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RELIGION IN RURAL CENTRAL THAILAND

An analysis of some rituals and beliefs

by

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This thesis is submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in the Australian National University

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Except where otherwise acknowledged in
the text, this thesis represents my
original research.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'B.J. Terwiel', written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke extending to the left.

B.J. Terwiel

PREFACE

The preparation for the research of which this thesis is a result began in 1964, when Dr R.H. van Gulik lent a textbook and gramophone records for the study of the Thai language¹ to a group of undergraduate students at the University of Utrecht. For more than two years these students held regular meetings during which they covered the greater part of the course. Most of them persevered with the study of this language because a plan had been developed to form an anthropological 'expedition' to a small community in Thailand. It was intended to set forth in 1967 and, once in the field, each member would gather data almost independently from other members of the group. In order to prevent duplication of work, and to spread the scope of the research as wide as possible, each member had to choose a certain topic within the anthropological discipline upon which to base fieldwork. One decided to concentrate upon decision-making and authority (the 'power structure' as it was then called), one would look closely at land-tenure, another would deal specifically with problems related to kinship and genealogy, whilst the author of this study would focus his attention upon the religious aspects of social life. Since these plans were conceived while the students involved had only recently commenced their academic studies, it was possible for some of them to map out several courses which would prepare them for the planned fieldwork. The author was thus able to incorporate the

1

Mary R. Haas and Heng R. Subhanka, Spoken Thai, Holt Spoken Language Series, 1945.

reading of Sanskrit and Pāli texts and the History of Buddhism in the program of the doctoraal examination in cultural anthropology.

The conditions attached to the allotment of funds for this joint fieldwork proved too demanding, and the plan for the 'expedition' was abandoned in 1966. However, the preparatory work of several years proved fruitful in at least one instance when, in December 1967, the Australian National University admitted the author as a research scholar.

Before taking up the scholarship, it was possible to travel extensively in central and northern Thailand. The main object of this journey was to select a community where the circumstances seemed favourable for anthropological fieldwork, where the inhabitants would not be opposed to prolonged intensive research which would centre upon their religious observances.

No effort was made to ensure that the community to be selected would be 'typical' or 'average', since it was virtually impossible to form a firm opinion on such matters at that stage of the research. It was argued that if the selected community should prove markedly different in its religious practices and beliefs from those of other communities, this would by no means invalidate the research. In such an event, analysis of the differences between the religion studied in detail and the religion of other communities would elucidate the topic of research as much as would analysis of the situation where no marked variation could be traced.

In retrospect it can be said that the religious observances of the community in question did not differ in any major aspect from those of other communities visited

in the central rice-growing areas of Thailand¹ and areas surrounding this basin².

The homogeneity of religion in central Thailand is not surprising when seen in historical perspective. Archaeological finds indicate that religions of Indian origin have been established in the area which is now called central Thailand probably from the second century A.D. onwards³. Throughout this region buildings and objects which show a connection with Buddhism are well represented. Since the beginning of Thai political dominance over this area in the thirteenth and fourteenth century A.D., the prominent position of the Buddhist religion has remained unchanged. From that time onwards no major changes in the religion of Thailand seem to have taken place, notwithstanding many political upheavals and turbulences. This dominance of the Buddhist religion for many centuries implies a continued existence of an organized order of Buddhist monks, a fixed body of sacred texts and a wealth of monasteries. In this respect it can

1

See Figure 1, p. 2.

2

During the more than 16 months of fieldwork, it was possible to visit monasteries and attend ceremonies in various places in the central rice-basin of Thailand other than the community selected as base. In addition we were able to compare our findings in rural areas of Phetburi, Kaanchanaburi, Nakhon Ratsima and Trat (for the spelling of Thai place names see Note on Transliteration, Appendix I, pp. 346-348.

3

Some Thai scholars tend to date the arrival of Buddhism as early as the reign of Aśoka in the third century B.C.

ความเป็นมาของพุทธศาสนา ในเมืองไทย หน้า ๑๔-๑๕

Suriyabongs places it as far back as 329 B.C. (Luang Suriyabongs, Buddhism in Thailand, University of Thammasat Press, 1955, p. 38). There is no firm evidence to support these early dates.

be added that the region as a whole is very accessible. Almost every house is connected by an encompassing network of waterways, a circumstance not only favourable to central control of the whole region, but also permitting dissemination of ideas through migration and mobility of the inhabitants.

Both the historical religious continuity and the accessibility of the area are factors associated with the phenomenon of uniformity of religious behaviour in central Thailand.

Religious behaviour in other areas of Thailand, especially in the north and north-east of the country, was found to be at variance in many details from that of the central region and was therefore not included in this thesis.

It was the uniformity of religious practices in the central region that precipitated the idea of analysing aspects of the religion of rural central Thailand as a whole, using the community selected for the main period of fieldwork as a paradigm.

Acknowledgements

In the different stages of the research, various people and organizations assisted me. Among these I would like to thank in the first place the Australian National University for granting me a Ph.D. scholarship for four years and financing the last two periods of fieldwork.

I am indebted to Professor J.A. Barnes, now of the University of Cambridge, England, for initial assistance and encouragement. Among my informants in Thailand, the following people greatly assisted me with their wisdom and

friendship: Phra Khruu Wimonthiti of Watphanøenpluu, Phra Pliig and Phra Rood of Watsaancaaw, Phra Khruu Methithammaanujud of Wat Laadmethan and Joom Sañiem Carøencan.

During the writing of the thesis I was greatly encouraged by Professor A.L. Basham and Dr H.H.E. Loofs of the Department of Asian Civilizations of the Australian National University whose patient supervision proved of great assistance.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AAS	Acts on the Administration of the Buddhist Order
ASTB	Anthropological Studies in Theravada Buddhism
DPN	Malalasekera's Dictionary of Pāli Proper Names
JSS	Journal of the Siam Society
KHD	Kane's History of Dharmaśāstra
McF	McFarland's Thai-English Dictionary
MMW	Monier-Williams' Sanskrit-English Dictionary
NGNVO	Nachrichten der Gesellschaft für Natur- und Völkerkunde Ostasiens / Hamburg
PED	The Pali Text Society's Pali-English Dictionary
Ph.Th.	พจนานุกรมไทย
PTS	Pali Text Society
SBE	Sacred Books of the East Series
SSFA	The Siam Society Fiftieth Anniversary Commemorative Publication
TSD	Haas' Thai-English Student's Dictionary
WZKSA	Wiener Zeitschrift für die Kunde Südasiens und Archiv für indische Philosophie

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Setting of the Fieldwork

The community selected for the main period of fieldwork¹ is situated in the province of Ratburi², in the south-west corner of the central rice-growing area of Thailand³. From the provincial capital, which also carries the name Ratburi, a bitumen road leads in a south-easterly direction, parallel to the river Maeklong⁴. At the point where this road leaves the course of the main river to follow a side stream, a footpath continues to skirt the river Maeklong in an easterly direction. Following this path to the point where the river โอม⁵ meets the Maeklong there is a monastery. The origin of this monastery cannot be determined with certainty. Oral tradition claims that it was founded hundreds of years ago by a monk who came from the north-east of the country, and

1

The three periods of fieldwork in Thailand upon which this study is based were a preliminary survey which lasted from 24 October 1967 to 27 November 1967, the main period from 3 April 1968 to 11 March 1969 and finally a period from 23 October 1969 to 16 January 1970.

2

ราชบุรี . When Thai words are introduced for the first time, the spelling in the Thai alphabet will be given. For the method of transliteration of Thai words, see Appendix I, pp.

3

See Figure 1, p. 2.

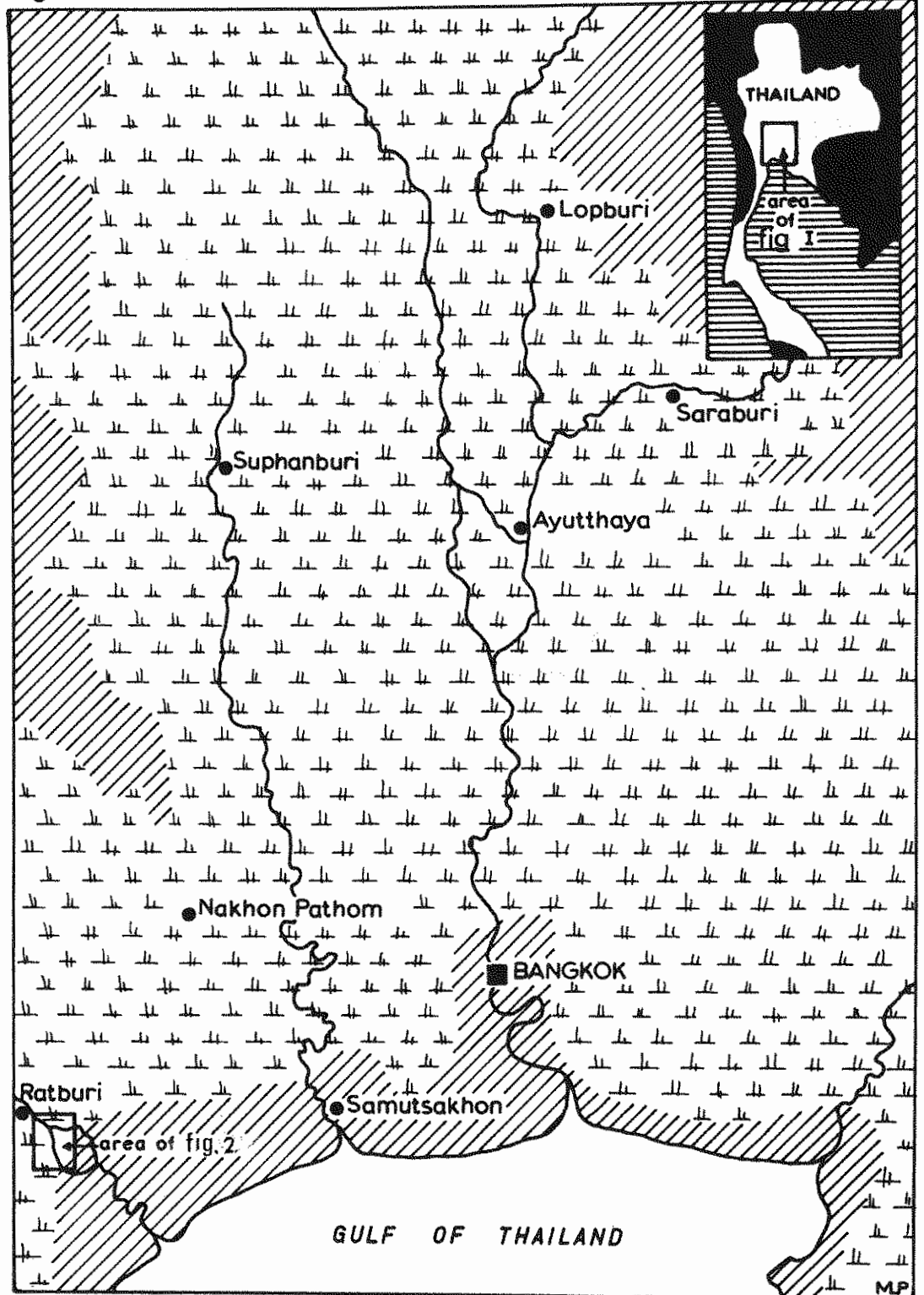
4

แมกคลอง

5

ออม

Fig. 1 THE MAIN RICEGROWING AREA OF CENTRAL THAILAND



scale 1 : 1,000,000

that at that time the name of the monastery was Watkεεwfaa¹, 'Monastery of the Precious Sky'. More definite information revealed that approximately one century ago it was known by the name Watpaaknaam², 'Monastery at the Mouth of the River'. From that time onwards, some old people can recall the names of all the abbots. Recently, however, the name has changed again, this time to Watsaancaaw³, 'Monastery of the Shrine of the Lord'. This name is derived from the fact that the monastery is situated next to a big shrine, built by a man of Chinese descent after winning a big prize in the lottery Huaj kookhoo⁴. Although the shrine is situated next to the monastery, the Thais do not use it for religious purposes. Its upkeep is in the hands of a Chinese caretaker and its worshippers are invariably Chinese from the provincial capital.

Watsaancaaw faces the river Maeklong and is situated on a rectangular plot of land of eight rai⁵. Like most Thai rural monasteries, the area can be considered to be the community centre of the population sustaining it, and

1 วัดแก้วฟ้า

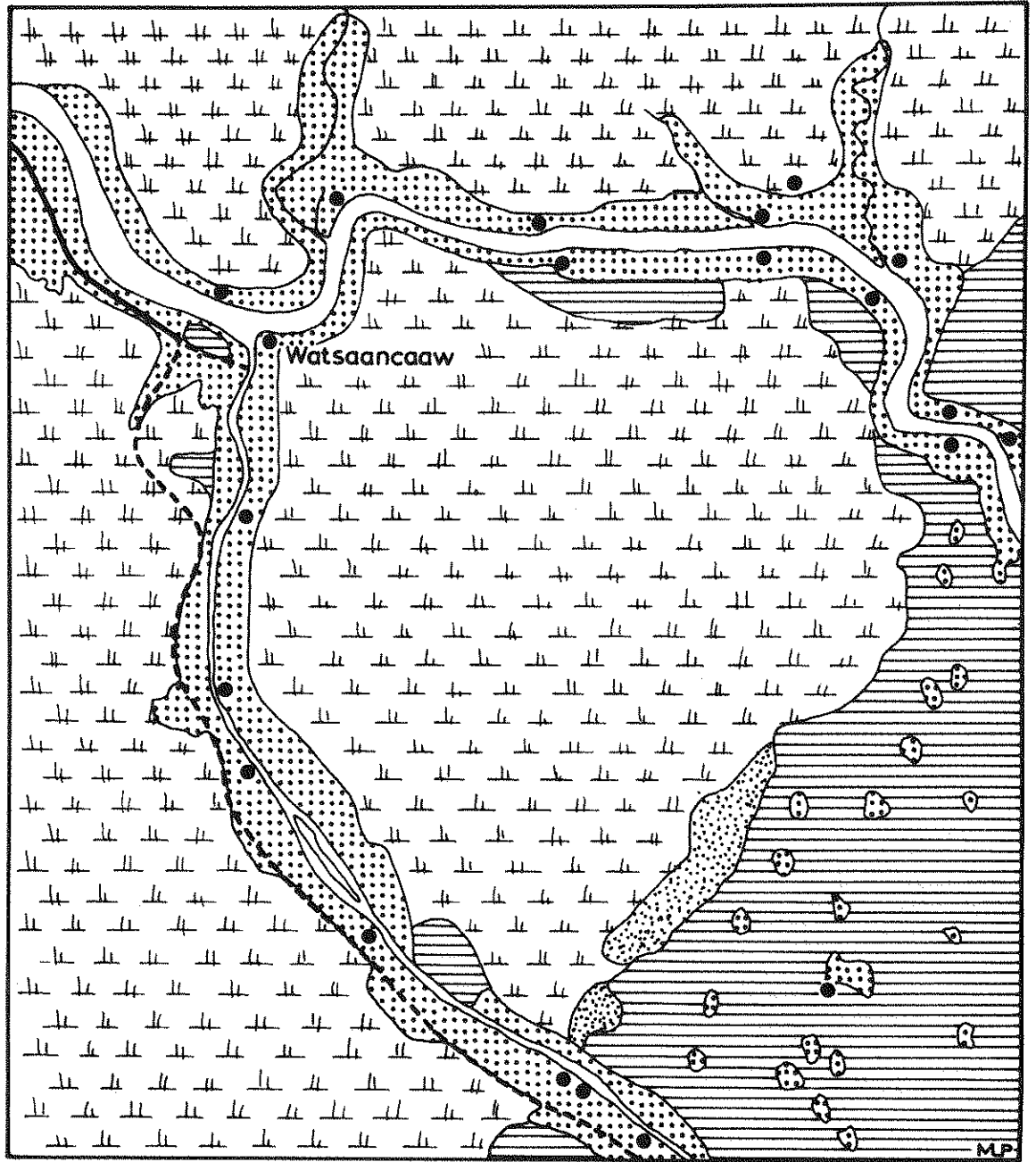
2 วัดปากน้ำ

3 วัดศาลเจ้า



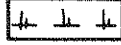


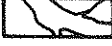


4 หวยก้อฮอ . This lottery was run in Thailand from 1835 till 1916, and the shrine must therefore date from this period. For details about the history of this lottery, see the paper by B.O. Cartwright, 'The Huey Lottery', JSS, Vol. XVIII (Part 3, 1924), pp. 221-239, reprinted in SSFA, Vol. I, 1954, pp. 131-149.

5 ไร่ . The rai is a Thai square surface measure. 2.53 rai equals one acre, and the surface on which the monastery is built therefore equals 3.2 acres.

Fig. 2. HABITATION, VEGETATION AND RIVERS AROUND WATSAANCAAW



scale 1 : 50,000

- | | |
|--|---|
|  houses and yards |  sealed road |
|  rice growing |  loose-surface road |
|  plantations |  river |
|  wasteland |  monastery |



great care has been taken to make a good impression upon the casual visitor. Ornamental trees provide ample shaded areas, footpaths are slightly elevated so that they can be used when heavy rains flood most of the area¹, there are seats where anybody can rest and the buildings are kept in reasonable repair and show much ornamentation. Of the buildings, the temple, bood², is the most impressive. It is built of bricks, is covered with plaster, and possesses a tiled roof. Next to the temple stands the great gathering hall to which two parallel rows of monks' cells, kuti³, are attached. Other structures in the monastery grounds are the saalaas⁴ (covered gathering halls), the buildings of the elementary school, a cremation platform, a belltower and a huge brick pyramidal structure, known by the name ceedii⁵. At the river's edge, three jetties provide access to the monastery. There are many paths which connect it overland with regions in easterly, southerly and westerly directions.

¹ The footpaths are of special importance to monks, who must use a footpath in preference to walking in grass in order to avoid treading on insects, and thus killing them.

² โปสถ์ . The Thai word bood is related to a Pāli word posatha (PED, p. 475b) or the Sanskrit poṣadha (MMW, p. 650b), meaning a Buddhist fasting-day. The spelling of the Thai word suggests derivation from Pāli rather than from Sanskrit.

³ กุฏิ . Kuti is related to the Pāli kuṭī (PED, p. 219b) or the Sanskrit word with an identical spelling (MMW, p. 288b). In Pāli and Sanskrit, as well as in Thai, the word can be used in a meaning wider than that of a monk's shelter and is also used to indicate the shelter of an animal (Ph.Th., p. 166a).

⁴ ศาลา . The Thai word saalaa means a covered hall, and is related to the Pāli word sālā (PED, p. 706b) or the Sanskrit sālā (MMW, p. 1067b).

⁵ เจดีย์ . The Thai spelling of the word indicates that it may be derived from the Pāli word cetiya (PED, p. 272a) rather than the Sanskrit caitya.

Figure 2, a map of the surroundings of Watsaancaaw¹, depicts two distinct major ecological systems. On the one hand there is the region in which Watsaancaaw is situated, characterized by the cultivation of rice; on the other there is an area which begins suddenly a few kilometres to the south-east of Watsaancaaw where no rice is grown, but where people draw their livelihood mainly from cocoa-palm² plantations. The latter type is part of a wider area covering most of the delta of the river Maeklong. In this estuary the salinity of the soil prevents the growing of rice. Scattered throughout these plantations single homesteads can be found. Recently many plantation owners have begun to base their incomes on a broader basis by investing in poultry farming.

The habitat around Watsaancaaw differs greatly from the plantation area; it conforms to the rice-growing regions in the rest of the central alluvial basin of Thailand. Here the people live on the borders of the main waterways in an almost continuous stretch of gardens, here and there interspersed with the expanse of a monastery. Thick vegetation hides most houses from view. The plants growing in a compound usually comprise a few clusters of bamboo³, a variety of vegetables, many trees which bear edible fruit, an areca palm⁴, a betel plant⁵, and a kapok

¹ See p. 4.

² Cocos nucifera (McF., p. 636b).

³ Bambusa arundinacea (McF., p. 552b).

⁴ Areca catechu (McF., p. 909b). The seeds of the Areca plant are often known as betelnut, an unfortunate name since it is not a Betel, nor, botanically speaking, a nut.

⁵ Piper betle (McF., p. 575b).

tree¹. These stretches of inhabited area are divided into small administrative units, the muubaan². Most farmers are aware of the fact that they live in a certain muubaan, because they have to mention their muubaan when dealing with government employees (for example with officials from the cadastral office, the Department of Irrigation and, occasionally, members of the police force). But the farmer does not readily identify himself with his muubaan. Apart from his family, the only other unit with which many farmers are firmly linked in thought and deed is usually the monastery.

Enclosed by the main waterways and their fringes of gardens and houses are the regions used for agriculture. Generations of farmers have cleared the soil of almost all flora and have made small rectangular fields, each surrounded by a small dyke which also serves as a footpath. Each year, during the months of May, June and July, at the beginning of the rainy season, young rice-plants and seed are distributed³ over the fields, and in November, December and January, during the cool season, the crop is harvested.

The extent of land-holding varies considerably from farmer to farmer. In the region surrounding Watsaancaaw,

¹ Ceiba pentandra or Eriodendron anfructuosum (McF., p. 462b).

² หมุบ่าน

³ As in practically all wet rice-growing areas of South-east Asia, there are two different methods of distribution in Watsaancaaw. The first method consists of growing young rice-plants in a special seed bed, followed by planting them one by one in a prepared field; the second method is the broadcasting of seeds. The first method, though laborious, ensures a much higher yield per rai of land.

a man possessing more than 100 rai¹ is considered a big landowner, while a farmer with 5 rai to his name will be regarded as very poor. Many farmers possess between 30 and 40 rai. A field is not necessarily cultivated by its owner; big landowners and old people without children often rent the land to farmers with small holdings. In 1968 a rai of fields could be rented under the condition that the owner received a certain part of the yield of those fields. The customary fee was 10 than², or 200 litres of rice per rai, regardless of the total yield, but in special circumstances a different price could be agreed upon. Since the harvest of one rai usually yields between 25 and 50 than of rice, the customary rent amounted to a share of the produce ranging from 20 to 40 per cent of the total.

After harvesting and threshing, part of the rice must be reserved for private consumption, and another portion for planting during the subsequent year; sometimes a certain amount must be used to pay for rent of land or working animals³, but the remainder can be sold to a dealer. The amount of baht⁴ received for his surplus of rice usually represents the greatest part of the yearly income

1

The rai has been mentioned earlier in this chapter (supra, p. 3, note 5).

