasise the fact that the attitide and behaviour of the local officials towards village people has a direct bearing on the image the villagers have of them and the Government as a whole. These attitudes of the villagers affect the Village Headman and the school principal to some degree since they have been incorporated into the government structure that will be discussed in the following section.

The first position to be analysed is that of the Village Headman or Pooyai Ban. In olden days the Pooyai Ban was selected by the villagers as their leader to represent them in their contacts with the outside world and to coordinate certain village activities. His rule was basically that of a primus inter pares and the power of his decisions was the power of mutual agreement. But in the process of the central government in village affairs, the position of the Headman has changed. He is still selected by the villagers, but now their

selection needs to be approved by the district officer.[2] Slowly but surely the Headman has been incorporated into the government structure. In many cases he no longer seems to stand on the basis of his village constituency, but merely functions as the last and the lowliest link of the national administrative structure. Although his association with the government carries a measure of prestige, to translate the prestige into authority is quite another matter. His position has become very ambiguous indeed. The district officer, or Nai Amphur, expects him to pass the orders of the central government down to his villagers, while he is in no position to effectively feed the wishes of the villagers into the higher, bureaucratic officialdom.[3]

The following quotation suggests that the district officer and not the Headman is the Government as far as villagers are concerned:[4]

> The district head (Nai Amphur) is regarded with trepidation and distrust, yet treated as a king when he makes his annual tour of the village. The gold stripes on his uniform represent the power to help or to impede, and usually connote the latter. People avoid him whenever possible. He, on the other hand, regards the farmers as his intellectual and social inferiors. The social relations of the village Headman to the district head can best be understood by attending the monthly meetings. The village representatives behave abjectly and humbly. Meetings are one-sided, with village headmen seldom if ever taking the opportunity to raise questions or to discuss their problems.

> The district officer's relationship to the village headmen is definitely of the phuyai-phunoj type (phuyai, lit. 'big person', phunoj lit. 'small person').

The relationship between government and villagers can be characterized by an absence of democratic procedure, a one-way traffic in terms of orders and suggestions (from the top down), and a feeling of ineffectiveness on the part of villagers. Generally it has been their experience that direct contact with the government should be avoided whenever possible. The villagers do not have the idea that they politically participate in the Thai nation: they are subjects of the government, not citizens of Thailand. New national policies of social welfare and development are looked upon with some suspicion, and community development reaches them in terms of orders that have to be executed rather than as a programme designed for their benefit on the basis of felt needs and local decision making. Furthermore, the idea of local co-operation with the government in development programmes is too new to be readily accepted by the villagers.

For all these reasons the position of the headman has declined in effectiveness, and other respected villagers may carry more weight in local decision making.[5]

The second position to be discussed is that of the principal of the government primary school. As a civil servant in the Ministry of Education he is certainly the most obvious representative of the government structure and the outside world. Moreover, he is generally not a native of the village to which he has been assigned. But in the minds of the villagers,

the principal normally does not seem to be closely associated with national institution. He is, first of all, the representative of highly respected knowledge and he works primarily with village children. In this respect, the Wat organisation has lost part of its functions and its prestige to the school and its teachers.

Because of his familiarity with the outside world and his greater knowledge, the village people, leaders as well as others, may often seek the head teacher's advice and he may consequently wield substantial influence in the village. This of course need not be so, unless he is a native of the village. Some teachers may feel alien to the village and keep themselves apart, but if they choose to play an active role in village affairs, they seem to be comparatively well educated and well placed to do so.[6]

The third and the last position to be analysed is that of the Abbot. It has already been demonstrated that the leadership potential of the Abbot is very great indeed and that he may wield considerable influence over a number of informal village leaders who are concentrated in the prestigious Wat Lay-committee and the office of the lay-accountant.