2

ถัง . One than, or 'bucket', is a unit equal to 20 litres.

3

During 1968, the rent of an ox was estimated to be 30 than of rice per year.

4

บาท . The baht is the monetary unit of Thailand, divided into four salyn (สลึง) or 100 satan (สตางค์). In 1968, the pound sterling equalled approximately 49 baht, or, more commonly known in that year, one US \$ equalled approximately 20 baht.

of the farmer. Other sources of cash income during the year come from the sale of surplus vegetables, fruit and fish in the provincial market, and from selling sweetmeats or products of handicraft. The poorer farmers can derive additional income from working as unskilled labourers during the slack period of the year, between the harvest and the planting of the new crop. More well-to-do farmers may derive extra income from breeding draught-oxen and growing a second crop on some of their fields. In the region around Watsaancaaw, the growing of a second crop is confined to areas which can be irrigated and usually only peas¹ are grown.

While the great majority of people in the region of Watsaancaaw derive their main income from agriculture, there are some who can claim other sources of income. In the first place, there are a group of people who work in an ancient² brick-making industry. This is confined to a small region east of Watsaancaaw on the south bank of the river Maeklong, where the deposits of alluvial clay are suitable for this purpose. Secondly, there are farmers who have an aptitude for trading and who have specialized almost full-time in the trading profession. Some go from house to house in small boats, selling goods; others, whose homes are situated near a footpath, sell household goods and also often serve soft drinks and alcoholic beverages. Other farmers around Watsaancaaw derive an extra income from the production of metal religious images.

1

Phaseolus mungo.

2

The fact that the clay-pits are of impressive size led to the deduction that this industry had been established for a considerable time.

A third group consists of those who receive a remuneration from the government. Under this heading fall the schoolmasters, the headman of the tambon¹, men in military service and those who draw a state pension.

While the region of Watsaancaaw can be characterized as rural, it has become increasingly dependent economically upon the provincial capital. Up to the time of the Second World War, the flow of goods from the capital to Watsaancaaw was very small. During the war, when the Japanese army was in power in the provincial capital, this flow dried up almost completely. The older inhabitants of the region can recall that in the last year of the war they had to press their own oil, and the scarcity of matches made it necessary to rely on ancient ways of making fire. Since the Second World War, however, many new ideas and goods have been introduced in the region.

These innovations have proven beneficial in many instances; the introduction of the mosquito net, modern medical equipment and new pharmaceutical products have relieved some of the harsher sides of the life of the farmer. Many innovations, however, have drawbacks. Transistor radios link many households with the national broadcasting system and much valuable knowledge is disseminated through this medium, but the art of conversation and story-telling is dying out while the volume of noise produced is increasing. A bicycle does provide an opportunity to travel rapidly along a footpath,

1

ตำบล . A tambon is an administrative unit, consisting of a certain number of muubaan (supra, p. 7). Several tambon make up an amphoe (อําเภอ), several amphoe form a canwat (จังหวัด). This latter word is throughout this thesis translated by 'province'.

but this has led to some changes in etiquette. A young person on a bicycle cannot readily move aside and be in 'lower position' when meeting a person who is his superior; nowadays it is the older and ritually superior person who has to step aside for the youngster speeding along. The outboard motor has increased the efficiency of the transport system on waterways, but the troublesome waves and the loud noise are unfortunate accompaniments. Mechanical pumps do relieve some anxieties of the farmers, but the change from dependence on yearly flooding of the river to the regular supply of water through irrigation channels deprives the soil of some 'natural' nutriments.

B. Methodological Remarks

In this section is explained how the data were collected and which techniques were used in order to ensure the reliability of the material.

When an anthropologist remains for a prolonged period among a small group of people, often he cannot avoid becoming a disturbing influence in the community under study. Like some other social scientists, Gluckman has observed¹ that his presence alone can sometimes precipitate a chain of reactions beyond his control. The position of the researcher in his community will mainly be determined by his sex, age, race, wealth and overt behaviour. Only the last two items of this enumeration of determinants can be changed at will. The introduction of an anthropologist into the community of research can be difficult, especially

¹ Max Gluckman in the Introduction to The Craft of Social Anthropology, edited by A.L. Epstein, 1967, p. xviii.

when he is not able to explain his presence in sufficient measure. Usually he cannot claim a kinship relation with any member of the small community and the argument that he has come to do research, to try and understand aspects of the culture of this small group, will often be met with utter disbelief. Often the people will suspect that the researcher has come for a special reason which he cannot divulge openly. Such a situation hampers proper research, because the information gained from people who are suspicious of the motivation of the researcher tends to be cautious, guarded and sometimes deliberately untrue.

For these reasons it is advisable, at least in the early stages of fieldwork, for the anthropologist to try and find a role which makes his presence more understandable in the eyes of the informants. Depending on the situation he can, for example, assume the role of schoolteacher, shopkeeper, tractor-repairer or irrigation expert. If a role can be found which is intimately linked with the aspect of culture under study, the practical advantages of assuming such a role are great.

Since the research was connected with Thai rural religion, the role which immediately presented itself was that of the Buddhist monk. In central rural Thailand, almost every adult man will become a member of the Samgha¹ for some period of his life². In these rural areas the taking by a young man of the vows of the order for at least one season is regarded as essential preparation for adult

1

In this thesis, the form Samgha is used in preference to the spelling Saṅgha. Throughout, the Thai word son (สอน) is avoided. Cf. Appendix I, a Note on transliteration, p. 347.

2

See ch. V, pp. 121-126.

life. It is a fortunate circumstance that, in some cases, the Thais do not take exception to a foreigner who wishes to become a monk¹. As long as the aspirant-monk is prepared to behave in a monkly manner, to learn a certain amount of Pāli sentences by heart, and to show to all members of the group that he is restful, happy and content in the role of a Buddhist monk, the farmers will be inclined to encourage and sponsor such a man.

This investigator had the privilege to be a member of the Samgha in Watsaancaaw from 20 April 1968 till 3 November of that year, a role which proved to be advantageous in many respects.

In the first place, the researcher had no difficulty in explaining his presence, for, in the eyes of the members of the community, he was leading a very useful life. Secondly, the role of Buddhist monk is in principle open to all males: it is not reserved for males born in the community which sustains the monastery, and therefore the adoption of this role by a foreigner does not necessarily upset the total situation. In the third place, as a newly ordained monk, it was necessary to learn a set of skills which are of prime importance in the practice of Thai religion. Learning to chant Pāli texts, preach, meditate and study with fellow monks aided in the understanding of many formal aspects of the religion.

1

Many persons of Western origin have taken this chance. In many cases these people are deeply religious and their devotion assures them of a fruitful period in the Samgha.

In addition, participation in a great variety of ceremonies¹, from services for the laity like ritual haircutting, praying for rain and assisting with cremations, to ceremonies reserved for the Samgha, provided a stimulating introduction to the kaleidoscopic variety of experiences a newly ordained monk can undergo. Moreover, the fact that many rituals were repeated in different circumstances gave rise to a realization that rituals of the same name can take many different forms².

As a monk in Watsaancaaw, the researcher participated in a variety of situations which sometimes proved very useful towards understanding certain aspects of the culture. He became linked in a network of obligations towards his benefactors, pupil of some senior monks, comrade of fellow monks and teacher of some children in the monastery. The fact that the foreign researcher was so obviously involved with the community's religion made much of his repeated questioning about details of religious matters excusable to the Thais, and when such questioning took place, the answers were often given as a matter of course, in a spontaneous manner.

Finally, the ritual superiority of a member of the Samgha over all laymen facilitated the questioning of people who were much older than the researcher himself. As a layman, the difference in age would have placed the researcher in a subservient position.

1

Throughout this study, the words 'ceremony' and 'ritual' are used as synonyms.

2

This aspect is elaborated upon later in this chapter, infra, p. 34.

The role of a Buddhist monk also brought some disadvantages from the anthropologist's point of view. A monk cannot move freely, he should avoid crowds, he cannot be unrestrained, especially when women are close by, he should keep at a distance from sporting events, and he cannot openly participate in gambling, drinking alcoholic beverages with other men, work in the fields or fishing. His superior ritual position prevents him from participating in those kinds of religious behaviour which involve paying homage to certain non-human powers which are ritually inferior to monks.

In order to overcome the limitations imposed by the monk's role, the first year of fieldwork was divided into two parts; the first portion consisted of the time as a member of the Samgha, the second part was a period of five months during which the researcher remained in the vicinity of Watsaancaaw as a layman.

During the second part of the main fieldwork period, the participant-observer technique remained in the foreground. Every occasion to participate actively in the lives of the laymen was grasped. Therefore it was decided not to live alone, but to accept an invitation to take up residence with a farmer's family¹. Many days of hard physical work were spent in the fields, especially during the period of harvesting the rice crop. Every opportunity to join in a ritual, whether it be a fund-raising ceremony at a neighbouring monastery, building a new house, celebrating a marriage, or listening to a famous preacher, was taken.

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Our indebtedness to the family of Joom Sañjem Caræncan is great. They virtually adopted the researcher into their family.

Much of the information upon which this thesis is based was thus obtained with the help of the participant-observer technique. This technique has its difficulties and shortcomings. While the researcher is physically actively engaged in some aspect of social life, for example, while he is helping to pound rice kernels into a paste, or learning how to weave a basket, and meanwhile asking questions about some related beliefs and values, it is difficult to record the information received. In many situations a tape-recorder could not be used¹ and notes had to be written down at free moments in an abbreviated form. Sometimes it took many hours for these notes to be worked out and incorporated with the rest of the data. It is obvious that in these circumstances, no word-for-word record could be made. Relying on his memory, the researcher could record only the gist of the different conversations. In order to obtain volunteered, spontaneous and 'un-artificial' information, accuracy had sometimes to be sacrificed to a certain extent.

For this reason, a check on accuracy seemed necessary, and it was decided, near the end of the first fieldwork period, to employ one member of the community living around Watsaancaaw, with whom all accumulated data were read, and who was encouraged to make critical comments. This checking eliminated some inaccuracies and rectified some misunderstandings; in addition the notes proved a most

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A tape-recorder could only be used in extremely formal circumstances, such as during the chanting of the monks. Casual conversation could not be recorded with such a machine, because people tended to feel inhibited when they saw a microphone, or the conversation was diverted towards the machine itself.

fruitful topic of conversation, and some new data were unearthed. These sessions lasted for one month and this period represents the only time a paid informant was used.

In order to impart a complete picture of the techniques used during the different periods of fieldwork, some additional methods have to be mentioned.

(a) A picture of the historical background was obtained through discussions with the older members of the community. It was substantiated by a careful check of all available documentary records of the monastery, which comprised 346 books and pamphlets in Thai and Pāli, and several handwritten sources.

(b) Throughout the fieldwork information was obtained from depth-interviews rather than questionnaires. In general it can be stated that when a certain point remained unanswered or not understood, such a point was followed up in subsequent questioning.

(c) Genealogical charts of all people sustaining the monastery and their ancestors as far back as could be remembered were constructed, and of the males in the charts it was recorded whether or not they had ever been a monk, and if so, where, how many times and for how long.

(d) On occasions when the researcher was prevented from attending a certain ceremony, a photographic record was obtained. For this purpose, an informant was trained in the use of photographic equipment. The resulting photographs were often instruments used in further conversations and interviews.

(e) While the use of the tape-recorder was often restricted¹, it was possible to make recordings of much of

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Supra, p. 16, note 1.

the chanting of the monks. These recordings were later used to compare the chanting of the Watsaancaaw monks with the 'official' texts issued by the Department of Religious Affairs, the Mahaamakutraadchawithajaalaj, and publications of various monasteries.

Finally, it should be mentioned that attempts were made to evaluate the instrument upon which the whole project depended in the first place: the anthropologist himself. The values and attitudes of a person influence the manner of observation, classification and analysis, especially when the object of study is part of an alien culture. These attitudes and values may well undergo a marked change during the fieldwork period itself.

In order to assess the attitudes and values of this researcher, and in order to discover whether any marked changes occurred during the main period of fieldwork, a psychologist in the Australian National University¹ was approached. It was decided to try to obtain a picture of the attitudes and values of the researcher by administering a certain number of tests² during two different periods, one in March 1968 before setting out for Thailand, and one in April 1969, immediately upon returning from the main period of fieldwork. The major findings resulting from the analysis of these tests can be summarized as follows³:

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Mrs Margaret Evans gave many hours of her time in order to give an answer to these questions.

2

See Table 1, infra, p. 19.

3

These findings are taken from the Psychological Report of 11 June 1969 by Margaret Evans; only those items are quoted which have a direct bearing on the subject of the thesis.

(1) The topic of the thesis and the monastic experiences were chosen, not only for the purpose of intellectual enquiry, but also because the researcher hoped and expected that it would enlarge and enrich his personal experiences.

(2) After the research, he was slightly disappointed to realize how ordinary and understandable the experiences were.

(3) Although he participated in many ceremonies and rites, he never possessed faith, he never believed in them.

(4) He himself felt that he did not personally change greatly from these experiences.

(5) The tests revealed no significant changes in his personality as a result of these experiences.

Table 1. Tests administered before and after the main period of fieldwork

March 1968		April 1969	
1	Eysenck Personality Inventory Form A	1	Eysenck Personality Inventory Form B
2	Thematic Apperception Test	2	Thematic Apperception Test
3	Rorschach	3	Rorschach
4	Cattell's 16 P.F. Form A	4	Cattell's 16 P.F. Form B
5	Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory	5	Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory
6	Allport-Vernon-Lindzey's Study of Values	6	Allport-Vernon-Lindzey's Study of Values
7	Leary Interpersonal Check List	7	Leary Interpersonal Check List
8	Willoughby Personality Schedule	8	Willoughby Personality Schedule

C. Theoretical Approach

The anthropologist's fieldwork methods and his manner of analysis are at least partially guided by his theoretical insight. Unlike many other sciences, anthropology does not seem to possess a set of axioms and a body of theories which are generally accepted. There is no unanimity of opinion on what should be the definition of culture, society, group or institution; the definition of anthropology itself is not beyond discussion. For this reason it is relevant to set out in a concise manner the theoretical considerations and axioms on which this thesis is based.

In this account two different approaches are used to explain the overall theoretical approach: some paragraphs are devoted to a critical appreciation of a school of thought in anthropology, generally known as the 'structural-functionalist school', and in other paragraphs an alternative is given. Since many other authors have already expressed opinions closely related to the views of the author, it was decided to avoid a lengthy exposition and limit the discussion by referring to some of the leading scientists' publications.

'Structural-functionalism' or 'functionalism' is a term used to describe the holistic approach towards the study of society, explicitly or implicitly expressed by many anthropologists during the last four decades. There are many variations upon the functionalist theme but, in general, it can be said that a functionalist orders his data while taking into account a working hypothesis which states that a culture is made up of a system, or systems, of elements, that each item or element can be characterized

in the context of the system, and that each element is necessary for the maintenance of the system in a state of equilibrium. Usually the system of elements and the maintenance of the system can be compared with a biological unit, where each part of a body is necessary for the proper working of the whole.

Or, as Martindale defines functionalism:

... two major theoretical propositions hold all branches of functionalist theory together: (1) the fundamental unit of interpretation is an organic-type system; (2) the parts, elements, aspects, or phases of the organic-type system are in a functional relation to the whole, both determining the whole and being determined by the whole¹.

It has become increasingly clear that functionalism is of less analytic value for the social sciences than used to be supposed. There are many excellent studies which have been heavily influenced by the functionalist theory, but it is now realized that the types of societies which were under study were themselves of a sort which induced functionalist views, and that it cannot be expected that other types of societies will fit the functionalist model. During the last two decades especially, many leading scientists have formulated their objections against this

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D.A. Martindale, The Nature and Types of Sociological Theory. International Library of Sociology and Social Reconstruction, ed. by W.J.H. Sprott, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961, pp. 520-521.

model¹. Not only are there technically unfortunate methods incorporated in functionalism, but the model itself needs to be modified purely from a pragmatic point of view, and in many circumstances it is not applicable.

The functionalist model usually implies the view that a cultural system is made up from sub-systems, which, in

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Among the publications which criticise functionalism, the following should be mentioned: George C. Homans, The Human Group, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1951, pp. 268-272; he restates his position towards functionalism on several subsequent occasions, notably in his review of Radcliffe-Brown's Structure and Function in Primitive Society, American Anthropologist, Vol. LVI, 1954, pp. 118-120, and in his "Bringing Men Back In", American Sociological Review, Vol. XXIX, 1964, pp. 809-818; Ernest Nagel, "Teleological Explanation and Teleological Systems", in Vision and Action (ed. by S. Ratner), New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers U.P., 1953, pp. 192-222, and in The Structure of Science, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961, pp. 522-533; Bernard Barber, "Structural-Functional Analysis: Some Problems and Misunderstandings", American Sociological Review, Vol. XXI, 1956, pp. 129-135; J.H.M. Beattie, "Understanding in Social Anthropology", British Journal of Sociology, Vol. X, 1959, pp. 45-60; Kingsley Davis, "The Myth of Functional Analysis", American Sociological Review, Vol. XXIV, 1959, pp. 757-772; C.G. Hempel, "The Logic of Functional Analysis", in Symposium on Sociological Theory (ed. by Llewellyn Gross), Evanston: Peterson & Co., 1959, pp. 271-307; D.A. Martindale et al., "Functionalism in the Social Sciences", American Academy of Political and Social Sciences, Monograph No. 5, Philadelphia, 1965; Richard S. Rudner, Philosophy of Social Science, Foundations of Philosophy Series (gen. ed. E. and M. Beardsley), Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1966, pp. 84-111; Llewellyn Gross, "Note on Selected Problems in Theory Construction", in Sociological Theory: Inquiries and Paradigms (ed. by Llewellyn Gross), New York, Evanston and London: Harper & Row, 1967, pp. 254-264; and Maurice Mandelbaum, "Functionalism in Social Anthropology", in Philosophy, Science and Method, Essays in Honor of Ernest Nagel (ed. by Sydney Morgenbesser, Patrick Suppes and Morton White), New York: St Martin's Press, 1969, pp. 306-332.

turn, are related to institutions¹, or complexes of norms, values and statuses. These institutions can be seen to possess certain functions in the total system, usually connected with the fulfilment of certain human biological or psychological needs. Thus, in the functionalist view, religion can be called by the same author on one occasion a cultural system², and a few years later an institution³, whereby the author assumes that '... institutions — though not all of their features — are instrumental means for the satisfaction of needs'⁴.

Functionalism has developed from the study of certain small societies, where the scientists were impressed by the fact that the different elements under study were interrelated, that these elements were instrumental in fulfilling the needs of the members of the societies, and that these elements in their interrelatedness could be seen as helping to perpetuate these particular societies.

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The term 'institution' is used rather ambiguously by social scientists. Sometimes it means a certain role- and status-complex with norms of its own (in this meaning the words 'the institution marriage' can often best be understood); but on other occasions it can mean an establishment, a formal organization, an association with a permanent staff. Functionalists often adhere to the first meaning when they use the term.

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Melford E. Spiro, "Religion and the Irrational", in Proceedings of the 1964 Spring Meeting of the American Ethnological Society, ed. by June Helm, p. 103.

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Melford E. Spiro, "Religion: Problems of Definition and Explanation", in Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion, ed. by Michael Banton, A.S.A. Monograph No. 3, 1968, p. 96.

4

Melford E. Spiro, ibid., p. 96.

These observations, however, do not necessarily hold for the more complex societies. On the contrary, it has become apparent that the functionalist's model is of limited analytical value for data obtained from complex societies.

The culture of Thai farmers certainly cannot be classified under the small, 'primitive' cultures upon which functionalism was originally based. In the whole of central Thailand the farmers participate in the national language; many individuals can read and write the Thai script, they often have opportunities to travel over wide areas, they are tied in a wide economic network and some of their religious practices are influenced by decisions of the central government. Therefore it can be said that Thai peasantry is part of an intricate, complex society. In studies involving Thai farmers, a functionalist approach is limited by its methodology and is thus of low heuristic value.

The theoretical framework, upon which this study is based, rests upon a system of thinking which is by no means original: a similar model has been devised, for example by Homans¹.

A basic assumption in this theoretical framework is that the aspect of culture which social scientists primarily want to elucidate is social activity. By the 'social activity' of a person is meant that type of activity which is directed towards, or implies the existence of other actors. The word 'actor' is used in a

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George C. Homans, The Human Group, 1951, and Social Behavior, Its Elementary Forms, gen. ed. R.K. Merton, 1961.

broad sense: it is not solely reserved for human actors, it can include all kinds of non-human or imagined actors. Thus religious behaviour is not excluded from the theoretical system under discussion.

Not all the activities of men can be called social: a not-learned automatic reflex, for example, falls under non-social activity and will generally not be of interest for the social scientist. Some activities, which are non-social by definition, can acquire social dimensions through the intervention of another person.

For example, in the following situation:

A person, X, feeling tired and thinking that he is alone in his room, yawns loudly. In general, this action can be classified as non-social. If a second person, Y, happens to pass the room just at that time and overhears the yawn and reacts to it, for example by tiptoeing away so as not to embarrass X, the non-social action has suddenly obtained a social aspect.

The word 'activity' must in this context be defined too. With activity is meant the spending of energy. This should not be conceived of as merely the output from the exertion of muscles, but also includes the exertions of the brain: the thoughts, which are more difficult to measure.

The social activities observed by the researcher invariably take place in an environment which contains other actors, who recognize, or are believed to recognize, most of each other's activities; in other words, who are partaking in the same culture. Not only will a social action be recognized by certain other actors, but it can give rise to a reaction which implies a judgment upon the action. These reactions can be ordered along a dimension

of approval-disapproval. In a hypothetical situation, a social activity can result in any of the following five¹ reactions or value judgments:

- (1) All actors strongly approve,
- (2) All actors approve,
- (3) All actors are indifferent about the action,
- (4) All actors disapprove,
- (5) All actors strongly disapprove.

In reality, however, each social action will result in many different reactions, which broadly can be described as follows: while there may be some members of the group who will strongly approve of a certain action, there may be others who strongly disapprove, and the remainder of the group of actors involved will either approve, disapprove or remain indifferent. Therefore it is clear that the study of values requires complex research techniques. Each individual will make value judgments of a unique kind, which can be traced back to his personal experiences in the past. Usually the systematic study of values and the research techniques involved belong to the field of social psychology.

¹ The division under these five headings is often used in research upon attitude scales. It was developed by R. Likert ("A Technique for the Measurement of Attitudes", Arch. Psychol., N.Y., No. 140, 1932, pp. 1-55), and used in many different tests by psychologists, notably in the classic study by G. Murphy and R. Likert, Public Opinion and the Individual: a Psychological Study of Student Attitudes on Public Questions, With a Retest Five Years Later, Harper, New York, 1938 (reprinted in 1967 by Russell & Russell, New York).

An anthropologist, on the other hand, is usually not intent upon finding out in a systematic manner what degree of approval or disapproval a certain social action evokes from other actors; instead he is more intent on investigating the norms which exist in a certain community.

By the concept 'norm' is understood the opinion of a certain number of actors that under certain circumstances certain activities should be engaged upon or avoided¹. Bearing in mind that an 'actor' can include the non-human², it becomes clear that in this framework ethics and morals can be seen as specific types of norms.

Each norm is the product of a historical chain of events: there must have been a set of precedents in the past which have resulted in its being generally known that in certain circumstances one ought to behave in a prescribed manner. The constant influx of new circumstances, which brings about new precedents, combined with the fact that in the course of time the members of a culture do not remain the same individuals, makes it understandable that norms do change in all societies. There are norms, however, which,

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While during the discussion of value a marked divergence from Homans' thinking is observable, the definition of norm comes close to what he believes a norm to be. In 1951 he wrote: 'A norm, then, is an idea in the minds of the members of a group, an idea that can be put in the form of a statement specifying what the members or other men should do, ought to do, are expected to do under given circumstances' (The Human Group, p. 123). Ten years later he defines norm: 'a statement made by a number of members of a group, not necessarily by all of them, that the members ought to behave in a certain way in certain circumstances' (Social Behavior, p. 46).

2

Supra, p. 25.

with the help of historical records, can be traced over a long period of time. Even if a certain norm does not seem to have changed during many centuries, this does not warrant the conclusion that the norm can be evaluated in a similar manner over the whole period of time. Since the culture is in constant flux, a norm should be interpreted in its contemporary context: in relation to the whole cultural situation of a particular time.

When regarding the relation between society and norms, two main characteristics of society are of prime importance. In the first place the components of societies, the individual human beings, are of great diversity. Each group is made up of individuals of widely varying types. Not only is each social group made up of people of different ages and experience, but each individual person possesses a unique genetic code.

In the second place it can be remarked that men live gregariously; the individuals of a society interact. While interacting with each other, people feed themselves, sleep, learn, breed, exchange goods, die, dispose of corpses and divide the property of those dead¹. These areas of interest are related to the biological reality of being a gregarious mammal with certain abilities, and around each of these 'areas of vital interest' norms can be

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This enumeration is not exhaustive; in all societies there can be found other areas of interest which are the result of biological and psychological factors, such as the necessity of weaning children, puberty, dealing with mental illness, and problems related to old age.

found in every community¹. In the course of time, after the occurrence of many different situations in which clashes of interest and divergences of opinion have to be settled, sets of interrelated norms come into being which deal with most of the important events in the life of an individual in his own culture.

These sets of interrelated norms surrounding a 'vital area' in a society can exist in the formalized manner which is often known as a 'ceremony'. A ceremony or ritual is here defined as the performance of a number of related social activities in a prescribed manner. In many societies the enactment of a ritual is considered important, and great care is taken to adhere to the manner traditionally observed. In certain societies, and this is especially obvious in those where traditional lore is preserved in handbooks or by advanced methods of teaching, ceremonies tend to preserve an interrelated network of norms of a period prior to the time when they are enacted.

1

This is the main reason of existence for scientific cross-cultural comparison. Functionalists who venture into the field of cross-cultural comparison often take institutions as their unit of comparison. However, there is no indication that institutions can lend themselves for this purpose. The difficulty of defining institutions cross-culturally is an indication towards the idea that more basic biological and psychological spheres of activity may better be used as units of comparison. The difficulty of defining an institution 'universally' is well illustrated by the discussions surrounding the definition of marriage in Man, Vol. 55, 1955, No. 198 ("Polyandry and the Kinship Group", by H.R.H. Prince Peter of Greece and Denmark) and No. 199 ("Polyandry, Inheritance and the Definition of Marriage", by E.R. Leach, reprinted in Rethinking Anthropology, London School of Economics Monographs on Social Anthropology No. 22, University of London, The Athlone Press, 1961, pp. 105-113) and the notes in Man, Vol. 56, 1956, No. 46 and No. 92, respectively by Prince Peter and H. Th. Fisher.

Therefore the study of ceremonial can be an aid to historical insight, and on the other hand, historical insight may be needed to understand ceremonies.

Apart from ceremonies, in many societies there are even more formalized ways of dealing with 'vital areas' in a society, namely in institutions. An institution is defined as the developed, formal, explicit organization of certain clusters of social activities and norms, usually related to one or more 'vital areas' of a society.

An institution provides the framework for many ceremonies, but each ceremony need not necessarily be part of one or more institutions. Persons who are members of an institution agree to adhere to the specific rules of the institution. These rules can be quite distinct from other rules in the wider context of the culture. Consequently, institutions show a distinct organization and the formalism of institutions can include strict adherence to impersonal roles and acceptance of a dominance hierarchy¹.

D. A Definition of Religion

Since this thesis is entitled 'Religion in Rural Central Thailand', a definition of the concept 'religion' cannot be omitted. Especially during the last hundred

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The dominance hierarchy is a characteristic of many different types of animals, like chickens (the 'pecking order'), wolves and monkeys. The hierarchy of monkeys, for example, was demonstrated in a series of tests whereby surgical methods were used to change the dominance hierarchy (H.E. Rosvold, A.F. Mirsky and K.H. Pribram, "Influence of Amygdalectomy on Social Behavior in Monkeys", J.Comp.Physiol.Psychol., 1954, Vol. 47, pp. 173-178).

years many leading philosophers, sociologists and anthropologists have deemed it necessary to reject previous definitions and formulate anew what, in their opinion, religion entails. It is not planned here to trace all the different solutions devised and to evaluate their merits and shortcomings. Apart from providing insight into the variety of phenomena which can be subsumed under the concept 'religion', such an exercise would probably reveal much of the attitudes and beliefs of the scholars themselves. For example, Müller stated:

Religion is a mental faculty which, independent of, nay, in spite of sense and reason, enables man to apprehend the infinite under different names and under varying disguises. Without that faculty, no religion, not even the lowest worship of idols and fetishes, would be possible; and if we will but listen attentively, we can hear in all religions a groaning of the spirit, a struggle to conceive the inconceivable, to utter the unutterable, a longing after the Infinite, a love of God¹.

From this quotation it appears that Professor Müller was a deeply religious man, and in addition that he considered some types of 'worship of idols and fetishes' of little merit. In the last part of the quotation it seems that religions can be ordered in a hierarchy along a developmental scale, whereby those religions which are theistic appear as the climax, the latest development.

When it is ventured in this thesis to devise a definition of religion which differs from that of preceding

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From Lectures on the Origin and Growth of Religion, as illustrated by the Religions of India, delivered in the Chapter House, Westminster Abbey, in April, May and June 1878 by F. Max Müller, published by Rameshwar Singh for Indological Book House, Varanasi, 1964, p. 23.

scholars, it is not necessarily intended as a rejection of all previous definitions. There are many ways of looking at the same reality, and a philosopher's or a theologian's definition of religion will often be quite distinct from that of the anthropologist. But even among anthropologists, the definition of the phenomenon 'religion' depends on the theoretical framework used.

Consistent with the theoretical framework drawn up earlier in this chapter¹ the definition of religion will, in this thesis, be based upon the concept of religious activities. Religious activities are hereby defined as those social activities or aspects of social activities which involve human actors in relation with culturally postulated immaterial non-human² actors³. These non-human actors can take almost any shape or form, and a morphological classification of them will probably differ from religion to religion.

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pp. 20-30.

2

The words 'immaterial non-human actors' are used in preference to 'supernatural actors', since the word 'supernatural' has connotations like 'more than natural', 'beyond nature'. While activities showing the aspect of 'more than natural' should be regarded as religious, the exclusive use of the term 'supernatural' limits religious phenomena somewhat, since it is theoretically possible that in some cultures religious actors can be seen as an intrinsic part of 'nature'. In fact, in as far as human thought is 'natural', religious thought can be seen as essentially a part of nature. Similarly, the term 'superhuman actors' had to be rejected, since 'superhuman' has connotations of 'more than human', 'above human', and while much religious action can be caught under this heading, it is not necessarily a classification which comprises all religious action. Theoretically it is possible to devise religious actors which are 'less than human', 'below human'.

3

'Actor' in its wide meaning (cf. p. 25).

In this theoretical framework, religion is not conceived of as a social system, a sub-system or an institution; on the contrary, it is maintained that religious activities can be found in connection with a wide range of other social activities. Religion, for example, can play a part in the justification of a wide variety of norms, or it may have a deep effect on aspects of economic behaviour. Typical religious activities can often be studied in relation to non-religious activities. When a group of people gather to pay homage to a deity, the motivations for gathering may vary considerably from person to person; for example, while some actors may attend because it is the tradition, some may want to meet other members of the attending group, and others may have come in the belief that the meeting will result in alleviating a personal feeling of distress.

The study of religious activities will reveal a multitude of norms, all related to non-human actors. The study of these norms can give rise to an understanding of the conception of the non-human actors, of their forms and characteristics. In a culture like that of the farmers in central Thailand, data about non-human actors may be compared with historical records of other areas and other times.

A religion, while not being confined to an institution, can possess clusters of activities and norms rigidly organized into institutions. Such an explicit organization in rural Thailand is for example the monastery.

Magical activities are seen as a particular type of religious activity, namely those religious activities where the human actors manipulate the non-human actors for a purpose of their own.

Ceremonies are not necessarily part of religion, since they have been defined earlier¹ as the performance of related social activities in a prescribed manner. Often, but not necessarily always, the social activities of a ceremony can be religious activities.

Much of the evidence brought forward in this thesis is based upon analysis of ceremonies. Throughout the study it is ensured that the ideographical details are separated from the nomothetical structure behind the ceremony. It is important, when analysing a ritual, to distinguish between three different aspects:

(1) The essential ceremony, the minimum core without which the ceremony has no validity;

(2) The common elaborations, with which people who have the means will usually embellish the essential ceremony;

(3) The deviations; the latter are usually due to the uniqueness of the circumstances, and include improvisations and unprecedented accidents.

Each of these three aspects in a ceremony has its own analytical value, and each should be evaluated in its own way. The anthropologist who bases much of his evidence upon the analysis of rituals should take these different strata into account. Throughout this thesis, the distinction between the first two aspects is consistently made, but the third category has in most cases been omitted. Deviations from the generalized type of ceremony are only mentioned when they throw light upon the first two aspects.

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Supra, p. 29.

In this thesis, two different vehicles are used to elucidate the religious norms of the people in rural central Thailand. While analysis of ceremonies is the major key towards understanding some fundamental principles underlying rural Thai religion, due regard has been given to the ontogenetical aspects of society; the growth and development of individuals has been taken into account. During the first formative years of his life, the religious knowledge of a person can be essentially different from the understanding an adult may have acquired. A woman may learn religious behaviour different from that taught to a man. For these reasons, the ceremonies, aspects of which will be analysed, have been ordered along a developmental scale. From chapter III onwards, rituals have been placed according to the principle that religion unfolds itself gradually to a Thai person, and that there are certain ceremonies with which he will most likely be confronted during certain stages in his life.

CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

It has been customary to think of Buddhism in Southeast Asian societies as consisting of discrete strata, one on top of the other, e.g. a Buddhist stratum, a Brahmanic stratum, and an animistic stratum¹.

This general remark about the study of Buddhism in south-east Asia typifies the attitude with which most scholars who write about Buddhism in rural Thailand approach their subject. When dealing with the religious practices of rural Thailand, the terms Buddhism, Brahmanism² and animism are used as a matter of course. Each author, however, assesses the relations between these different strata in a slightly different manner, and these approaches can be brought under three headings.

A. Syncretist Views

Some scholars, whilst recognizing the different traditions from which Thai religion is made up, stress that these have become so blended during the course of time that it is difficult to segregate them.

1

Gananath Obeyesekere, "The Buddhist Pantheon in Ceylon and its Extensions", ASTB, 1966, p. 12.

2

Sometimes a scholar uses the term Hinduism instead of Brahmanism, and such a use of the term Hinduism could well be defended. In order to reduce the possibility of confusion in this section where the views of other scholars are described, the term Brahmanism is used in preference to Hinduism, conforming to the practice of most of the authors mentioned here.

Phya Anuman Rajadhon discerns two broad layers in Thai religion. On the one hand he recognises animism, in which he traces some Chinese influences; the other layer consists of Buddhism, in which some Brahmanic practices can be seen. In Thai popular Buddhism, these two layers of beliefs and conceptions have become intermingled to an inextricable degree¹.

In a similar way Ingersoll recognises a trilateral system when he characterizes Thai religion as: '... the diverse threads of the Buddhist and Brahmanic traditions interwoven with the indigenous tradition...'². Wright states that in the Thai religion 'we find both classical Buddhism (together with the folk developments which have taken place within Buddhism) and animism. Buddhism and animism are intimately fused in the Thai heart'³. Attagara formulates the intimate relation between the different strands of religion in Thailand in a slightly different manner:

While people are guided by the Buddhist ethics, they conceive the gods and the lower spirits as natural phenomena along the ethical scale. Hinduism, and various strands of deistic worship have been incorporated in the culture of the villagers⁴ without disturbing the superiority of Buddhism.

1

Phya Anuman Rajadhon, Essays on Thai Folklore, 1968, p. 33.

2

Jasper Ingersoll, "The Priest Role in Central Village Thailand", ASTB, 1966, p. 51.

3

Michael A. Wright, "Some Observations on Thai Animism", Practical Anthropology, Vol. XV, 1968, p. 1.

4

Kingkeo Attagara, The Folk Religion of Ban Mai, 1968, p. 169.

The three strata in the religion of Thai farmers are characterized by deYoung as:

Buddhism, which through the centuries has become so blended with Brahmanism and with elements of an earlier animism that it is impossible to segregate pure elements of each.¹

B. The Diachronic Perspective

The words 'earlier animism' indicate that deYoung views the three strata in a historical perspective, in which the animism of present-day Thai farmers can be traced back to practices common in the period before Brahmanism and Buddhism were introduced. He is not the only scholar who indicates a link between a pre-Buddhist, pre-Brahmanic religion and present-day Thai practices. This thought is implied, for example, when Klausner writes in relation to the Buddhism of north-east Thailand:

... Brahmanism, and — reaching further back — animism, find expression in the popular Buddhism of the villagers.²

Similar views, expressing or clearly implying that the trilateral approach to Thai religion is based on an

1

John E. deYoung, Village Life in Modern Thailand, 1955, p. 110.

2

William J. Klausner, "Popular Buddhism in Northeast Thailand", in Cross-Cultural Understanding (ed. by F.S.C. Northrop and Helen H. Livingston), 1964, p. 89.

assessment of historical processes, can be found in the works of other scholars¹.

C. The Synchronic Approach

Some authors base their distinction between different strata in Thai religion upon the fact that it has analytical value. Credner, for example, accords to each strand of beliefs a different function in society. Thus, Buddhism provides the Thais with the means to order their relations with their society and, in addition, the Buddhist moral code offers them an opportunity to ensure fortunate rebirths. The epic tales of Brahmanism teach the Thais to value virtue, to accept authority and to take heed of the ultimate punishment for evil acts. According to Credner, animism deals only with the traditional methods of behaving towards the ghosts that dwell in nature².

Quite comparable are the views expressed by Velder, who indicates a functional difference between the ethical and moral side of Thai religion (Buddhism), and the

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Recently this view has been expressed, for example, by Akin Rabibhadana in his paper "The Organization of Thai Society in the Early Bangkok Period 1782-1873", Data Paper No. 74, Southeast Asia Program, Cornell University, July 1969, p. 11, and by Gehan Wijeyewardene in his "The Still Point and the Turning World: Towards the Structure of Northern Thai Religion", Mankind, Vol. VII, 1970, pp. 247-55. The latter's opinion towards the substrata is reflected in this quotation: 'The historical strands of the synthesis, if synthesis it is, is frozen into the three religions by the Thai themselves' (ibid., p. 249).

2

Wilhelm Credner, Siam, Das Land der Tai, 1935, pp. 342-3.

practical side of everyday life, propitiation of spirits (Animism)¹. Klausner builds his analysis of Thai religion along similar lines when he states:

... the powerful forces of Buddhism, Brahmanism, and animism in the community also operate independently, each one serving a specific function and each reserved to its special sphere, not conflicting with the others. Not only do Buddhism, Brahmanism, and animism² not conflict, they often reinforce each other...

Other authors who, while recognising the syncretism of Thai religion distinguish between Buddhism, Brahmanism and animism for the sake of analysis, are Landon³, Kingshill⁴, Kaufman⁵ and Kirsch⁶.

While every scholar who uses the trilateral division of Thai religion differs in his way of formulating it and in his emphasis on certain aspects of this partition, the following generalizations can be made:

The terms Buddhism, Brahmanism and animism are almost invariably used when scholars describe Thai religion as a whole. Most authors indicate that the three layers belong

1

Christian Velder, "Chao Luang Muak Kham", JSS, Vol. LI, Pt I, 1963, pp. 85-92.

2

William J. Klausner, op. cit., p. 90.

3

Kenneth Perry Landon, Siam in Transition, 1968, pp. 201-5.

4

Konrad Kingshill, Ku Daeng, The Red Tomb, 1960, p. 92 et passim.

5

Howard Keva Kaufman, Bangkhuad, a Community Study in Thailand, 1960, p. 12 et passim.

6

Anthony Thomas Kirsch, Phu Thai Religious Syncretism, a Case Study of Thai Religion and Society, 1967, passim.

to a generally accepted trilateral model which fits Thai religion. Some scholars justify the use of the three terms by surmising that these three strata correspond with three different religions which, at some time in the past, became intermingled. According to many authors, this blending has progressed so thoroughly that the different strands are difficult to isolate at present. Those who adhere to this historical justification for the trilateral model usually imply that the animist side of Thai religion is largely a survival of pre-Hinduised religions.

Many modern anthropologists do not use this diachronic approach; they justify their use of the trilateral model mainly on two grounds: firstly, some authors claim that the Thais themselves classify their own religion under the headings Buddhism, Brahmanism and animism; and secondly, there are social scientists who maintain that the use of the three-fold partition has heuristic value.

Each of these possible lines of defence for maintaining that Thai religion is made up of Buddhism, Brahmanism and animism will be examined separately.

Diachronic Evidence

The area which is now called central Thailand was probably part of the Indianised Fu-nan empire from the second century A.D. onwards. From the second half of the sixth until the eleventh century A.D. the region seems to have formed the centre of a political unit generally known as Dvāravatī. The people who inhabited this area were mainly of Mon stock¹. From archaeological remains it

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G. Coedès, The Indianized States of Southeast Asia, 1968, pp. 76-77.

appears that the religion of the inhabitants was typically of Indian derivation¹. The Buddha images of this period indicate a prevalence of Theravāda Buddhism². Almost all religious objects are of a style which is quite compatible with that of Gupta India. Apart from Buddha images, portrayals of Brahma, Indra, and especially Viṣṇu are common in Dvāravatī. The presence of images of different Hindu gods does not necessarily mean that, apart from Theravāda Buddhism, there was adherence to other Indian religions. There is no evidence to suggest rivalry and sectarianism between different doctrines, and the images of various Hindu gods may have been an integral aspect of Theravāda Buddhism³.

From the eleventh until the thirteenth century, the Khmers dominated the political scene in the region now known as central Thailand. Even under Khmer rule, however, the evidence suggests that Theravāda Buddhism retained the pre-eminence it had enjoyed during the Dvāravatī period⁴.

1

P. Dupont, L'Archéologie Mône de Dvāravatī, 1959, p. 289 et passim.

2

H.G.Q. Wales, Dvāravatī, 1969, p. 23 et passim.

3

In theory it can be argued that the Buddhist images may have been part and parcel of a more orthodox Hindu religion with, for example, the Buddha seen as an incarnation of Nārāyana Viṣṇu. However, the frequency with which Buddha images are found in Dvāravatī does indicate that the Buddha was the most important figure in the religion of the inhabitants.

4

G. Coedès, The Making of South East Asia, 1966, p. 122.

The concensus of modern scholars is that tribes of Thai origin migrated southward from a homeland, situated probably in south China. This migration had already begun during the second half of the first millenium A.D., but it was not until the thirteenth century that the Thais seized the suzerainty over most of the region which is now known as Thailand. There is virtually no reliable information about the religion of the Thai peoples prior to their migration southwards. It is plausible, however, to adhere to the theory that the Thais who had already established themselves in what is now northern Thailand before the end of the first millenium were heavily influenced by Mon and Burmese culture¹. From the time of the Burmese ruler Aniruddha, who favoured an orthodox Theravāda Buddhism above other creeds, the dominant religion which the Thai immigrants must have encountered in their new homelands was probably Theravāda Buddhism.

Le May, writing about the religion of the Thais after their migration southwards, adheres to the view that Buddhism was only accepted as a veneer:

It must not be forgotten that to the vast majority of Siamese (and Burmese) peasants Buddhism is, and always has been, what I call 'The Decoration of Life', and the people themselves have remained at heart animists. Their lives fall into two parts. They pay their devotions and give their offerings to the Lord Buddha, so that their merit may increase and their Karma may enrich them in future lives, but in the present life there are a host of 'p'ī', or spirits, to be propitiated if evil is not

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For a summary of the evidence regarding the arrival of the Thais in this region, see Reginald Le May, The Culture of South-East Asia, 1964, pp. 156-166.

to befall them, and the latter are, therefore, continually courted and feasted to this end.¹

Unfortunately this historical interpretation is only too common. Inherent in Le May's assessment are the assumptions that propitiation of spirits is the factor which differentiates Buddhism from the pre-Buddhist religions of the people, and that the acceptance of Buddhism consisted simply of adding the idea of the Buddha together with some ethical rules to the 'original animism'. Not only do these remarks imply that before the advent of Buddhism the core of the religions in this part of Asia was animism, but in addition they offer a limited conceptualization of Buddhism.