It is realised that, although he is a part of the national Sangha hierarchy, neither the Abbot nor the other local monks are dependent on the government for their material support. On the contrary, the Wat and those in it are supported by the people that patronize the Wat. An Abbot may eventually receive some monetary reward from the Sangha treasury on the

basis of his rank, but the amount concerned is too small to be of any significance. Consequently the Abbot enjoys a great deal of autonomy, and does not necessarily identify with the policies of the national hierarchy and the government. On the contrary, he is more likely to identify primarily with the interests and the thinking of his villagers. He is very enthusiastic about programmes designed to enhance the welfare of the community because he knows that they are in the interests of his villagers. In other words, Abbots seem to be well placed to promote such activities, and are prone to do so because they construe these to be in accordance with local needs and desires.

The three obvious elements of the formal power structure of the village are then Abbot, headman and school principal, each deriving his position and prestige from a different source; these are respectively religion, government, and knowledge.

The village headmanship tends to be the least effective in the village power structure, especially when the Abbot shows an active interest in village affairs, in which case the position of the Abbot tends to carry most weight.[7]

The national government seems to be well aware of the relative importance of the headmanship. Since the government thus far has been ineffectual in incorporating the village administratively into the nation, an effort is being made to achieve a higher degree of structural integration and loyalty to the nation through the other channels. Therefore the school and the motivating power of the Sangha are to be utilized in this respect.

Tension between active headmasters and active Abbots seems to be a common phenomenon in the Thai countryside, though administratively both Abbot and headmaster operate within the framework of the Ministry of Education. In some cases this is due to a factor observed by Kaufman.[8]

> In Thai theory, the school and the Wat should work hand in hand. The Ministry of Education,...., has delegated all headteachers to coordinate their efforts with those of the local Abbot. But this arrangement has had repercussions throughout the nation, as well as in Bangkhuad. As mentioned earlier, the school in Bangkhuad, like many others, is built on Wat property but pays no rent to the Wat. Permission is requested of the Department of Religion and seems always to be granted. This places the school under certain obligations to the Wat, however, and many an Abbot takes advantage of the situation.

Whenever possible, independently minded headmasters tend to break away from the supervision of the Abbots and try to exert autonomous influence on village affairs.

The headmaster therefore becomes a sort of natural ally of the headman and the informal village leadership vis-a-vis a strong and independent Abbot. But although the teacher can influence village affairs by virtue of his greater knowledge, he also is an outsider. Therefore, he can but rarely operate as an independent leader with a following. Among the secular

leaders of the village he may become the most influential person, but an open confrontation with the abbot may force him to leave the village. It is the Sangha, therefore, that is ultimately the most influential institution in the village and the Abbot is the person who wields the greatest motivational power.

It should be obvious, without further clarification, that the official link between government and village is weak and in motivational terms rather ineffective.

Of course another factor that may seriously hinder communications between village and government with regard to policies of social welfare and development is the serious shortage of competent civil service personnel at the district, or Amphur, level. Even if attitudes of Amphur officials and villagers were to change, the necessary personnel for extension activities would not be available.[9]

It is therefore understandable that the government is attempting to win the favour and possibly the active co-operation of the Sangha for the implementation of its policies of social welfare and development. As the most respected and least suspected leader in the village, the Abbot seems to have a greater capacity to act as an effective intermediary between government and people than headman or schoolteacher. Moreover, the Abbot's cooperation would also suggest religious sanction for government policies.

FOOTNOTES

1. See "mie ohkkam system of supporting monks" in this thesis, P.174

2. See "the secular authority and leadership system" in this thesis, P. 31

3. Sharp, L. et. al., Siamese Rice Village: A Preliminary Study of Bang Chan (Bangkok 1953), P. 47; Kaufman op. cit., P.78

4. Kaufman op. cit., P. 34, Impact of USOM Supported Programmes in Changwad Sakon Nakorn (Bangkok Research Division USOM), P. 24

5. Impact of USOM Supported Programmes in Changwad Sakon Nakorn, op. cit.

6. Kaufman op.cit., P. 34; deYoung op. cit., P. 168

7. Kaufman op.cit., P. 78

8. Kaufman op. cit., P. 94

9. Impact of USOM Supported in Changwad Sakon Nakorn op. cit., PP. 16-17, 19.

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