Whilst some practices which could be called animism were probably inherent in the different religions of south-east Asia, it seems deceptive to group the pre-Buddhist religions under such a wide term. Particulars of ceremonies in Thailand sometimes reveal aspects which seem to indicate certain religious specializations, which may be regarded as a remnant of pre-Buddhist religions or a reminder of the fact that non-Indian religions have influenced Thai religion at some stage in its development. There may have been an organized Shamanism, some religions may have specialized in sacrifices to the ancestors, there may have been a religion concentrating on the worship of heavenly bodies, or the fertility of the earth. There is not enough evidence, however, to describe any of the pre-Buddhist religions in detail. There are only indications of a variety of religious specializations and

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Reginald Le May, op. cit., p. 163.

therefore a classification of them under the term 'animism' seems an oversimplification; it underestimates the possible divergence of different principles.

In addition, Le May's evaluation of the situation presents a limited approach to Buddhism itself. Whilst Buddhism may, in its Indian context, be described in a valid manner as a soteriology, or as a philosophy preferred by a select group of adepts in India above the more orthodox types of Hinduism, at the moment that Buddhism was introduced in other regions (i.e. to the areas which are now called Burma and Thailand), it should be evaluated in terms of these new surroundings. In India, Buddhism was one of the less orthodox solutions offered to achieve an escape from the eternal samsāra. In the region now called central Thailand, Buddhism seems to have been introduced as the soteriology, without real competition from other systems of thought.

In India, underlying both the orthodox as well as the unorthodox philosophical schools of thought were a multitude of common religious beliefs. When Theravāda Buddhism was presented for the first time in central Thailand, many of these Indian, 'Hindu' beliefs were probably introduced as well, not as a separate religion, but as inherent basic principles underlying Buddhism. Therefore it is valid to approach Buddhism in its Indian context as a philosophy, built on a Brahmanical or Hindu religion; but to the Mons of Dvāravatī Buddhism must have been presented as a religion rather than as a philosophical system. The Pāli canon indicates that the general popular Indian beliefs are taken for granted, and that the philosophical teachings are not particularly concerned with the religion of the people. It is suggested here that the

Indian background of Buddhism became an intrinsic part of Buddhism when it was introduced in some non-Indian countries¹; when exported, Buddhism became a religion.

Propitiation of spirits, being an intrinsic part of most Indian religions, and not being against the Buddhist philosophy, is therefore fully in keeping with the Buddhist religion. Like Le May, other authors indicate an approach to the history of Thai religion which must be read with reservations. When Dutt, for example, evaluates the inscription of Rāma Khamh̄eṅ, the Thai ruler who at the end of the thirteenth century expanded his realm considerably, he writes:

'... If the Spirit be not revered well, if the offerings be not right, the Spirit in the mountain does not protect, does not regard, — this realm perishes.'

The superstition, so akin to Burmese 'geniolatry', does not seem to have yielded to Buddhist teachings. Right down to the time of Rama I of the Cakri dynasty, who, without suppressing the worship of spirits and demons, tried to subordinate it to the Buddhist worship, the populace in Siam retained this superstitious demon-worship.²

Evidently, Dutt uses the term Buddhism in the limited 'Indian' sense rather than in its 'exported' broad meaning. He does not allow for the fact that the edict of Rāma Khamh̄eṅ is fully in keeping with the Buddhist religion.

1

The environment in which Buddhism arrived is crucial in understanding the process of Buddhism becoming a fully fledged religion. In other parts of south-east Asia, for example in Cambodia, the situation was quite different. Buddhism seems to have been introduced there after other types of Indian beliefs had been widely accepted, or possibly at the same time as other Indian beliefs.

2

Sukumar Dutt, Buddhism in East Asia, 1966, p. 78.

Later Thai inscriptions, made at the instigation of Thai rulers from the end of the thirteenth century A.D. onwards¹, reveal that all passages which refer to religious activities are compatible with the Pāli canon. Reference is made to relics of the Buddha, monasteries, the Tipiṭaka, the pursuit of merit, sacred objects, the ancestors and the guardian spirits of mountains, streams and caves.

From the fifteenth century onwards, there is ample historical evidence to show that, notwithstanding several major political upheavals, adherence to Theravāda Buddhism remained the main characteristic of Thai religion until the present day.

Whilst for many centuries the peoples of this region adhered to Theravāda Buddhism, this fact does not exclude the possibility that other systems of belief may have influenced their religious behaviour. Probably the pre-Buddhist religions of the region have left some traces², although the many centuries of Buddhism have made it difficult to evaluate the extent of these previous beliefs. During the eighth and ninth century A.D., some elements of Mahāyāna Buddhism and Tāntrism may have been introduced.

1

Many inscriptions have been edited by Coedès in Recueil des Inscriptions du Siam, 1924-1929, where a transliteration in modern Thai script and a translation in French are offered. Recently, several early Thai inscriptions have been discussed in a highly illuminating series of articles by A.B. Griswold and Prasert na Nagara, entitled "Epigraphic and Historical Studies", in JSS, Vol. LVI, 1968, pp. 207-249, Vol. LVII, 1969, pp. 29-148, Vol. LVIII, 1970, pp. 89-113, Vol. LIX, Part I, January 1971, pp. 153-156, 157-188, 189-208, and Vol. LIX, Part II, July 1971, pp. 179-228.

2

See supra, pp. 44-45.

During the eleventh and twelfth century Khmer influences may have precipitated some further changes in religious practices and beliefs. Alterations in the religion of the Thais may also have been caused by local developments. The peoples of the region cannot be thought of as passive recipients; it is probable that they have altered aspects of their belief system as their circumstances changed.

While the historical and archaeological evidence is inadequate to enable the presentation of a full picture of the evolution of the Thai religion, all available information suggests that the creed in the region of central Thailand can best be called the religion of Theravāda Buddhism, and that this religion has been there for at least thirteen centuries. It can be concluded that, historically speaking, there is insufficient evidence to support the assertion that Thai religion is derived from three independent sources: Buddhism, Brahmanism and animism.

Synchronic Evidence

In their analysis of Thai religion, some scholars¹ link their use of the terms Buddhism, Brahmanism and animism with three functionally distinguishable areas of Thai religion. They equate Buddhism with the ethical aspect of Thai religion, Brahmanism is considered to be represented in many rituals, and animism is thought to be manifested in the propitiation of spirits. The value of using an analytical framework which distinguishes between ethics, ritual and propitiation is not discussed here.

1

E.g. Credner, Klausner and Velder, supra, pp. 39-40.

However, the designation of these three aspects by the terms Buddhism, Brahmanism and animism respectively will be examined.

The use of the term Buddhism to indicate the moral or ethical aspect of Thai religion may seem justifiable to a scholar who, from a historical perspective, conceptualizes Buddhism in its 'Indian' context: a philosophy, the essence of the teachings of Siddhārtha Gautama. It has been argued, however, that this limited conception of the term Buddhism may not encompass the religious framework with which Buddhism has been introduced in Thailand. To the inhabitants of central Thailand, the word Buddhism signifies more than the moral or ethical aspect of religion: it includes different types of rituals and propitiation.

The choice of the term Brahmanism to classify many rituals of the Thai farmers may, on first sight, seem permissible because the details of many ceremonies indicate close parallels with Indian pre-Buddhist rituals. However, though it may be demonstrated that many religious practices were derived from an Indian paradigm, this does not warrant the classification of these rituals under a term which indicates a complex belief system of pre-Buddhist times. The Indian background of Buddhism itself explains the importation of these 'Brahmanical' rituals. There is no evidence of a separate Brahmanical sphere of influence outside the royal court¹.

1

The court rituals, which the Thai rulers seem to have adopted in imitation of the Khmer royal court, fall outside the scope of this work. They have little or no bearing on the rituals of people in rural Thailand.

Animism pervades Thai religion in many respects; it is an intrinsic part of many rituals and underlies much of the religious behaviour of the Buddhist monks as well as of the laymen. Therefore it should not be used to indicate solely the propitiation aspect of Thai religion.

A close examination of most Thai rituals reveals that a moral aspect, a ritual aspect and some propitiation aspects are inherent in the religious behaviour. An analysis which uses for each of these three aspects a term commonly applied to a whole religious system may draw the attention away from the fact that in rural Thai religion each of these aspects is fully in tune with the others.

Evidence of Thai Informants

Some anthropologists indicate that the Thais themselves make the threefold division¹. If Thai informants generally divided their own religion into Buddhism, Brahmanism and animism, an analysis along these lines would be justified. However, other anthropologists indicate clearly that their informants do not make such distinctions. Kaufman writes that the traditional farmers and the great majority of monks do not distinguish between Buddhist and Brahmanic rituals. The intellectuals especially, he argues, make this distinction and regard Brahmanic practices as superstition². Similarly, Kingshill reports that only the more learned villagers can indicate whether a religious practice is Buddhist, Brahmanic or

1

E.g. Wijeyewardene, op. cit., p. 249 (supra, p. 39, n. 1).

2

Howard Keva Kaufman, Bangkhua, p. 12.

'ancient custom'¹. It is the opinion of deYoung that the ordinary Thai worshipper cannot distinguish between Buddhism and Brahmanism².

These views are in agreement with the findings in Watsaancaaw. Only the local intelligentsia ventured to state that a certain rite or part of a ceremony was of Brahmanic origin. The terms these learned villagers applied to indicate this were 'a Brahmanic thing' (khooṅ phraam)³, or 'something that comes from the Brahmanic religion'.

When learned informants volunteered the information that a ceremony or part of a ceremony was Brahmanic, they did not all refer to the same aspect of their religion. Whilst one informant maintained that a procession was a 'Brahmanic thing'⁴, a Buddhist monk stated that the use of magical diagrams was of Brahmanic origin⁵. Later on the same day, the monk described a Shamanistic session at the spirit shrine as Brahmanic. A third informant stated that the white clothing of a local spirit doctor corresponded with the clothing of a Brahman⁶. All informants who volunteered statements about Brahmanism revealed, upon further questioning, that they had obtained this knowledge

1

Konrad Kingshill, Ku Daeng, p. 134.

2

John E. deYoung, Village Life in Modern Thailand, p. 110.

3

ของพรานผี

4

Vinai Careencan, Watsaancaaw, 23 April 1968.

5

Phra Phan, Watsaancaaw, 13 May 1968.

6

Somkhuān Sutticaj, Watsaancaaw, 22 August 1968.

during the period of their lives when they were Buddhist monks.

It was possible to witness one occasion during which knowledge on the subject of Brahmanism was disseminated to a class of monks and novices in rural central Thailand. The abbot of the monastery, in one of the first lessons about the life of Siddhārtha Gautama, outlined the place of Brahmanism in Thai religion in a few sentences, which can be translated as follows:

Before the Lord Buddha attained full knowledge and brought Buddhism into this world, there was already some kind of religion in the area of the world where he lived. He forbade some aspects of it like the killing of animals as sacrifice to the gods, but most practices were not considered wrong by the Lord. In fact, many of our own religious practices stem from this older, Brahmanical religion. In this respect I must mention the use of the cotton cord during many ceremonies, the ceremonies to strengthen the morale of an individual, the charging with protective power of images and water and the use of magical diagrams. These aspects are not forbidden, nor are they wrong, because the Lord Buddha had no objection to them.¹

It may have been on similar occasions that other learned informants obtained their knowledge about the fact that aspects of their religion can be related to pre-Buddhist Indian religious practices. It can be concluded that in rural Thailand² the knowledge of a few learned informants about 'Brahmanic things' in their own religion is to be

1

Watphanænpluu, 2 August 1968.

2

In municipal areas and in advanced centres of learning, it may be stressed that these Brahmanic practices are not the most admirable aspects of Thai religion; in rural areas they are generally accepted as an intrinsic part of religion.

regarded as 'interesting historical knowledge'. The fact that these informants may mention Brahmanism should not therefore be used as the justification of classifying present-day Thai religion along lines of Buddhism, Brahmanism and animism.

A comparison with Christian religion may illustrate this point: if a Christian has become aware through lessons at school that the Christian beliefs in Good and Evil were heavily influenced by Zoroastrianism, the fact that this Christian may volunteer to mention Zoroastrianism should not lead an anthropologist trying to analyse present-day Christianity to work from a model implying that Christianity is made up from 'pure' Christianity and Zoroastrian categories. There may be some basis for evaluating the role of Zoroastrianism at some point in history, but a careful assessment of the whole of present-day Christian beliefs may readily reveal to the anthropologist that the mentioning of Zoroastrianism was primarily an attempt by his informant to impress him with a piece of rare and curious information.

There is no word for 'animism' in rural Thailand, but there are several Thai concepts which western researchers may classify as 'typically animistic'. The most common Thai classification of religious practices which scholars¹ tend to use as epitomising the animistic aspect of Thai society is the worship of spirits, the kaanthyphii². The Thais do regard their dealings with the phii as

1

E.g. Landon, op. cit., p. 204, Kirsch, op. cit., passim, Wijiyewardene, op. cit., p. 249.

2

กัณฑ์ผี

important, and kaanthyyphee is an important section of Thai religion, but they do not equate their relations with phii with animism. The phii are seen as a wide variety of religious actors of which the Thais must beware. These actors are potentially dangerous; they may cause sickness and disaster to befall a man. Usually the Thais place a word behind the name phii to indicate which section of this wide category they are dealing with¹. Religious activities connected with these potentially harmful phii do not form, however, the only area which can be called animistic. For example, the Thais use the word phra² to indicate that an object or a person is different from the ordinary, by being charged with some beneficial power³. It may be used to indicate a person of the highest nobility, a member of the Samgha, or an amulet which has the power to protect its wearer from harm. Further areas of Thai religion in which a researcher can recognize clear overtones of animism are the beliefs and rituals in connection with magical diagrams and the sacralization of a bowl of water. Thai religion is permeated by animism, which is overt in the behaviour of monks as well as in the religious activities of laymen.

1

See ch. III, pp. 74-77.

2

पुत्रः

3

Phra is related to the Sanskrit word vara. In Sanskrit this word means 'precious', 'excellent', 'best'. It is interesting to note that in Sanskrit the word does not have religious overtones. It is possible that the Thais derived their use of the word from the Khmers who use the same word phra in a more religious meaning than in Sanskrit.

The local terms with which the Thais themselves indicate certain areas of their own religion do not warrant the assertion that Thais distinguish between Buddhism, Brahmanism and animism. When the Thais use the term Brahmanism in relation to their own religious practices, they offer this piece of information to show that they are aware of the fact that a certain element of their religion was already in existence before the time of the Buddha. Such information is not intended to indicate a distinct area in their religion which may be incompatible with other areas. The Thais do not use a term to indicate the animistic side of their religion. Terms which some anthropologists have quoted to show that the Thais know of a category 'animism' are used without careful consideration by these scholars, because these terms indicate only something animistic, while other terms cover other animistic areas of Thai religion.

In this chapter it has been argued that many researchers who deal with Thai rural religion as a whole recognize implicitly or explicitly a threefold distinction, namely Buddhism, Brahmanism and animism. Some authors indicate that this trilateral model is built upon historical evidence, others relate each of these terms to a separate function in Thai religion, and there are authors who indicate that the Thais themselves classify their own religion along these lines.

A careful assessment of the historical evidence indicates that there is little basis for the trilateral model, especially when the history of Thai religion is evaluated in its situational context. Whilst a scholar may try to show three different functional aspects of Thai religion, there seems no reason to designate each of these

functions by a term which is commonly used for a separate system of religious thought. Finally, when statements of some Thai informants regarding their use of the terms Buddhism, Brahmanism and animism were weighed, it appeared that these statements did not provide sufficient evidence for a trilateral model.

Therefore, the Thai religion will be approached in the course of this thesis without the use of a pre-conceived trilateral model. Instead a different analytical approach is attempted. The basic premises of this approach have been outlined in Chapter I. The study of Thai religious activities is intended to reveal some fundamental norms underlying these activities and for this reason several ceremonies are analysed. Often some aspects of ceremonies will provide information about the possible historical background of the religion or part of the religion. Therefore in many places footnotes have been added which illustrate the historical perspective.

The rituals discussed in the following eight chapters have been ordered and selected with care so that in each chapter a different aspect of Thai religion is illustrated.

CHAPTER III

CHILDREN AND RELIGION

In many traditional societies people have an incomplete knowledge of the exact biological principles governing the conception of a child. Their views on the mechanism of conception are often influenced by religious beliefs. In Thailand, it can be expected that adults see the conception of a child as related to the principles governing rebirth and karma¹. In rural areas it is believed that a woman who regularly has sexual intercourse with a man becomes pregnant when a winjaan² settles in her womb. Coitus provides the circumstances wherein the winjaan can be reborn. Sometimes a woman obtains knowledge of the exact moment of the beginning of pregnancy because the settling of the winjaan is made clear to her in a dream³.

1

กรรม . The Thai spelling is related to the Sanskrit word karma rather than to the Pāli kamma. The Thai pronounce the word as kam. Because the word is generally known in its Sanskrit form it has been decided to use the transliteration karma throughout this thesis.

2

วิญญาน . This word is derived from the Pāli viññāna, rather than the Sanskrit vijñāna as the Thai spelling indicates.

3

A woman's dream during the descent of a winjaan is a theme often used in literature. A wizard, explaining some puzzling aspects of the dream, can predict the future of the person who will be born. In Thai literature the best-known examples are the dream of Queen Māyā and the dream of the mother of Khun Chaan. เสด็จเฝ้าองค์ขุนช้างขุนแผน

If the child is stillborn or if a child dies soon after birth, the winjaan of the infant is considered to have possessed bad karma. The fact that such an unhappy and sad event happens to a certain family is also seen as related to the bad karma of the parents involved.

The woman who finds herself pregnant has to protect herself and the foetus from harm. It may be asked why the Thai take elaborate precautions against mishap, since the doctrine of karma seems to indicate a world view based on a theory of predestination. It could be reasoned that an individual with good karma will be free from mishap, whatever actions are taken, and that the person who possesses bad karma will not be able to avoid this horrible fate. Those who are inclined to reason this way, and thus expect the Thai religion to incite fatalism, do not realize the place of the karma doctrine in the Thai world view.

In order to sustain themselves, all farmers have to manipulate their environment. If a man plants a crop and tends his fields, he has a chance of reaping a harvest, whilst the man who decides not to plant may run out of food. The methods of dealing with the surroundings in order to produce good results have been handed down through the generations. Magical manipulations form part of the traditional knowledge, and it is generally known that they have proved successful in many instances. Sometimes, however, a person does not obtain the desired result notwithstanding the fact that he took proper precautions. Small misfortunes can be explained in different ways: the techniques might have been used in the wrong manner, or at the wrong time, the persons involved may have been inexperienced, propitiation of outside powers may have been insufficient. It is only when a man has continuously used

the proper methods and still receives setback after setback that his bad karma must provide the explanation. The explanation of exceptional good fortune as well as exceptional bad fortune must be found in the karma doctrine. It is used ad hoc, as an ultimate explanation for extraordinary events.

It obscures rather than throws light upon the situation when a researcher analyses Thai farmers' behaviour under two opposed causation systems: karma versus magic¹. However, the systems involved are complementary: one does not exclude the other. A person who neglects magical protection, relying on his good karma, can be compared with a gambler trusting his luck. A man who takes many magical precautions will feel secure, for at least he has done his best, and, if things turn out badly, at least it is not the result of neglecting to be polite to the non-human powers² around him.

For the same reason, a pregnant woman will do all she can to protect herself and her child. Moreover, her relatives will ensure that she takes all magical precautions, because she is a potential danger to her surroundings. If she dies with her child still unborn, or in giving birth to her child, she will become a very

1

Textor, for example, analyses the religion of rural central Thailand with the aid of a 'moral' karma system versus an 'amoral' magical system. These must be regarded as western constructs, having little bearing on the motivation of people in rural Thailand (Robert B. Textor, An Inventory of Non-Buddhist Supernatural Objects in a Central Thai Village, 1960, pp. 8-11 et passim).

2

These terms have been defined earlier, see Ch. I, pp. 32-33.

dangerous spirit, blindly revenging her sorrows on the innocent members of her community¹. Precautions which are generally taken include a special diet, the wearing of certain talismans and special rules of behaviour during bathing².

Usually a child is born at home. Even the farmers who live within easy reach of a hospital will ask for medical help only in exceptional cases. This reluctance to use modern medical facilities is partly due to the expense involved. Additionally, many women prefer to give birth in the ancestral home because there they can freely surround themselves with magical precautions which are frowned upon in hospitals. Moreover, most women fear the obstetrician because they do not want to expose their bodies to the eyes of a doctor. When the child is born in the village, an older female assists and a loose cloth is kept over the lower parts of the body.

Ceremonies surrounding the birth of a child vary according to the wealth of the family into which it is born. Poor farmers will feel obliged to limit ceremonials to the essentials. In a corner of the house an oven is prepared from a layer of banana leaves covered with a generous amount of sand. The farmer collects an ample supply of firewood, which he heaps up neatly. The wood

1

Infra, p. 76.

2

Some of the traditional rules of behaviour prescribed for the pregnant woman have been described in detail by Phya Anuman Rajadhon in his "Customs Connected with Birth and the Rearing of Children", in Life and Ritual in Old Siam, 1961, pp. 107-190.

should be of good quality, which will burn steadily for a considerable time. He should, for example, avoid collecting bamboo for that burns unevenly and with too much heat¹.

Close to this earth oven, the resting place of the pregnant woman should be situated.

As soon as the labour pains begin, the midwife is called. When the midwife enters the house she must be presented with a ceremonial gift: a tray holding some unhusked rice, a cocoa-nut, some bananas, some areca fruit, candles, incense and some money². As soon as the midwife has accepted the tray, it is placed somewhere high in the house. She does not take possession of it until three days after the delivery. The midwife assists the pregnant woman with her skills which include the application of ointments, the taking of medicine, the use of spells and manipulation. As soon as the child is born, mucus is removed from the mouth and the nose by sucking. The umbilical cord is cut with a knife made from maajruag³. The placenta is collected, salted, and placed in a jar which is kept in the room for three days. The day of the

1

Another reason why bamboo cannot be used for the ceremonies surrounding birth is that it was traditionally used to cover corpses, and to cremate them. Bamboo is therefore often associated with death, and it is said that a young person should not even plant bamboo.

2

It is interesting to note that, among this money, cowrie shells can be used, a survival from the days when shells were part of the general currency. For details see Le May, The Coinage of Siam, 1932, p. 8 et passim.

3

ไผ่ . Thrysostachys siamensis (McF., p. 689b), cf. Ch. IV, p. 110.

week and the lunar month are noted, so that the child may use this knowledge later when making decisions for which astrological calculations are necessary.

Under the house, exactly beneath the place of the confinement, a heap of thorny branches is placed. This acts as a cover for all excreta that may fall during and after the confinement. The thorns prevent not only animals, but also malevolent spirits from feeding on the offal. As soon as the child is born, a big fire is lit in the earth oven, and the mother is laid as close by as she can endure. The fire is kept burning for several days and the mother and child should not leave the place of confinement until it is considered safe. Usually an uneven number of days is considered auspicious, and a woman may remain as long as fifteen days on the confinement bed. Nowadays, a much shorter period of juufaj¹ or 'living at the fire' is common.

Juufaj is a period of time many women relish in their memory. During this time they are the centre of attention in the household. The men make sure that the supply of wood does not run out, and female relatives constantly care for the woman who gave birth. Friends come to visit the lying-in woman and cheer her up with interesting stories. No visitor is allowed to speak about the heat of the fire, because it is believed that if such a topic were broached, the lying-in would become unbearable. The period of lying by the fire is considered to be a very strong medicine: 'A woman who has performed a juufaj will not suffer from pains in the back or in the belly.'²

1

อุยไฟ

2

Sanjem Carøencan, 4 December 1968.

On the third day after birth, the child is ceremoniously accepted into the world of his relatives. The infant is laid on a kradon¹, a winnowing basket. The midwife moves the basket three times in a clockwise direction, whilst chanting slowly: 'Three days, child of the spirits; four days, human child. Who will receive this child?' An older relative receives the infant from the hands of the midwife and has to pay her a ceremonial sum for this honour. On this occasion the child receives a string of cotton thread bound around his right wrist², a ritual to reassure the soul of the infant. After this precaution, the baby is bumped softly on the floor in order to acquaint it with the fact that harsh and startling events may occur in the world of the humans. After the infant has thus been introduced to its relatives, the afterbirth can be buried under a tree somewhere near the house. This establishes a link between the tree and the infant: if the tree thrives, the infant should be healthy and happy; if the tree dies it bodes ill for the child and it should be guarded carefully.

The elementary ceremonies surrounding birth close with the tonsure of the child. On an auspicious day, some time after mother and child have left the birth fire in a proper manner³, a member of the family who is skilful with a

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2

This ritual is mentioned for ancient India in the Grhya Sūtras, e.g. the Sāṅkhāyana Grhya Sūtra, I, 25, 12 (SBE, Vol. XXIX, p. 51). Later in this chapter it is mentioned again, infra, p. 66.

3

Before leaving, the fire should be extinguished with sacral water or with water mixed with saliva from a person chewing areca fruit.

shaving knife shaves the head of the infant¹. If the child seems ailing and the family fears that it may not be strong enough to face life, it may be decided to leave one or more tufts of hair growing. In the years following, the rest of the head should be shaved regularly leaving the tufts to grow. When the child is ten or more years old this hair, which may be plaited and knotted, will be shaved off at an auspicious moment. Many children who seem perfectly healthy may never have a topknot. The tonsure can be seen as a purification rite; it serves to cleanse the baby's head which has been treated disrespectfully and which has come into contact with unclean matter during birth.

Farmers who can afford to pay for elaborate ceremonies may decide, before a child is born, to have the place of confinement purified and protected. They invite a ritual specialist, who can be a Buddhist monk or an older layman, to do this. This specialist strings a white cotton thread, named saajsin², around the place of confinement in the form of a square some feet off the ground. When such a cord is placed around an area or an object it invariably underlines the sacredness of that which is enclosed. The ritual

1

The tonsure ceremony was commonly used in ancient India. It is described in detail in the Grhya Sūtras (SBE, Vol. XXIX, pp. 55-57 et passim), and is mentioned in the Manu-smṛti, II, 27 (SBE, Vol. XXV, p. 34). See also KHD, Vol. II, p. 260 et seq.

2

สายสิญจน์ . . . This word means literally 'sprinkling cord'. It is related to the Sanskrit siñcana (MMW, p. 1214a). The connection with water lies probably in the ritual of making sacral water in private houses.

specialist sacralizes a bowl of water, nammon¹, by reciting from memory sacred verses in the Pāli language whilst holding a lighted candle above the surface of the water in the bowl. During this recitation, the specialist holds the candle at such an angle that it drips wax on to the surface of the water². As soon as the nammon has been prepared, it can be sprinkled in and around the area of confinement. The householder may keep some of the nammon to extinguish the fire, some days after the birth.

In order to ward off evil influences, the ritual specialist may have prepared different kinds of sacred objects: small banners and magical drawings. The banners are usually made of gaily coloured pieces of paper cut in the shape of a triangle and fastened by one side to a small stick. The magical drawings, jan³, are usually made on paper or cloth. Often they consist of intricate geometrical designs in which, at regular intervals, small characters are inserted⁴. Both the banners and the jan should be placed above and around the place of confinement.

¹ น้ำมนตร์ . Literally 'mantra-water'. The word seems related to the Sanskrit mantra in the meaning 'mystical verse or magical formula' (MMW, p. 786a).

²

The sacralizing of water by a chapter of monks is mentioned in Ch. IX, pp. 272-277.

³

ยันต์ . A word derived from the Pāli yanta or the Sanskrit yantra (PhTh, p. 1065). Originally the word meant 'aid' or 'tool', to be used in meditation. The Thai use it in what Pott would call a 'restricted sense', namely as 'mystical diagram' (cf. P.H. Pott, Yoga and Yantra, 1965, p. 28).

⁴

The magical drawings are discussed in more detail in the following chapter (see infra, pp. 96-107).

An elaboration of the ceremony of the winnowing basket, three days after birth, consists of a tham khwan¹ ceremony. Some ceremonial conical structures are folded from banana leaves and on top of each of these structures an egg may be placed. Other foods liked by the gods, such as bananas and sweetmeats, may be placed around these structures. A ritual specialist invokes the gods to come and assist in the tham khwan ceremony, to lend their power so that the 'ego' of the infant becomes strong. To strengthen the courage and reassure the soul, the infant is dressed with glittering ornaments and the whole family, forming a circle around him, wafts smoke from three lit candles towards him. During the tham khwan, the ritual specialist binds a piece of white cotton string around the wrist of the baby, anoints the child's forehead and implores the soul of the child to be unwavering, to stay firm, to enjoy its pleasant surroundings. The members of the family now and then interrupt the ceremony by loudly uttering some auspicious syllables².

The tham khwan ceremony may be repeated at various periods of a person's life. For example, it may be held if a person has undergone a severe shock and members of his family fear that he is in danger of losing his zest for life. It is customary to hold a tham khwan ritual for a man before he becomes a member of the Samgha. It can be

1

พำขวัญ . The word khwan is a concept which is difficult to translate into English. Different aspects of its meaning are shown spread over the whole paragraph (cf. McF., pp. 144a-145b; TSD, p. 50a; PhTh, pp. 218a-220a).

2

See, for details, Ch. VII, p. 214.

held to assuage and fortify the spirit that lives in a piece of wood. Tham khwan may be performed over the rice harvest, immediately before threshing¹.

Finally, the tonsure of an infant can be subject to elaborations. Well-to-do farmers may use the first shaving of their child as an opportunity to invite a chapter of monks. These monks sacralize a bowl of water and, while they chant a final blessing, the head of the child is shaved. If the infant is a boy, the leader of the chapter of monks may remove the first locks of hair, but a small girl is handled by laymen only, since members of the Samgha cannot touch females.

When it appears that the child will live, its name is chosen. There are two different types of children's names: the private name and the nickname. The private name must be selected with care, for an unsuitable appellation may cause its bearer to become sickly and listless. Before deciding upon a name many parents will consult a person who possesses a handbook on astrology. With the help of a table, the ritual specialist can find with which letter the child's name should begin. The table can be used if he knows the day of the week and the time of the day the child was born. The names in the astrologer's handbook often have auspicious, pleasant or highly valued connotations. The private name of a person may be the word for a pleasant trait in people such as 'Polite, Clean, Beautiful, Happy, Gentle', or it may refer to a precious or a semi-precious

1

Phya Anuman Rajadhon, in Essays on Thai Folklore, pp. 202-253, discusses several more interesting aspects of the khwan and its ceremonies.

metal: 'Gold, Silver, or Copper'. Often there are names which are especially suited for boys like: 'Firm, Extreme, Battle, Grasp, Impressive', whilst girls may be referred to by names like 'Fascinating, Full of Auspiciousness, or Attractive'¹.

Often, a child cannot be called by its private name, which reflects characteristics which the infant still does not possess. It will be only after the years of childhood are over that a person can make full use of the name that has so carefully been chosen for him. Therefore, a nickname is used during the child's tender years, and in the choice of this nickname the parents carefully avoid reference to beautiful or auspicious objects or concepts. They select 'neutral' words instead, which are neither auspicious nor inauspicious. They may choose the generic name of a domestic animal: 'Pig, Chicken, Dog, or Cat', or a common adjective: 'Little, Fat, Red, or Plenty'. A special characteristic of the child may prompt the nickname, and this leaves room for choosing a rather humorous name like '๑๑บ'² (Happily satisfied with food), '๑๑๓'³ (Big vessel), 'เ็ด'⁴ (Sound of a squealing pig) or 'อุด'⁵ (Squeal). It is quite common to form the nickname from an abbreviation of the real name, choosing one of the syllables

1

A list of names, ranging over the whole alphabet and divided for male and female, can be found in วัฒนธรรมไทย หน้า ๘๗-๑๑๗

2

เ็ดบ

3

อุบ

4

เ็ดบค

5

อุค

of the latter. Some families select nicknames beginning with the same consonant for all the children.

It has been mentioned often that the use of nicknames in Thailand is derived from a custom to deceive evil spirits into thinking that there was no child in the house; that, when parents were calling out to their child, it was only the cat, the dog, or an innocent harmless word being called¹. Informants near Watsaancaaw, however, upon hearing of this belief, commented somewhat in the following manner:

Of course it is possible that people gave ugly nicknames to deceive evil spirits. But this must have been a long time ago. We use nicknames which are often referring to something common when we speak of our children because we believe that it helps the child. If you call a child 'Dog' or 'Pig', you do so in the hope that the baby will be growing up easily, that it will need as little attention as a dog or a pig. Other names such as 'Little' or 'Red' are simply neutral names because you would not want to use the real name.²

In this respect it is relevant to notice that the nicknames given to children never refer to inauspicious objects or to objects which are considered magically powerful. Names which cannot be used are those connected with footwear, pain, death, poverty, unripeness, heat, fire, rice and tools.

1

Landon, Siam in Transition, p. 169; Kumut Chandruang, My Boyhood in Siam, 1969, p. 37; Kaufman, Bangkhud, p. 145.

2

Taken from a general discussion on the subject on 17 November 1968, near Watsaancaaw.

In general, the Thai child spends its first two years on earth in a relaxed environment. Children are taught to walk, to speak and to control the body functions without punishment. They meet with practically no restrictions: they eat when they feel hungry and sleep when they feel tired. The encouragement given to a successful step, or a properly pronounced word, is far greater than the censure given when the child falters in movement or speech.

Before a child is one year old it should be able to make several polite gestures. Every time a child wishes to receive something, and immediately after obtaining something from an older person, he has to raise his hands, palm to palm. During the first six months the relatives may take the arms of the baby to help it perform the gesture, but by the time the child is one year old, this has become a conditioned reflex. Another gesture which infants learn before they are able to speak is the prostration: placing the hands palms down on the floor and slowly lowering the head until it rests between the hands. Both gestures are extremely important in Thai culture; they are part of almost every religious ceremony, and the order in which these gestures are made and the exact manner of execution reveals the hierarchical positions of the participants in a ritual¹.

The infant can freely observe how the eldest member of the house pays obeisance to the ancestors. Little children notice the lighting of candles and incense and are encouraged to imitate the prostrations of the elders.

1

For further details about the execution of both gestures, see Phya Anuman Rajadhon, "Thai Traditional Salutation", in his Essays on Thai Folklore, pp. 178-189.

Gradually, as the child grows older and begins to understand language in its finer nuances, training in proper behaviour becomes more serious. Gradually the infant is weaned from the breast of its mother and encouraged to eat solid food. If the child acts naughtily, with full knowledge that a rule of behaviour is broken, he is slapped or reproached verbally.

From about the age of two, education of boys begins to differ in character from that of girls. Small girls are taught to do errands for their mother, to help watch over a younger relative and to make themselves useful in the household. The boys on the other hand are allowed to walk about and to explore their surroundings. The only chore which automatically falls to a male child is to keep an eye on the buffaloes or oxen when they are allowed to graze, or to pluck grass for these domestic animals. The difference in treatment between the sexes is stressed from a very early age in the different ways of clothing: many parents will dress a baby girl with a string around the waist from which a cover hangs over the lower abdomen, whilst small boys may walk around naked. A girl is made to wear short trousers from about the age of four and they must cover all the lower part of the body from about the age of nine. Boys may wear short trousers from about the age of six¹.

One of the strictest rules impressed upon young girls is that they should never come close to a Buddhist monk. All women, regardless of age, must keep their distance from members of the Samgha². A small boy, however, is not kept

1

See Ch. VI, p. 179.

2

See Ch. V, pp. 143-145.

away from monks, and parents like to present their sons to a monk when a member of the Samgha comes on a visit.

A young girl ought to be near the house. She helps in the kitchen, assists in cleaning the house and sweeps the compound. She is given charge over a younger child, thus learning to handle infants with skill. Part of the household duties of a girl may consist of the offering of food to the monks every morning at dawn. Women donate food into the begging bowls of monks in preference to men for several reasons. In the first place, since women are the ones who have prepared the rice and curries, they may feel that they ought to be handling them. Women, supervising the preparation of food, are better judges of the amount that can be distributed to others without depriving the household. Moreover, early in the morning when the sun is low, most able men will be in the fields, so that this task automatically falls to the women¹.

A child's first acquaintance with the monastery usually dates from a very early age. On wanphra², the Buddhist special day of worship, children are often brought

1

Tambiah puts forward that young men avoid feeding the monks because they 'find it uncongenial to approach their peers who have temporarily renounced the world...' (S.J. Tambiah, "The Ideology of Merit and the Social Correlates of Buddhism in a Thai Village", in Dialectic in Practical Religion, ed. by E.R. Leach, 1968, p. 66). Such a motivation cannot be ascribed to men in central Thailand. Certainly, few men do give food to the monks in the morning but their absence can be readily accounted for. When men are available, they perform this simple ceremony willingly.

2

วันพระ . Literally 'Holy day'. Wanphra is held four times each lunar month, on the 14th or 15th and the eighth day of each half month. These are exactly the days reserved by the Buddhist monks for recitation of the teachings in the early days of Buddhism (Mahāvāqqa II, 1, 1 - II, 2, 1; SBE, Vol. XIII, pp. 239-241).

along whilst their parents attend ceremonies. During the periods of the service when the monks chant sacred texts, most laymen sit in a polite posture, with the hands raised palm to palm in front of the chin. Some children readily follow the example of their parents, but if the chanting persists for a long time young people usually relax from their polite position. No child will be reproached for not keeping up his hands. Only when a youngster threatens to interrupt the ceremony will he be restrained.

Some ceremonies in the monasteries can be accompanied by festive elaborations¹. In order to attract a great number of people who will donate money, the organizers of such a major ceremony provide a variety of attractions: music, classical theatre, popular theatre (likee)², shadow theatre (naṅ taluṅ)³, films and acrobatics. Great crowds of children flock to a monastery on such occasions and they enjoy watching the entertainers. Through the theatre performances especially they become acquainted with the splendour and pomp of royalty, the might and beauty of gods, the fearful looks and behaviour of demons, the antics and power of Hanuman, and the nobility and heroism of Rāma.

The attitudes of children towards the monastery are often ambiguous. The splendour of gods is counterbalanced by the fearful impressions of demons. The smile of the monks disappears during the impressive sonorous chanting. The lofty buildings are said to be the habitat of dangerous spirits. In the monastery grounds corpses are often

1

See Ch. IX, pp. 297-299.

2

ลิเก

3

ผนังตะลุง

Literally 'hides on posts'.

stored, awaiting the annihilation of the body on the funeral pyre. Children watch older people handle these decaying bodies immediately before cremation. It is common knowledge that, at night, spirits roam around in the monastery grounds and beyond. When the dogs of the monastery start to howl it is because they can see these spirits even if men sometimes cannot. Children are told about these spirits in the monastery: beings, often dressed in a white shroud, sometimes deceptively looking like ordinary humans, but capable of suddenly changing into skeletons trying to grab people¹.

At night, a multitude of strange beings threaten the humans. These spirits often lurk in patches of dark vegetation and stories about their characteristics vary, depending on the accounts of eyewitnesses. Sometimes it was only a rustling noise, or a peculiar sound heard at such places, but the wise person does not stay to investigate; he hurries home to tell of his narrow escape from the terrible shock of an encounter with an unknown power.

Some of the spirits that a person may encounter are well known from lore. If a man meets them he would certainly recognize them for what they are. A great looming shape with a small head which makes a piercing noise must be a pret², a being suffering for the heavy sins

1

Many children base their knowledge of what these spirits look like on a film produced in the beginning of this century by M.L. Anusak, Thepasdin, with the title Meenaagkhanong rak (แม่นางกhanong rak). This film has been circulating in rural central Thailand for several decades. It is Thailand's most popular horror film and is full of examples of the powers of different kinds of spirits.

2

เปรต . The Thai follow the Sanskrit spelling rather than the Pāli (the latter leaves out the letter r).

of a past life¹. The pret are not very dangerous; if encountered, one should have pity on them and offer them some merit with an appropriate sentence². Much more dangerous are the phii krasyy³, ghosts which feed on excrement. A phii krasyy is shaped like a human head with entrails hanging underneath⁴. They reveal their position during the night by emitting a small red light intermittently. These ghosts live during daytime in the body of an ordinary person. As soon as the person in whom a phii krasyy lives falls asleep, the ghost can roam around and search for food. If a person succeeds in capturing a phii krasyy, the ghost will plead to be released and reputedly offers great amounts of money in return. The person in which the phii krasyy lives during the daytime may not be aware of the fact that a ghost lives as a parasite in his body. Being possessed by phii krasyy is hereditary⁵ and, if it becomes known that a certain family is prone to carry these ghosts, pressure may be exerted to have them removed from the district.

Extremely malicious are the phii taajhoon⁶, the spirits of people who died in an inauspicious manner. For

1

See Ch. X, p. 307.

2

See Ch. VI, p. 172.

3

ผีกระสือ

4

The same spirit is described for Malaya under the name penanggalan (Kirk Michael Endicott, An Analysis of Malay Magic, 1970, p. 61).

5

Hardouin describes in detail how the phii krasyy are transferred when a possessed person dies (C. Hardouin, "Traditions et Superstitions siamoises", Revue Indo-Chinoise, April 1904, pp. 415-418).

6

ผีตายโหง

example, the ghosts of those who died from a bullet- or knife-wound inflicted in anger are dangerous. They come into existence when people die unprepared and against their will. The most dangerous phii taajhoon comes into being when a woman dies when pregnant or during childbirth.

Less dangerous are the phii baan, also known as phii ryan¹, the ghosts of ancestors who hover around the house that once was their property. These house-spirits jealously watch what their descendants do with the property. If the phii baan do not agree with an activity of the occupants of the house, they may express their discontent by causing nightmares or illnesses. Their spirit usually resides near a shelf in a high place in the house where some of their ashes and a picture are the material witnesses of their former residence as humans in the home. The present householder lights some incense and a candle on the shelf every evening and tells the phii baan that everything is well. Unpleasant news is usually carefully omitted in the daily account, lest the phii baan become upset.

A different category of powers are the caaw phii², tutelary spirits living outside the homes of people. These powers may reside in the forest, in a mountain or in a tall tree, but sometimes people have been able to entice one to come and live in a shrine. These powers are often addressed by the title 'Lord father' or 'Lady mother', and should from time to time be presented with an offering. Some pleasant aroma from a bundle of incense or some

1 ผีบ้าน ผีเรือน

2 เจ้าผี

flowers, a candle alight or the essence of some food or liquor are reputed to satisfy such powers. In return for these gifts, the persons who offer may ask that these powers provide assistance in difficult ventures.

Children are well aware of these different, potentially dangerous powers. They hear stories of horrible encounters, and of people suddenly becoming violently ill by offending a spirit. A child will be taught to behave politely, and to make appropriate gestures to the different spirits. In addition, a simple spell can be taught which will be protective in all circumstances¹. Other protective measures taken are in the form of amulets. However, these amulets are usually given only to boys. Very young girls are rarely seen with objects which have the power to protect, and on the few occasions when small girls were seen with an amulet around their neck, it was reputedly a 'small one', 'not a powerful one' or 'more for decoration than for protection'.

Around their necks boys wear a cord from which an object with the power to protect dangles. Often it is a small Buddha image or a medal, cast in honour of a famous monk. Sometimes it is a small container with a scroll inside, which is attached to the cord. These scrolls, takrut,² may be of paper, cloth or metal and usually are tightly rolled around the cord or in the container. Their protective value is derived from the fact that a jan³ has

1

Kumut Chandruang was taught to say 'Namo', obviously derived from 'Namo Buddhāya' (Chandruang, My Boyhood in Siam, p. 68).

2

ตะกรุด

3

Supra, p. 65.

been drawn on the material by a person skilled in magical lore. There may be boys who wear beads, made from the seeds of the makhaam¹ tree. Some boys wear a takrut on a cord around the waist, but in most cases when such a cord is worn so low on the body, a small wooden or metal phallus is the only talisman.

The boy who wears protective objects is instructed to handle them with care. The cord around his neck can be taken off, for example, when lying down to sleep, but in no circumstances should it be placed on the floor or in a position where a person might inadvertently step on it. When washing or relieving himself, the amulet may be taken into the mouth, or temporarily hung at the back so that it cannot be insulted². The object on the cord around the waist cannot be taken off so easily and at inauspicious moments the wearer should therefore temporarily shift the amulet to the back, out of sight.

Formal Education

Since the revolution of 1932 the Thai government has embarked upon a program to bring primary education within the reach of the rural population. The introduction of schools has resulted in some far-reaching changes in the social life of the farmers. Before the time of government schools, formal education was in the hands of the monks. The skills of reading and writing were taught to a select

1

มะขาม . Tamarindus indica (McF., pp. 356-7).

2

These rules resemble the Hindu practices regarding the yajñopavīta, or sacred cord.

group of small boys, the degwat¹, who lived in the monastery as servants to the monks. Lessons were given every afternoon, five days per week², by a monk who could read and write with ease. Apart from the intricacies of the Thai alphabet, instruction often included the learning of some Pāli formulae and the Khoom script³. Therefore the road to learning was strictly reserved for males, girls being excluded from the monastery schools. Usually girls were under the supervision of an elder relative at home until they married.

Nowadays, however, most communities possess a government school, often situated on monastery grounds. Usually the monks do not possess a teacher's certificate and are not allowed to teach in the schools.

When children are about six or seven, both boys and girls have to attend school. The first time a child attends lessons, parents usually accompany him in order to present the pupil to the guardian spirit of the monastery in the grounds of which the school is situated.

1
เด็กวัด

2
No formal instruction was given on wanphra or the day before wanphra.

3
ขอม . It is the script reserved for sacred writing in Thailand, based on the Cambodian letters. It is only since World War II that the Thai government has stopped printing Pāli in these Khoom characters. They are still used widely in the more esoteric skills of tattooing and the drawing of jan. Kaufman was obviously misinformed about the sacred script of the Thai, when he wrote that most of the monks were of Cambodian origin and used their own books (Kaufman, Bangkhuad, p. 84). It is the script which is related to the Cambodian writing, not necessarily the people. Sometimes it is also called the Mūl script.

The tutelary spirit of Watsaancaaw lives close by the temple and his residence is marked with a stone monument. The parents light a candle and some incense and address the spirit by his name, the Venerable Father Chaa. Father Chaa is told that this child will come each day to the monastery in order to be educated. The parents ask from the spirit that he takes note of the fact that this child will be in the school from time to time and that he will cause the child to be happy and successful. After the prayer to the spirit, a garland is fastened to the shrine and the child can proceed towards the school.

It would be unwise to forget to inform the tutelary spirit of any event of importance, because if the spirit becomes annoyed he may retaliate.

Some years ago, there was a degwat who suddenly fell ill. He had a high fever, and the abbot was called to examine him. Another degwat told the abbot that he had seen the sick boy earlier that day playing near the shrine of the Venerable Chaa, and that some incense sticks had been taken away from the shrine. The abbot immediately understood the cause of the fever and hurriedly sent someone over to light new incense sticks near the shrine. Half an hour later the sick boy had recovered, his fever had almost completely gone.¹

The curriculum of the school is determined in the Department of Education in the capital, but details of the course are left to the discretion of the teachers. Most of the time in school is devoted to learning to read and write the Thai language with ease. Some teachers will use

1

Translated from a personal communication with Phra Pliig, on 5 November 1969. Later Phra Pliig added: 'Each monastery has its own spirit, and its characteristics vary. Our Venerable Chaa happens to be easily offended.'

about an hour per week for religious instruction. A variety of subjects can be caught under this heading. Apart from the story of the life of the Buddha and the essential ideas incorporated in the paticca-samuppāda¹, religious teaching can include lessons about ethics and morality. Each child should respect four classes of superiors: the parents, the teachers, the King and the Buddha. Towards his superiors a child should behave in a proper manner, using polite speech and respectful gestures. The body should be in a proper position when in the presence of one's elders: never on a superior horizontal plane, and with the feet out of sight. Children are often reminded of the fact that they are deeply in debt to their parents and teachers who have provided them with life and knowledge.

The King and the Thai government should be respected as institutions which uphold and propagate morality and the Buddhist faith. In teaching, nationalism and Buddhism are closely interlinked. The connection between the two concepts is clearly indicated, for example, in the flag-raising ceremony at nine o'clock in the morning. All children stand neatly dressed in orderly lines in front of the school buildings while the flag is raised, and sing a few bars of the national anthem. A schoolteacher will lead the children in a communal recitation of some well-known Pāli words²:

1

The causes of rise of phenomena, as applied to dukkha (PED, p. 394).

2

They are the opening words of three well-known paragraphs (เจตคํานานทนา๑๕).

Teacher: 'Arahaṃ sammāsambuddho bhagavā...'
 All: 'Buddhaṃ bhagavantam abhivādemī.'
 Teacher: 'Svākkhāto bhagavatā dhammo...'
 All: 'Dhammam namassāmi.'
 Teacher: 'Supaṭipanno bhagavato sāvakaṣaṃgho...'
 All: 'Saṃgham namāmi.'

Translated:

Teacher: 'He is the Holy one, completely aware, the Lord...'
 All: 'I honour the Lord Buddha.'
 Teacher: 'The Dhamma¹ is well preached by the Lord...'
 All: 'I will pay homage to the Dhamma.'
 Teacher: 'The community of the disciples of the Lord is of good conduct...'
 All: 'I pay homage to the community of the disciples.'

The children do not know the exact translation of these words, but they recognize that the monks often use the sentences prompted by the teacher. Probably they are aware of the fact that their answers refer to the Triple Gem: the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Samgha.

During term, the children flock to the monastery grounds five days a week². Before school and during

1

ธรรม . The spelling of the Thai word tham indicates that it was derived from the Sanskrit dharma, rather than the Pāli dhamma. In pronunciation, however, it adheres more closely to Pāli, and throughout the thesis the Pāli spelling has been adopted.

2

In rural schools, schools should be closed on wanphra and the day before wanphra, in accordance with the lunar calendar and the religious life in the monastery. Nowadays, however, more and more schools conform to the government policy of closing on Saturday and Sunday.

lunchtime they can play in the monastery grounds, and they become well acquainted with the daily affairs of the monastery. Children can see the monks eat in the morning, they can look into the cells when the doors are left open, and witness the monks when they read, talk or rest. Monks can stroll to groups of playing children and stop to chat with the boys (the girls know that they must keep their distance). The members of the Samgha can be observed when they perform a ceremony, repair a building¹ or go to the river for a bath. Even during classes, children are aware of the daily routine in the monastery, for they can hear the chanting of the monks.

The Degwat

Although the monks' monopoly of primary education has been broken by the government schools, the institution of the young male servants of the monks, the degwat, is still important. In 1967 for example, the Department of Religious Affairs reported for the whole of Thailand 108,424 degwat². The number of degwat per monastery in municipal areas is probably lower than the average number of degwat per monastery in rural areas. In the region around Watsaancaaw there are usually as many degwat as there are monks.

With the loss of the educational privileges which were bestowed solely upon the degwat, the recruiting pattern has

1

Whilst monks are not allowed to engage in agriculture, lest they kill numerous insects, carpentry and masonry are considered legitimate occupations.

2

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undergone a change. While previously parents sent their young boys to serve in the monastery so that they would learn to read and write, nowadays other reasons prevail. A small boy can be assigned to a monastery where an older relative has become a member of the Samgha, and he will serve that particular relative. Another motive for pressing a small boy to serve in the monastery is related to the fact that degwat obtain free food in the monastery. Parents who can ill afford the expense of feeding their children may well decide to send one or more sons into the service of the monks.

The age of the degwat usually varies between seven and 14 years, and therefore their tasks in the monastery are interrupted by the school curriculum. Their duties are not very heavy. At night they sleep on the floor of a monastery building, huddled together, using some discarded cloth to keep warm. Just before six o'clock in the morning they are awakened by the monks, so that they have time to wash their faces before joining the monks for the begging round¹. The degwat must always walk behind the monks; they carry a layered multi-compartmental food container while the monks carry their begging bowls. Monks receive rice in a ceremonial manner² in their begging bowl, and most other kinds of food are collected by the degwat. Different kinds of food have to be stored in

1

The monks who go begging paddling a boat do not need a degwat to accompany them. In municipal areas monks often beg without degwat; it is only in rural areas where monks beg on foot that the small boys accompany the members of the Samgha.

2

See Ch. IX, p. 270.

different compartments of the food containers and this requires some manual skill from the degwat. Around seven o'clock in the morning they return heavily laden to the monastery, and help to arrange the food in the place where the monks have their communal meal. Those monks who prefer to eat alone have their portions placed in the privacy of their own cells¹.

When the monks gather to partake of the joint meal, each platter of food and each bowl of rice has to be ceremoniously offered to them. Monks are not allowed to eat many kinds of food unless it has been officially presented. If a layman touches a piece of food, or a container of food from which a monk is eating, the layman should immediately ceremoniously offer the food anew. The ceremonial offering, prakheen², is one of the most important tasks of the degwat. When, for example, a monk prepares some food before the fasting period of the day begins, or when a monk wishes to consume a soft drink, a degwat should be called to present the plate or the vessel in the proper manner.

After waiting on the monks during their main morning meal, the degwat are allowed to eat. The empty food containers should then be washed and the floor of the building ought to be swept before the degwat go to school. Each of the boys dons his school uniform and is inspected by the monk to whom he is assigned for any signs of

1

It is common practice that the monks share all food, so that those who cannot beg because of physical infirmities will not suffer.

2

พระเคน

uncleanliness before he joins the flag-raising ceremony at school.

During the time that the small boys are assigned to serve a certain monk, this member of the Samgha should act as father and mother to the child. A monk can punish the degwat when they do not perform their tasks well. Punishment varies from a verbal reprimand to thrashing. Outside schooltime, the degwat can be called to perform small services for the monks, such as carrying messages, hauling water, buying refreshments, or prakheening an item of food. When a monk is invited to perform a ceremony somewhere else, outside the monastery, the degwat can be taken along. However, if travel would interfere with the school tasks, permission to accompany a monk should be obtained from the head of the school.

Unlike the days before the government primary schools, in many monasteries there is no formal instruction of the degwat. The abbot of a monastery may, from time to time, call the degwat to his cell to impress upon them that they should behave in a proper and dignified manner; that they are not like other boys who do not have the advantage of living in a monastery; and that they should try to observe the Five Precepts.

The intelligent boy can obtain an extensive knowledge about the life of the monks during the period he is one of the degwat. Daily he hears their chanting, and the Pāli texts which are most frequently repeated may soon be grafted upon his mind. He witnesses many ceremonies and is soon able to recognize the difference between the ordination of a monk and that of a novice; he never misses a theatre performance in the monastery and is in front of the crowd during cremations.

The degwat are not confined to the monastery, and can observe religious events beyond its walls. During fund-raising ceremonies in neighbouring monasteries the degwat may accompany the monks who are invited to attend. If a member of the Samgha has to travel to the provincial capital or beyond, a degwat may be taken along with him so that the boy can handle money¹. Degwat can be taken to ceremonies during which monks are invited to chant, and therefore these boys can observe how the monks sacralize water², how the monks chant for rain in the fields, how they bless the crop and how they chant to ensure longevity in a person.

The Novices

While in 1967 the Department of Religious Affairs reported more than 100,000 degwat for the whole of Thailand, the number of novices was 96,569³, an average of four novices per monastery. A breakdown of the figures shows, however, that the distribution of novices is uneven. In the North and Northeast and in the capital of the country the average is as high as seven novices per monastery, but in rural central Thailand the average is only two novices per monastery. In the North and Northeast of Thailand this high number of novices correlates with a relatively low number of monks, and it seems that in these areas the noviceship has taken on some of the functions of the order of monks in other regions. In the North and Northeast many a man is considered adult after having been a novice,

¹ See Ch. V, pp. 160-163.

²

See Ch. IX, pp. 275-277.

³

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whilst in central Thailand having been a novice does not entitle a man to be called adult: he should join the Samgha as a monk before he is admitted to adult status. The high incidence of persons in novitiate in the capital seems to be related to the good schooling facilities in monasteries in Bangkok.

Before the introduction of state schools in rural areas, a young boy could obtain formal education at an advanced level only if he became a member of the Samgha. The boy who looks for a secondary education in present times will find that the state schools offer a program suited to the demands of society, whilst becoming a novice does not prepare a young person for secular life.

In the rural community the aura of the elite still surrounds the institution of noviceship. In the film Mænaagkhanõõ rak¹, for example, it is a novice who performs the final ceremony which liberates the angry spirit from its earthly links. Parents who cannot afford the expense of sending a son to secondary school may encourage a child to become a novice and thus obtain at least a thorough religious education.

Under the influence of the Department of Religious Affairs, monks as well as novices are expected to partake in the yearly religious examinations², and a bright young person can, in principle, pass through at least the lower degrees of ecclesiastical learning whilst still a novice. Such a person may well decide to embark upon a career in

1

See supra, p. 74, footnote 1.

2

This is discussed in more detail in Ch. V, pp. 154-159.

the order, because passing a certain number of examinations makes a man eligible to higher offices in the Samgha. The novice who passes his examinations, however, will have to wait until the year he becomes twenty before he can join the order as a monk, and it is only as a monk that he can hold an office.

A novice is ritually inferior to a monk: novices follow only a limited number of precepts¹ and are excluded from decision-making meetings of the Samgha. A novice cannot partake in the final part of the ceremony of the ordination of a monk, he is not allowed to join the monks during the times the Pātimokkha is recited, and he does not change his name when becoming a member of the Samgha, as the monks do. In rural central Thailand, noviceship does not carry great prestige and, if a novice fails his yearly examination, his parents may ask him to give up his yellow robes, to return to the household and to work on the land.

In this chapter two themes have appeared. In the first place it has become apparent that most parents surround their children with magical protection. The birth-fire is left at an auspicious moment, the name of a child is chosen with care, children are protected from phii. Children are vulnerable, weak, and may suddenly and unexpectedly contract diseases, and it is indicative of the anxiety and insecurity of the parents that so many different magical means are manipulated.

The second theme which appears in this chapter is the difference in behaviour between small boys and girls in relation to religion. This is apparent in the difference

1

See Ch. VIII, pp. 264-267.

in behaviour with regard to members of the Samgha, but it is even more obvious with regard to education. Traditionally boys were the only members of the community who had a chance to learn to read and write, and whilst girls are now freely admitted to elementary school, small boys retain most of the monopoly on religious knowledge through the institution of the degwat. The difference in access to religious knowledge between boys and girls becomes even more pronounced in the period of adolescence, discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER IV

ADOLESCENTS, AMULETS AND TATTOOING

Adolescents and Religion

After successful completion of primary education, children can, in theory, continue their formal education in a school which prepares them for matriculation into a secondary school, and boys have a wider choice in being able to join the Samgha as a novice. In the region around Watsaancaaw, the incidence of children opting for further education is rare. In the genealogies of people sustaining the monastery, only 1.4 per cent of the eligible males had been novices¹. Of all adults who had been brought up in the Watsaancaaw community, people could recall only three persons who had completed secondary education. The number of persons taking secondary education in state schools may rise sharply in the future, because in 1969 there were eight children attending preparatory school and one boy enrolled in a secondary school.

Many parents seem reluctant to allow their children to study further after completing primary education. To the parents, the advantages of further education are hypothetical and at best many years ahead. Sending a child to school when he is more than twelve years old deprives the household of valuable manpower. Moreover,

1

In these genealogies there were 790 males of more than 14 years of age; only 11 were reported to have been novices.

since the cash income of the farmer depends largely on the rice crop and can fluctuate greatly from year to year, the steady financial burden of a schoolgoing child is something not lightly engaged upon.

After formal primary education, the great majority of children of the Watsaancaaw community do not continue their formal schooling. Instead, they are employed on their parents' farms. Boys learn to plough and to harrow the fields, to transplant young rice plants and to maintain the irrigation channels. They obtain knowledge about the many different varieties of rice plants and the ways to improve the soil. As their skill and physical strength increase, they become indispensable in the household. Often a hardworking son is rewarded by his parents with the ownership of a plot of land.

Girls soon take over many of their mother's tasks. They learn to cook, tend fruit and vegetable plants in the garden and look after younger children in the household. In addition they must help with the lighter duties in the fields.

Work on the fields is intensive during several months of the year, but each year there are months when there is little labour on the land. Traditionally the boys were allowed to wander around with friends of their own age during the slack periods. They went fishing, playing or visiting the provincial capital in small groups. This was the milieu in which they learned to smoke, drink alcoholic beverages, gamble and fight. Girls were not allowed to roam around; they were kept under supervision. In the house there was always something to mend, and if they had a spare hour they could earn some money by weaving cloth or

making baskets. Nowadays, however, since a road has been constructed between Watsaancaaw and the provincial capital, many teenagers seek work in town during the periods of agricultural 'holidays'. Both boys and girls commute between the farm and the town and are often engaged as unskilled workers on construction sites.

After they leave elementary school, teenagers have little contact with the monastery. Young people generally find it tedious to sit attentively while the monks chant their blessings and they are not interested in the topics of sermons. During the services on a regular wanphra young people seldom attend¹. This lack of interest is regarded as something natural and parents do not try to coerce their children to attend the regular services. In these matters each child is fully responsible for its own decisions. It is recognized that young people do not worry about their future rebirths, because death still seems far away to them. Unlike older people they do not grasp every opportunity to increase their store of good karma.

However, on special occasions young people do come to the monastery in great numbers. During the annual major ceremonies in the monastery², they will join the rest of the community in the communal food offering early in the morning. The traditional New Year³ gives youngsters an

1

The same observations are reported for a community in northern Thailand by Moerman (Michael Moerman, "Ban Ping's Temple: The Center of a 'Loosely Structured' Society", in ASTB, 1966, pp. 143-144).

2

See Ch. IX, pp. 278-297.

3

See Ch. IX, pp. 280-281.

occasion to indulge in some mildly licentious behaviour, and during the night before an ordination there may be a period of music and dance. Every ordination is traditionally elaborated with at least one procession when young people can drink alcoholic beverages and dance to their hearts' content, encouraged by the stirring accompanying music. Girls enjoy the processions in a different manner: young unmarried women are needed to carry some of the ornate gifts used during the ordination. It is a chance for them to display their most beautiful clothes and walk gracefully under the admiring glances of other people of the community.

Every year, the lay leaders in consultation with the monks organize a fund-raising ceremony. They may use one of the annually recurring ceremonies for this purpose, or a special ceremony can be organized solely for the purpose of fund-raising. Great crowds of people are expected on such occasions, and young people play an important role in the preparations. The grounds must be clean, the grass has to be cut, and the buildings have to be decorated before the day when thousands of persons will flock to the monastery. Women occupy the monastery kitchen to prepare food for all who help embellish the 'community centre', and an older, quick-witted woman is in charge of the cooking. She buys provisions and divides the work, she ensures that nobody is idle and that the flirtations between the men who have finished their tasks and the young girls under her charge remain within bounds.

The fund-raising ceremony itself is attractive to young people, not for religious reasons, but because there is usually much entertainment in the form of theatre, music or films. For those of courting age it is an excellent

opportunity to see members of the opposite sex, not only from their own community, but from the surrounding area as well¹. The relations between adolescents and the monastery seem to have little to do with religious feelings. Young people are absent during most of the religious services; they are drawn to the monasteries only when there is interesting entertainment.

The Amulets

Small boys wear objects which protect them against disease, witchcraft and accidents². When a boy becomes adolescent these objects with protective power become increasingly prominent in their lives. There is a great variety of objects which can serve as amulets. Frequently a man can be seen wearing a small Buddha image on a cord around his neck. This image can be made of metal, mineral, wood or resin. Sometimes the Buddha image is made from a mixture of different ingredients: these are the phra phim³, the pressed or printed sacred objects. Any man equipped with the proper ingredients and the right spells can manufacture phra phim. Usually they are prepared by an older monk who has obtained knowledge about jan, the khoom⁴

1

In former days this was one of the few occasions when a young man might see unmarried girls from outside his own community. Nowadays, communications with the provincial capital have altered this picture. There is now ample opportunity to meet girls during the visits in town, and the attraction of the monastery fund-raising ceremonies must have waned consequently.

2

See Ch. III, pp. 77-78.

3

พระพิมพ์

4

See Ch. III, p. 79.

script and a recipe¹. On the cord from which the Buddha images dangle, other amulets can be hung. Medallions which carry the image of a Thai king or a famous monk are very common. Pieces of metal or cloth, inscribed with a mystical diagram², may be placed next to some round stones or metal pellets. A small container can hold an amount of sacred cotton cord or some twine used during the dedication ceremony of a temple. A splinter of wood taken from the most important supporting pole of the ancestral home has protective value to a man, and so has a small piece of cloth given to him by his mother³. Around his waist a man can carry a cord with a small wooden or stone phallus or a tooth of a tiger. The proliferation of amulets has been noted by Wood:

It would be possible to write a biggish book about charms to ward off sword or bullet wounds. There are dozens of different kinds — tattoo marks, written formulas, knotted strings, tiny images of Buddha, precious stones, dried seeds, needles in the body, and others too numerous to mention.⁴

It is very easy to obtain protecting objects. They are for sale in the market of the provincial capital, they are offered by travelling salesmen, many monks distribute them freely among other members of the Samgha and laymen. Amulets are sometimes distributed to those who attend a

1

Many researchers will hear with dismay that it is a common practice to burn the oldest books of the monastery in order to obtain ashes which can be used in the manufacture of phra phim.

2

See Ch. III, p. 77-78.

3

Infra, pp. 97-98.

4

W.A.R. Wood, Consul in Paradise, 1965, p. 88.

certain ceremony, and friends may exchange amulets to express their appreciation of each other.

The protective objects derive their power from two sources: the inherent quality and the processes of sacralization. The innate proper aspects of many amulets, or phra khryan¹, are apparent in phra phim and other images of the Buddha, in the medallions and in the objects inscribed with mystical diagrams. All these are related to depictions of man's highest accomplishment. A phallus or a tiger's tooth are connected with force and their use as protective objects points to the underlying belief in 'sympathetic magic'.

In some instances it is not immediately clear why objects are chosen as amulets. It is not until the ceremonies connected with building a house are taken into account that it can be understood why a splinter of wood from the main supporting pole of a house is chosen as an object with protective power². The use of the protective piece of cloth given to a man by his mother is more difficult to explain. The loincloth of a woman, phaanun³, is considered antithetic to protective powers of the amulets, because this cloth may have been soiled with menstrual blood⁴. The only exception to this rule is the piece of the phaanun of a man's mother; instead of being harmful or

1
พระเครื่อง . This word is the common abbreviation of phra khryanraan, and denotes all different kinds of amulets.

2
Ch. VII, pp. 213-215.

3
ผ้าถุง

4
Infra, pp. 117-118.

dangerous it can serve as an amulet. This reversal of the rule can be seen as symbolic of the close relationship between mother and child. During birth a child cannot be prevented from coming in close contact with his mother's reproductive organs, so that her bodily secretions are not harmful to him.

In general, the inherent quality of the amulets is considered insufficient to ensure protection to the person who wears them. Apart from being made from auspicious material, the phra khryan should be sacralized. The sacralization of protective objects can take many forms. When a monk gives a small Buddha image to a layman, the elementary sacralization ritual¹ can take place. Taking the image in both hands, the monk brings it close to his mouth and murmurs a short Pāli formula. Whilst uttering the last syllable of the spell, the monk can blow sharply upon the Buddha image. Some monks prefer to draw a simple jan over the amulet with the index finger of the right hand or a pencil whilst saying the Pāli words. The layman who receives the small image should press it against his face for a few seconds in a gesture of the highest appreciation.

One of the rarer fund-raising ceremonies that a committee of laymen, in consultation with the monks, can organize is the phutthaaphiseek² ritual, the ceremony primarily designed to sacralize amulets. This ceremony should be held on a day when the 'spirits are strong': an ominous, portentous day on which it is inadvisable to

1

ปลุกเสก , plugseek.

2

พุทธาภิเษก . This word is derived from Buddha-abhiṣeka. The Sanskrit word abhiṣeka is here used in its meaning of 'consecrating by sprinkling water' (MMW, p. 71).

cremate corpses, such as a Saturday or a Tuesday. A Saturday (the fifth day of the week) that falls on the fifth day of the fifth lunar month is especially suitable for sacralization¹. As soon as the date for the phutthaaphiseek ceremony has been decided upon, a chapter of monks is invited and the event is widely announced. Any man who wishes his collection of amulets to be sacralized wraps the objects in a bundle and hands them to the organizing committee. The objects are counted, the exact number is written down in a book, and a label is attached to each bundle. No mistakes should be made in the registration of the objects, because many amulets are highly valued by their owners, and a major argument would erupt if, at the close of the ceremony, some objects were found to be missing. The committee charges a fee for including an amulet in the sacralization ceremony, and the more people who come to 'recharge' their phra khryan, the greater will be the total sum of money that is raised for the monastery.

The ritual takes place in the temple, the most sacred place in the monastery. In the temple (bood) four tall, many-tiered² umbrellas are erected at the corners of the elevated platform on which the monks usually chant. At the level of the lowest tier of these umbrellas, about one metre above the floor, a white cotton thread, saajsin³, is

1

That is why there is a demand for tattoos on this day. This has also been reported for Bang Chan in central Thailand by Textor (Textor, An Inventory, 1960, p. 104).

2

There is always an uneven number of tiers, sometimes five, or seven, but usually nine of them.

3

See Ch. III, p. 64.

strung so that it encloses the rectangular area of the elevated platform. The thread is led around the back of the main Buddha image, so that this image is within the delineated sacred precinct. All the objects which have to be sacralized are placed in the middle of the marked-off area.

The monks who will perform the ritual step on to the elevated area, each member of the Samgha carrying a begging bowl which contains an amount of clean water, and a candle. They sit down around the heap of amulets in a semicircle, in such a manner that they, together with the huge Buddha image, enclose all phra khryan. Each monk places the begging bowl with water directly in front of him on a metal ring¹, and after having prostrated himself before the Buddha image, lights a candle. This candle is placed near the begging bowl so that, from time to time, each monk lifts it over the water and lets some wax drip on the surface². The monks remain for a long period within the sacred precinct, usually four or five hours, during which they chant Pāli texts in unison and meditate, thus emitting jointly so much beneficial power that the objects in the

1

The begging bowls are of such a shape that they cannot be rested on a flat surface without rolling over. Among the equipment of a monk is therefore the metal ring on which the begging bowl can be rested firmly.

2

There are alternative ways of placing the candle. Some monks prefer to affix the candle on the rim of the begging bowl, so that it will drip wax on to the surface of the water without intervention. Other monks may fasten a coin to the bottom end of the candle and carefully lower the candle into the vessel until it rests upright on the bottom of the vessel, the top of the candle rising above the water surface. Cf. Ch. IX, pp. 276-277.

centre become charged. During the time the monks are thus engaged, all the doors and windows of the bood remain closed so that no secular influence can disturb the ritual. The organizing committee can have ordered a special medallion or Buddha image from a firm in the provincial capital, and have them included among the objects in the centre of the ceremony. These specially cast amulets can be sold after the ceremony, as can the saajsin which had been used during the ritual; they have become phra khryan of their own right.

The objects which are auspicious can thus be sacralized by monks who say Pāli formulae over them, who draw jan, or blow air upon them or meditate in their proximity. In all the examples given, the consecration was intentional and goal-directed. Sometimes, however, amulets can be charged without the knowledge of the monks who bring this about. A small bundle of amulets can be placed under the edge of the cushion on which a monk sits chanting, preaching, or reciting the Pātimokkha. The monk in question may be totally unaware of the fact that he adds to the power of some amulets. The custom of placing amulets in the begging bowl which is used during the ordination ceremony¹ can be seen in the same light. The ordinand may know that friends place amulets in his begging bowl, but the monks who accept him as a member of the Samgha are often not aware

1

This custom is also reported for the north-east of the country by Cripps (Francis Cripps, The Far Province, 1965, p. 84).

of this¹. Sacralization can therefore take place unintentionally, proximity to a major ritual being sufficient.

Not all objects need the intervention of monks to become charged with power. A lay person who knows the proper actions and spells can charge objects with power, but whilst the intervention of a monk causes an amulet to become beneficial and protective, lay specialists may handle powers which are considered to be offensive and aggressive².

Sometimes no human intervention is needed to sacralize objects. It is believed, for example, that during the Loojkrathon³ festival the water in all rivers is charged with beneficial power. During the night of Loojkrathon, it is wholesome to bathe in the river and to fill the big earthenware water vessels which every house possesses. A very spectacular sacralization took place on 25 September 1968 when lightning struck the bood of Watsaancaaw. Scorched pieces of plaster were immediately collected by some of the monks. Ground up, this made an excellent ingredient for the manufacture of phra phim.

1

At the beginning of the ordination ceremony, when the ordinand carries the metal begging bowl strapped to his back, the amulets may suddenly rattle loudly when the monk-to-be prostrates himself. When the amulets thus reveal their presence, everybody, the ordainer included, may smile amusedly, knowing what caused the noise.

2

This aspect is elaborated upon in the section about tattooing, infra, pp. 107-116.

3

ลอบนทระพง . This festival is held on the night of full moon of the twelfth lunar month (October-November).

When donning a string of amulets, a man should raise the objects to his forehead and say some auspicious words over them. Some men have learnt a spell especially useful for this occasion, usually a mixture of Pāli, Sanskrit and Thai words. One such spell, or khaathaa¹, begins as follows:

Buddhakāmo rathedhammaṃ dhammakāmo rathebuddhaṃ
aṭṭhikāyo kāyādevānaṃ om sri om sri brahma raṃ sri
māmate².

These words of foreign origin are followed by a Thai sentence which concludes the spell. This additional sentence can be translated as:

I ask from the rsis³ and also from these amulets that they give me worthiness.

If a man does not know any spells that are specifically designed for the moment of donning a string of amulets, he may use some auspicious Pāli words like:

Buddha ārakkhaṇaṃ, dhamma ārakkhaṇaṃ, saṅgha
ārakkhaṇaṃ⁴

1

Related to the Pāli or Sanskrit word gāthā.

2

Recorded from the Venerable Pliig, 7 July 1968. The words are obviously a mixture of Pāli and Sanskrit; it seems that either some words have been changed during the process of oral transmission, or that they are part of an esoteric body of knowledge. Because of these uncertainties, it seems better to refrain from a conjectural translation.

3

The Thais use the Sanskrit word rsi to indicate mystical wizards, original possessors of knowledge which can be invoked at appropriate moments.

4

Translated: 'Buddha protection, Dhamma protection, Samgha protection'.

or he can repeat three times the famous sentence:

Namo tassa Bhagavato arahato sammā sambuddhasa¹.

The amulets are not worn continuously, but are reserved for potentially dangerous occasions. Men wear their amulets when they go out at night. The fear of potentially harmful spirits, the phii, acquired during early childhood², often does not diminish when a person grows up. A man who has to walk home in the middle of the night without company may become extremely apprehensive, and a sudden noise or a moving shadow usually suffices to convince him of the fact that something dangerous lurks in the dark³.

Phii are not the only dangerous element in a man's surroundings: when travelling in buses or cars a man may meet with a traffic accident; when going out with friends a man may drink too much alcohol and become involved in a fight; when gambling, tempers may rise and some persons may become violent; or when engaging in illegal pastimes⁴, all participants may be arrested by the police. The amulets of a man can be of aid in all these circumstances. They may cause his body to become hard and unpierceable so that he will survive a traffic accident and, if a gun is fired at him, the bullet will not pierce his skin.

1

Translated: 'Reverence to the Lord who is worthy and completely awakened.'

2

See Ch. III, pp. 74-77.

3

Contrary to Western attitudes, it is not considered unmanly to be afraid in the dark. The use of powerful flashlights nowadays may well shrink the realm of the phii, however.

4

Young men often engage in unlicensed betting.

Amulets may cause the wearer to be pleasant and inoffensive in the eyes of other persons so that nobody will feel the urge to vent his rage upon the man who carries phra khryan.

Apart from their protective value, the amulets are often objets d'art. A man will wear his string of amulets on an occasion when a display of neat clothes is required: during important ceremonies or secular meetings. The phra khryan reflect a man's wealth. He who can afford it will buy a gold necklace, and encase his amulets in gold. He will hang the choicest objects in the middle. Whenever a group of men are together and there is a lack of animated discussion, one of the group only has to ask someone to show his phra khryan, and the conversation will centre upon amulets for a long period. Everyone is willing to explain in detail from which monastery his amulets originate, how rare they are and what powers they possess.

Tattooing

During the period that boys serve as degwat in the monastery, they often have the opportunity to witness a tattooer, the khruu saq or aacaan saq¹, perform his skills upon young men from the age of seventeen upwards. If the degwat, impressed by the ritual, ask the aacaan saq to tattoo them as well, the tattooing specialist may be persuaded. He will place a small geometrical design, a

1

ครูสัก. อาจารย์สัก . The word khruu, teacher, is related to the Sanskrit or Pāli guru; aacaan is a word also meaning teacher, but is used as a more polite form; it is related to the Sanskrit ācārya rather than the Pāli ācariya. Sak is probably derived from the word śalākā, in the meaning of a pointed instrument (MMW, p. 1059a).

fish or the picture of a butterfly, on the lower arm of the little boys. For a while the degwat will be very proud of their decorations. They feel that they have shown themselves to be quite adult in willingly having undergone this painful ordeal. They feel a bond with the older men who are ostentatiously tattooed. It will not be long before somebody explains to them that the marks they received cannot be compared with the tattooing of older people, and that their designs are simple decorations lacking all the power ascribed to the more intricate patterns which their seniors received. What appeared to them to be a mark of adulthood is soon felt to be a sign of childishness which cannot be erased.

'Proper' tattooing is not given to men until they are adult: when they have reached the age of about 17. Nearly every man in rural Thailand will be subjected to tattooing of one kind or another. Monks as well as laymen can be an aacaan sag, but there is a difference in the scope of their work.

When a member of the Samgha exercises magical skills by tattooing young men, he is limited in the application of this skill by the fact that he is a monk. As a member of the Samgha he should read sacred texts, preach, chant and meditate, thus generating beneficial power, earning good karma for himself, the persons who sponsor him and his ancestors. When tattooing, he is therefore limited to the bestowal of beneficial, protective power upon the man who receives his indelible marks. A monk can tattoo only on the higher, better part of the body: the chest, the arms and the head of a man. The marks he gives are directly related to his monkly occupation: mystical diagrams, and rows of syllables in the sacred Khoom alphabet. They are

applied by the monk whilst he murmurs a few sacralizing formulae. A tattooing sometimes performed by a monk is the marking of the tongue. The monk does not pierce the skin of the tongue, however; a perfunctory touch with the tattooing needle suffices¹.

The tattoos made upon the body by a monk protect a man from mishap, and they have the power to make a man popular and favoured with his fellow human beings. A lay ritual specialist, not limited by precepts to protective, beneficial powers, can offer his clients a much wider variety of body decorations. He can execute all the designs that monks use (he usually has the choice of a wide variety of jan, and many syllables in the sacred alphabet), but in addition he can apply many theriomorphic and anthropomorphic designs.

A young man can be motivated to receive a tattoo for a variety of reasons. To many it is a sign that they are grown up and that they have bravely faced the painful process. The designs themselves are often aesthetically pleasing, and therefore some men may be prompted by vanity. Others may be especially attracted by the thought that the tattoos will increase their power and charm. Many young boys receive an extra incentive when they discuss it with their comrades; they do not wish to be outdone in courage by their age-mates.

When a young man has decided upon a certain aacaan sag, he must approach this ritual specialist with proper deference in order to make an appointment for the first

1

It is believed that the beneficial power from a tongue-tattoo pervades the whole body via the saliva.

session of tattooing. The aacaan sag will order the boy to return on a Tuesday or Saturday¹, and to bring a candle, incense, some flowers and the fee². On the appointed day, the young man comes to the house of the tattooer and follows his ritual instructions. The boy should kneel down facing the east, light the candle and incense and offer them together with the flowers to the 'teachers', those who in the dim past handed down the knowledge of tattooing. This ceremony, named waajkhruu³, should also be performed by the aacaan sag. It is a common ritual among Thai actors, dancers, musicians and boxers.

After the waajkhruu, when respect has been paid to the original possessors of the knowledge used, the aacaan sag begins to make the design. He employs a wooden shaft with a sharp metal tip which contains a small quantity of ink. The tattooer guides the instrument over thumb and index finger of the left hand on to the skin of the young man, making rhythmical, powerful strokes in order to pierce the skin, pausing often to refill with ink. The person who undergoes this treatment should not cry out in pain, lest he be the laughing-stock of all who have suffered stoically. One design, covering about twelve square inches of skin, is usually considered sufficient for the first session; if the man still wishes to receive other

1

See supra, p. 99.

2

Payment for these types of magical services should always be connected with the number six. Older people remember the days when they used to pay six salyn, nowadays the fee is usually six baht or a plural number of six baht.

3

ไหว้ครู

designs he should wait a few days until the swelling of the recently tattooed skin subsides a little.

While he is being tattooed, a man is sometimes advised to say softly to himself:

ehi ehi sammā¹,

whilst the aacaan sag himself murmurs formulae continuously. After finishing a design, the tattooer murmurs a final spell while rubbing his forefingers in the mixture of blood and ink that wells up from the recently tattooed skin, and terminates the session by blowing with all his might upon the design.

After a man has received as many tattoos as he wishes, he must undergo a final effecting ritual². This ritual can take place in a monastery, near a Buddha image, sometimes in the most sacred place: on the monks' platform in the bood. The scene of the ceremony has been made attractive to the non-human powers by the offering of foods these powers reputedly like: a pig's head, eggs, sweetmeats, candles, incense and flowers. When the powers have descended, the aacaan sag will cause them to enter the body of the recently tattooed young person by perfunctorily piercing the skin on top of the skull with his tattooing needle.

1

Translated: 'O come, come properly'. It is probable that this formula is meant to make the recipient open to receive magical qualities.

2

This ceremony is generally known as jok khruu (ယုဂ်ကရူ), literally: 'to raise the teacher'.

From this moment onwards, the tattoos are potentially powerful: their strength resides in the body. The tattooed person should observe some taboos to preserve these powers intact. In no circumstances should a man who has been tattooed be in an inferior position to a woman during copulation lest he lose all magical qualities of his tattoos. When relieving the body, a man should be aware and attentive so as not to let any of his magical power escape¹. In addition, many tattooers will prescribe that a man refrain from eating certain food. In the region around Watsaancaaw, the tattooed men were advised to keep away from the mafyan² fruit.

Apart from advising his clients to refrain from acts which will cause the recently acquired powers to dwindle, the aacaan saq will reveal to the men how they can induce the latent powers to rise. The recently tattooed men receive spells, khaathaa, which arouse the dormant forces. In order to show that the body has been properly tattooed, the aacaan saq will test the invulnerability of the people with tattoos. He will order a recently tattooed man to lie down, facing the floor. The aacaan saq will brandish a bamboo knife and show the bystanders how sharp the point

1

In both these rules of behaviour there is a common theme: a man is vulnerable both during copulation and while relieving the body.

2

မာဖျာန . This is the fruit of the Avarrhoa carambola (McF., p. 637). It is difficult to ascertain why this particular fruit is forbidden to tattooed men. A possible explanation is that a synonym of this name is sītā, widely known in Thailand as the heroine of the Rāmāyana. This association with so feminine a name may be a reason for prescribing to men filled with sacred power to refrain from eating this fruit.

is. After saying a formula over an area of skin of the man lying on the floor, he stabs the knife in the back. Invariably the point of the knife breaks off and the skin remains unpierced¹. After having thus proved that the powers do work, the tattooer urges his clients to use their magical forces only when in dire need — they are not something to be abused.

The different designs are placed on the body according to rules which reveal specific norms. The designs show a decreasing eminence when regarded from high to low on the body. On top of the skull, purely geometric designs, or the outline of a Buddha image surrounded by mystical diagrams, should be placed. These designs prevent the head from being harmed through an attack, but above all, they cause the wearer to be popular and favoured by others. The face is usually kept clear of elaborate tattoos², for they would interfere with the features and facial expressions of a man. The chest and upper arms can be used for strings of sacred syllables, sometimes decorated with anulomas³, but this part of the body can also be decorated

1

It is difficult to make sure how the tattooer ascertains that he does not accidentally pierce the skin; it is quite possible that he breaks the point of the knife immediately before thrusting it upon his client. When the author was subjected to this treatment he could hardly feel the impact of the knife.

2

A single dot can be tattooed on the cheek by way of protection of the whole face. In this context it is relevant that a mole on the face is considered a sign of beauty in Thailand.

3

The anuloma is a figure of conic shape often placed above a mark to indicate the importance of the mark. Literally the word means 'with the hair, with the grain' (MMW, p. 38a). According to Boeles it may have been related to a representation of the Vedic magic syllable Om (cf. J.J. Boeles, "The Migration of the Magic Syllable Om", India Antiqua, 1947, pp. 40-56).

with some esteemed anthropomorphic or theriomorphic designs. This is the region of the body where the heroes of the Rāmāyana are depicted: Rāma, his twin sons Kuśa and Lava, Aṅgada and especially Hanumān, each holding one or more appropriate weapons. An aacaan saq may tattoo here a strong and valiant animal: the garuḍa¹, the haṃsa², the lion, the tiger or the panther. When a human or animal motif is tattooed on the body, the aacaan saq usually surrounds the picture by secondary motifs, small mystical diagrams, and single Khṣṃ letters, often crowned with an anuloma.

The lower part of the arms, from elbow to wrist, can be used for miscellaneous designs. Some men carry the marks they received there when they were deqwat, others have placed just above the wrist the number of the regiment they served in when conscripted into the army. On the lower arm can be placed a picture of the garuḍa fighting a snake coiled around the world³, a lizard with two tails or a dove holding the top of an anuloma in its beak. The knuckles of the hands may each receive a single syllable.

High on the thigh near the hip joint, a man may receive a picture of a monkey, the liṅlom⁴. On the right thigh the monkey is depicted within a circle, on all fours, and when a man wishes to obtain a decoration on his left

1

กฤษณะ . In Thai iconography often depicted as the vehicle of a devata.

2

หงส์

3

The theme of a garuḍa fighting a serpent is well known in Ancient India (MMW, p. 348c); it probably arrived in Thailand with the Rāmāyana in which the battle between the birds and the serpents is also depicted.

4

ลิงลม . Nycticebus cinereus.



Plate I.

The result of many tattooing sessions.

thigh the liŋlom stands free, on its hind legs, not surrounded by a border. The monkey on the right thigh is most common. When Textor described this tattoo he tried to explain the circle around the monkey as follows:

The reason for the circular border, which is otherwise not common, is conceivably that liŋ lom in fast speech sounds somewhat like liŋ klom, that is, 'round monkey' or, by extension, 'monkey in a circle'. My guess is that tattooing artists found it difficult to¹ represent wind, and so settled on the circle instead.

This is an ingenious train of thought which, however, does not do full justice to the complexity of the representations of the tattooer. Above the back of the monkey as well as below the feet of the animal, usually a series of letters is tattooed. One of the lines represents water, the other line of symbols is fire². If it is realized that the word liŋlom means literally 'wind-monkey', it is apparent that the circle around the monkey, the water and the fire, represents the fourth element of the universe: earth³.

Lower still on the body, between the hips and the knees, miscellaneous tattooing of a less esteemed, dangerous kind can take place. This is the region of the body where a picture of a naked woman with an exaggerated vulva can be worn. This type of tattooing is very powerful and dangerous and is only given to those who wish magical power for

1

Textor, An Inventory, p. 102.

2

Aacaan saq nuan, 6 October 1968. This informant is a professional tattooer.

3

The representation of the earth as a circle is common in Thai tattooing, for example in the depiction of the snake encircling the earth (supra, p. 112).

aggressive reasons. Another strong item of tattooing on the upper leg is the phallus, depicted as if emitting semen.

Lower on the legs, very little tattooing is found. A single dot, or a few unadorned syllables, sometimes suffice to protect a man against snake bites, but usually the tattooing needle does not come so low on the body.

The distribution of tattoos on a man's body reveals some aspects of the evaluation of the different parts of the body. From the waist upwards, the most important parts of the body are crowned by the head, whilst from the waist downwards, man's lesser parts begin, ending in the most loathful members: the feet.

The same evaluation of the body underlies some of the behaviour towards amulets; phra khryan cannot be worn in a trouser pocket, they cannot be placed on the floor, stepping over an amulet is an abhorrent act. Further analysis reveals that there are not only positively charged amulets and tattoos, but also phra khryan and tattoos which are charged with dangerous, negative power.

The positively charged objects and tattoos are beneficial and protective. They are closely connected with the good behaviour of the monks, with chanting Pāli texts, meditating and esoteric knowledge. The negatively charged objects, on the other hand, are aggressive, potentially dangerous, and sometimes condemned. It is especially in the tattooing rather than in the amulets that many dangerous, negative, anti-social elements can be found. It is generally believed that dangerous tattoos influence the behaviour of a man, and that a heavily tattooed person will automatically acquire an aggressive and restless character. The aacaan sag is well aware of

the powers he bestows and he takes care that he does not give designs which are too strong in their effects. A picture of a yaksa would make the receiver go berserk. For this reason the tattooer can deliberately omit a detail of a design, in order to weaken its effect. Thus he may leave out the last syllable of a spell or, for example when tattooing a tiger, depict the animal without its tail.

Because of the fact that many aspects of tattooing are anti-social, and lead to violence and roguishness, the Thai government discourages the practice¹. Nowadays, if a man seeks a position as a junior government official and comes for an interview, he may be asked to take off his shirt and show that he is not heavily tattooed. In the same vein, the Department of Religious Affairs has advised all monks who have the power to ordain not to accept heavily tattooed men in the Samgha².

While the art of tattooing seems clearly on the wane, especially in municipal areas, some men have found a compromise in being tattooed with namman naa³, the oil of sesame seed, which leaves no visible traces. In the remote rural regions many men still consider it a privilege to be able to obtain magical powers from an aacaan sag.

1

The government may well be stimulated in this policy by the relatively recent European influence in the capital. Tattooing is, for different reasons, often considered objectionable in Western eyes.

2

The government cannot prescribe in this matter, but only advise. Many monks with the power to ordain put this advice aside, and admit heavily tattooed men into the order. After all, very often they are themselves covered with tattoos.

3

น้ำมันงา . Oil from the Engraulis setirostris (McF., p. 222b).

The main factor which sustains belief in the tattoos is the occasional occurrence of a case which 'proves' their powers. If a man is attacked and escapes unscathed, or is involved in an accident and receives relatively little injury, his good fortune is often ascribed to the magical powers of his tattoos or amulets. Events which do not corroborate the current beliefs in the protective quality of the magical designs and phra khryan are explained by surmising that there was some overruling factor: a man may have lost the protective powers by not behaving in the manner his aacaan sag prescribed, he may not have 'awakened' the dormant forces with the proper khaathaa, or simply, the man may have possessed an extraordinarily great amount of bad karma.

It is common for a Thai woman to wear a very small ornament on a necklace, and sometimes these ornaments may appear similar to the amulets worn by men. A common ornament of women is the image of naankhwak¹, the depiction of a girl who beckons with her hand. This image is believed to bring luck, especially during financial transactions. These objects worn by women cannot be regarded in the same manner as those of men, because they are secular ornaments, and are not filled with magical power obtained during a sacralization process.

Women are excluded from wearing 'proper' amulets and no tattooer invests them with magical tattoos. The reason for this total exclusion from this aspect of religious life lies in the fact that women can exude potentially dangerous and harmful power every month during menstruation.

1.
นางขวัก

Menstrual blood, which is dangerous, aggressive and polluting, is diametrically opposed to beneficial power. Those substances which regularly come into contact with menstrual blood are for the same reason harmful, and therefore a man should take care to keep his amulets and those tattoos which are charged with beneficial power (the tattoos on the upper part of his body) away from a woman's legs and her lower garments¹.

In this light the newspaper report about a non-Thai woman who '... caused a major furore by hanging her underwear on the rails in the bathroom above the heads of any men who might enter the room'² should be understood.

A woman should not possess an object charged with protective power; she might inadvertently spoil the amulet's value by accidentally bringing it in contact with her legs.

There are other polluting, dangerously powerful substances in the environment of the Thai farmer. Excreta from humans and from animals are polluted per se, and by extension, the soil around a house and those beings which devour excrement are to be avoided. The feet, which frequently come into contact with dirt, are therefore also polluted, and are the most despised parts of the body. Outside every house, at the foot of the ladder leading up to the living area, a big water-vessel filled with river water provides the means with which people can rinse some

1

The harmful magical power of menstrual blood is demonstrated also in some aspects of love magic (see Ch. VI, pp. 177-178).

2

The Bangkok Post, 13 November 1969.

of the dirt from their feet. In this context it is relevant to note, however, that the Thais do not wash their feet by rubbing them with the hands; it would not befit the members which may touch valuable objects to come into prolonged contact with the feet. The usual method of cleansing mud from one's feet is by rubbing one foot with the other whilst slowly pouring water over them.

Another major source of pollution is derived from corpses, especially from the bodies of people who have died violently and whose spirits are therefore enraged. A ritual specialist may use a corpse of a human who has died so inauspiciously, to extract some fluid, nammanphraaj¹, with which very aggressive magical practices can be undertaken. Some tattooers who specialize in powerful, aggressive designs are reported to mix a small quantity of nammanphraaj with the ink in order to increase the power of their tattoos.

In this chapter the concept of protective and beneficial power has been discussed through an analysis of the different ways of sacralization of amulets. Proximity to a force of nature, to a major ceremony of the monks, contact with monks when they meditate, chant their Pāli texts or murmur a spell, can cause an object to be filled with protective energy. This power can be conceptualized as emanating from sacred sources and permeating those things which are held in their proximity.

¹ น้ำมนต์พราย . Cf. Ch. VI, pp. 176-177.

When the religious tattoos were introduced, apart from this positive, protective energy, a different type of charging became evident. Thai religion comprises also some aggressive, potentially harmful powers. The most harmful powers are closely associated with pollution, dirt, excreta, uncleanliness and corpses. This negative power can sometimes destroy or weaken the positive charge of amulets. This underlies the fact that women are not allowed to handle amulets. From time to time, women come into contact with menstrual blood, one of the substances considered highly polluting and thus negatively charged. Boys are not thus handicapped, and have access to considerably more religious knowledge than girls.

The beliefs surrounding different energetic powers in the environment are reflected in the appreciation of the human body. The head and the shoulders of a man are the most valued part of the body and can be charged beneficially. The lower arms and lower torso may be seen as ambivalent, while the lower legs and feet are considered polluted and negatively charged.

CHAPTER V

THE FIRST PERIOD IN THE SAMGHA

As soon as a man reaches the age of 20 he is eligible to become a bhikkhu¹. Although most people around Watsaancaaw cannot state with precision on which day they were born, they are aware of the year in which their birth took place and can easily calculate when a person is eligible to become a monk.

While, in theory, every man joins the Samgha for at least one period of his life, in reality not all men are willing to take this step. Information for the whole of Thailand reveals that the number of monks during the rainy season² is relatively decreasing³. While from 1954 to 1967 the estimated male population older than 19 increased by about 62 per cent from 4,884,000 to 7,920,000, the number of monks increased only by about 15 per cent, from 157,000 to 186,000.

1

ภิกขุ . ภิกขุ . The Thais use the word bhikkhu derived from Pāli as well as the Sanskrit form bhikṣu.

2

It must be realized that outside the rainy season the number of monks in Thailand is considerably smaller than during this period of religious intensity.

3

See Table 2, p. 122.

Table 2. Thai monks, monasteries and population^a

Year	Number of monks	Number of monasteries	Population	Estimated male pop. over 19
1901			7,491,000	
1909			8,087,000	
1919			9,966,000	
1929	125,000 ^b	16,000	12,433,000	
1937	150,000	17,000	14,549,000	
1947			17,657,000	
1948	162,000	19,000		
1949	175,000	20,000		
1950	176,000	20,000		
1951	166,000	20,000		
1952	160,000	21,000		
1953	155,000	21,000		
1954	157,000	21,000	20,095,000	4,884,000
1955	155,000	21,000		
1956	150,000	21,000		
1957	155,000	21,000		
1958	156,000	21,000		
1959	150,000	22,000		
1960	159,000	23,000	26,990,000	
1961	153,000	23,000	27,210,000	
1962	152,000	23,000	28,054,000	
1963	152,000	23,000	28,923,000	
1964	167,000	23,000	29,820,000	
1965	173,000	24,000	30,744,000	
1966	175,000	24,000	31,691,000	
1967	186,000	25,000	32,680,000	7,920,000 ^c

^a All figures in the table have been rounded off to thousands. The sources used are: W. Trittel, Thailand, 1943, p. 34 and p. 45 (figures for 1901, 1909 and number of monks and monasteries in 1937); J. Bourgeois-Pichat, "An Attempt to Appraise the Accuracy of Demographic Statistics for an Underdeveloped Country: Thailand", as quoted in J.C. Caldwell, "The Demographic Structure", Thailand, Social and Economic Studies in Development, ed. by T.H. Silcock, 1967, p. 35 (Population figures for 1919, 1929, 1937 and 1947); Credner, Siam, das Land der Tai, p. 199 and p. 341 (number of monks and monasteries for 1929); Thailand

Statistical Yearbook, Number 27, 1966, p. 438 (number of monks and monasteries from 1948 until 1957 and population estimates from 1961 onward); รายงานวิเคราะห์ผลจากการสำรวจสภาพประชากรและการเสริมสร้างชีวิต (population for 1954 and estimated population over 19, 1954); รายงานการศาสนาประจำปี ๒๕๐๘.๒๕๐๙.๒๕๑๐. (monks and monasteries from 1958 onward); Caldwell, op. cit., p. 35 (population 1960).

^b Credner's statements are not linked to a specific date; it is deduced from the context that the figure given is for 1929 (Credner, op. cit., p. 199 and p. 341).

^c This estimate is arrived at by taking 1954 as basis and surmising that the structure of the population remained unchanged during the years between 1954 and 1967.

Close examination of the figures in Table 2 reveals that between 1954 and 1963 the number of monasteries gradually increased from about 20,000 to about 23,000, but that the number of monks fluctuated considerably without showing a trend towards increase¹. It is only from 1964 onwards that a marked increase in the number of monks becomes visible. This seems to be related to the post-war population 'explosion' in Thailand, 19 years previously, since a boy is only eligible for ordination in the year he becomes 20.

The figures available for Thailand as a whole are of limited value as they do not contain information on the turnover in the monasteries: it cannot be calculated how many monks remain in the monkhood for several years and how many leave the order after only a few months.

1

This has been noted earlier and has been commented upon by J.A.N. Mulder in "Merit, Monks and Motivation", unpublished paper, Northern Illinois University, 1968, p. 44.

When collecting genealogies of the people who live near Watsaancaaw, among the questions for males were: Has this man once been a monk, in what monastery (or monasteries), and for how long? Information was obtained on 495 males; it included men born in communities other than Watsaancaaw but related to Watsaancaaw people through marriage, and went as far back in history as people could recollect with certainty. Table 3 shows¹ the results of these enquiries. Under the category 'Ordained in other monasteries' two different types of persons can be distinguished. On the one hand there are households which, although situated near Watsaancaaw, send a young man elsewhere to be a monk. There is no firm obligation to send a boy to the nearest monastery; other considerations occasionally have priority². On the other hand, into this category fall some men who, having been monks in another community, have married local girls and settled near Watsaancaaw.

The number of 'living men, not ordained' is not necessarily a final figure. Most of these are men who married before they were 20 years old and whose responsibility for the upkeep of their family makes it difficult for them to become monks. Some have other reasons for never having been ordained. They may not be

1

See p. 125.

2

Persons who became bhikkhu in a monastery which was not the nearest place where a man could be ordained often stated that they decided to live in another monastery because the education in the chosen place was better. A further complicating factor is that a man can be ordained in one place and may choose to live in another immediately afterwards.

eligible for the Samgha because of physical or mental disabilities, or they may be overawed by the strict rules or the heavy burden of learning.

Table 3. Men of Watsaancaaw and their ordination up to 1968

Category	Living	Deceased
Ordained in Watsaancaaw	164	101
Ordained in other monasteries	85	21
Planning to be ordained, just over 20 years of age	21	-
Not ordained	36	13
No information available	18	15
Chinese religion	3	18
Male population over 19	327	168

Under the heading 'Chinese religion' fall all those who have a Chinese culture and do not wish to adhere to Thai Buddhism. A hundred years ago many Chinese settled in Watsaancaaw, married locally and grew rice like the Thais. Their children usually felt themselves to be Thai, rather than Chinese; they often changed their Chinese names into Thai and followed the Thai religion. Usually they did not become friendly with the Chinese who entered Thailand in more recent times and who did not become farmers but settled in the towns. The assimilation of the Watsaancaaw Chinese is shown clearly in the marked difference in numbers between living and deceased in this category.

Excluding the members of the Chinese religion, and disregarding the category of those planning to be ordained, and taking the 'No information available' category as 'Not ordained', it appears that of the deceased men 81 per cent of those eligible did become monks during their lifetime. Of the living it seems that 82 per cent have been or are monks. Thus it is clear that in the region around Watsaancaaw a very high percentage of Buddhist men become a member of the Samgha.

The question of why so many persons go through an expensive ritual of ordination and subject themselves to a set of rigorous rules immediately arises. In order to answer this question it should be understood that the person who is to be ordained for the first time will have a distorted picture of what being a member of the Samgha entails. If he has been a degwat¹ he will probably remember the power and authority of the monks to whom he was subjected. All men are aware of the picture of monks on their morning round to collect food, all have seen monks sitting in a long row chanting during ceremonies in the monastery and in the house. Every boy is aware of the superior ritual position of a monk in relation to a layman.

He will also realize that the life of a monk involves following strict rules in connection with consuming food and avoiding contact with women. This incomplete knowledge of the monastic life may present a rather attractive picture; all laymen will be ritually inferior, there will be no labour in the ricefields and, if the rules

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See Ch. III, pp. 83-87.

are hard to follow, in a few months' time, at the end of phansaa¹, the monk can become a layman again with impunity.

Although the overall picture these boys have of being a bhikkhu may not be completely negative, this alone seems an insufficient reason for deciding to become a monk. Kaufman writes that older monks regard newly-ordained members of the Samgha as: '... serving their term more as a result of outside pressure than from their own volition'². Pressure from other people certainly can be a major factor in a young man's decision to become a bhikkhu. The persons who sponsor his ordination gain prestige and earn a great amount of good karma by helping a man join the Samgha, and they would be upset if the candidate decided to remain a layman. In addition, the candidate will be influenced by the fact that other boys of his age will be monks. Not only will he feel more secure in the monastery with some of his comrades as fellow monks, but if he refuses to become a bhikkhu he risks becoming an outsider in his age-group. Within the community, a person who has never been a monk is regarded as a non-adult. He is a khon dib³, an unripe person. Such a person can be called by his nickname without consideration of his age. On the other hand, those who have served in the order can be referred to by the prefix thit⁴, a word derived from the Sanskrit pandita, meaning scholar, learned man⁵.

1

พืษ . The rainy season. This word is related to the Sanskrit varsa rather than the Pāli word vassa.

2

Kaufman, Bangkhuad, p. 120.

3

คนดิบ

4

ทิด . PhTh, p. 635b.

5

MMW, p. 580c.

During ceremonies where monks and laymen come together there is usually a moment in which one of the laymen will have to ask in the Pāli language for the Five Precepts¹. Every man should be able to lead the lay community during this part of the ceremony. Those who have not been monks, and consequently cannot lead the lay community in chanting in Pāli, may be teased about their lack of knowledge. Outside pressure is therefore certainly a factor to be considered when answering the question of why a young man decides to become a monk. However, it is a mild pressure, and there is no constant harassing, no barring from communal pleasures. Those who are well over 30 years of age and still have not been monks do not walk about dejectedly as if ashamed of themselves.

While the fact that becoming a monk is an accepted social custom may cause some of the ordinands to join the Samgha, considerations of a more private nature may be relevant as well. Credner indicates some aspects of personal motivations when he writes:

Gewiss verbirgt sich hinter dem Mönchstum des Buddhismus wohl auch viel Faulenzertum und Gefallen an arbeitslosem Dasein, sicher liegt ihm aber auch viel ernste Frömmigkeit und Streben nach Vervollkommnung zugrunde.²

The man who wishes to be 'idle and enjoy an existence without work' should not join the Samgha just before phansaa; he will be bitterly disappointed by having to chant and study many hours each day. On the other hand, 'piousness and a wish for spiritual completeness' are very

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See Ch. VIII, pp. 229-234.

2

Credner, Siam, das Land der Tai, p. 341.

rarely considered issues of importance in the eyes of the young aspirant monk. It is the older man who joins the Samgha when his life comes to a close who may be motivated in such ways¹. A young man may be motivated in a variety of ways; he may, for example, wish to avoid being conscripted into military service. Other reasons sometimes enumerated by the Thais in a little rhyme are:

1. Ordination in order to fulfil a promise to the supernatural powers
2. Ordination because a man has mounting financial difficulties
3. Ordination because a man wants to escape marital trouble
4. Ordination in order to save money
5. Ordination because the food in the monastery tastes better than at home
6. Ordination because one's friends have become monks.

However, the most socially acceptable and widely acclaimed reason a young man can give for deciding to join the Samgha is that he wants to learn. For this reason the first ordination of a man is commonly called buadrian² as Sitsayamkan pointed out, 'ordination in order to gain knowledge'³.

In order to distinguish between young men who join the Samgha at the age of 20 usually for a period of three months, and monks who remain bhikkhu for many years, Kaufman

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This is discussed in more detail in Ch. X, pp. 311-316.

2

บวชเรียน

3

Luang Sitsayamkan, Some Useful Information on the Buddhist Religion as it is Taught and Practised in Thailand, 1963, p. 6.

classified the monks under the headings 'Temporary monks' and 'Permanent monks'¹. Several objections can be made with regard to this categorization. In the first place the temporary nature of the young monk's residence can only be judged in retrospect. If a young monk wishes to remain a bhikkhu he can do so, in fact every year there are young men who will be urged to stay in the Samgha for at least another year². In the second place, the permanence of the monks who remain members of the Samgha for a period longer than one phansaa is no matter of certainty either. Every monk in the country can decide to become a layman again; no stigma attaches to him who acts thus and no layman would reproach him for doing so. A few months before phansaa, one year during World War II, the abbot of Watsaancaaw decided to leave the order and, notwithstanding the fact that this decision upset the organization of the monastery severely, it was never publicly criticized. In the third place, the Thais themselves do not divide their monks into groups by terms which can be translated by 'temporary' and 'permanent'.

When the Thai farmers make a distinction between monks who probably will serve for one phansaa, and monks who have been in the order for many years, they rate them using a hierarchical system. Two principles govern this hierarchy: seniority and rank. According to the rule of seniority a monk is more senior to monks who have joined the Samgha at a later period than himself. After ten uninterrupted years in the order, a monk automatically becomes a thera.

1

Kaufman, Bangkhuad, p. 107 et passim.

2

In Ch. VI this is discussed further (pp. 167-168).

The ranking principle always overrules seniority: an abbot is higher in the hierarchy than a monk who does not carry official administrative responsibility, regardless of the respective number of uninterrupted years spent in the order.

The difference between monks joining the order probably for one phansaa and those who remain in the order for longer periods is therefore not adequately described under the headings 'temporary' and 'permanent', but is designated better by the terms 'inexperienced' and 'experienced'. When the inexperienced monk joins the order, he is obliged to learn intensively; the experienced monk, when joining the order anew, does not need to attend lessons (he may in fact be teaching). The inexperienced monk is preparing for life, and looks ahead to raising a family and living in his own house, while the experienced monk looks ahead to a career in the Samgha and prepares for death.

The knowledge an inexperienced monk has to acquire can be brought under two headings. First will be described what a young monk should learn according to the traditional pattern which must have existed before the state examinations were introduced; this is followed by an account of the tasks which have been introduced nationwide since the reign of King Mongkut (1850-1868).

Traditional Learning of the Inexperienced Monk

A. Ordination

Before the ordination the aspirant monk must live for a while in the monastery where he will be ordained. Traditionally this period should be seven days, but in fact

two or three days are often considered sufficient. During this preparation period he will have to perform some menial tasks; he will sweep the floors of the saalaas and fill the water containers for general use. In return for these tasks he will be instructed in aspects of monkly life. He may, for example, be taught the proper methods of wearing robes. During this period he may join a group of bhikkhus in their morning round collecting food. The main purpose of this period, however, consists of the preparation for the ordination ceremony. The text of the ordination is found in the Cettamnaan¹, the most common handbook for monks. The learning is done individually and by rote: each sentence is repeated aloud until it can be recited without looking at the text. The whole text is in Pāli, which is unintelligible to the rural people of Thailand. Near the end of his preparation time, an experienced monk will ask him to recite the ordination text, and instructions will be given regarding the sequence of actions which take place during ordination.

When the time of the ordination has arrived², the aspirant monk is usually very nervous and is likely to make mistakes in the recitation or to forget the text altogether. If this occurs, the ordainer will prompt him with the appropriate key word until the text comes back into his mind. If he still cannot recollect the right words he will be guided all the way, word for word. This prompting does not invalidate the ceremony; the important aspect of

¹
เจ็ดตำนาน p. 53-60.

²
Some social aspects of the ordination are discussed in Ch. IX, pp. 283-284.

the ritual is that the words have to be said by the aspirant monk. The prompting may give rise to a little ridicule from the spectators: superior smiles from those men who performed better at the time of their ordination, compassion from those who met with the same difficulties. As soon as the ceremony is over, the text for the ordination can be forgotten.

Immediately after the ordination, the inexperienced monk has to use a new terminology for addressing some people of the community, and at the same time he will have to become accustomed to the fact that laymen address him differently. The newly ordained monk does not have to change the terms of address for older monks; as a layman he used to address older monks as 'reverend father' or 'reverend uncle' and this can remain. However, he used to refer to inexperienced monks by the term luangphii¹, or 'reverend older relative'; from now on they are his colleagues and can be called by their names or nicknames. All laymen have suddenly become ritually inferior and from the moment of ordination a monk avoids all polite prefixes that a layman may use for an older layman or relative. Honoured laymen can be addressed by a monk by the special term joom², or by the word joom as a prefix before the common name. All laymen who are of the same age or younger than the monk in question will be addressed by their name only, without the use of any polite prefixes. Many laymen will refer to the newly ordained monk by the term luangphii, or by placing a polite prefix before his name.

1 หลวงพี่

2 โยม

Apart from the change in addressing other people, the newly ordained monk is made aware of his exalted ritual position by the use of special words which are reserved for activities of monks. While laymen can speak of themselves eating, drinking, sleeping and relieving themselves, a member of the Samgha must use special sacerdotal language to designate these activities when they are related to himself or another member of the Samgha.

From the moment of his ordination a monk has to become accustomed to ritual superiority towards all laymen. When a farmer raises his hands palm to palm in a polite greeting, a monk cannot answer in the customary manner by returning the gesture. He can only acknowledge the greeting by a little nod of the head or verbally. When walking, a layman will walk a step behind him, when sitting a layman will choose a lower level to sit. When a monk walks through the ricefields the traditional farmer will kneel in the dust on meeting him.

B. Chanting

The common handbook for monks, the Cettamnaan, consists for the greatest part of Pāli texts which the monks often chant. They can be subdivided into several types: chants for early in the morning, chants for auspicious occasions, texts to be recited at funerals, etc.¹ During phansaa the monks chant these Pāli texts in unison during four different periods of the day. At about four o'clock in

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The Cettamnaan has been described in detail by Wells, who translated most of the individual entries (Wells, Thai Buddhism, passim).

the morning, after the first morning meal, early in the afternoon and just before sunset the monks sit with the legs folded behind, and the hands raised palm to palm in front of the chest, and chant texts appropriate for the occasion. On any normal day during phansaa, the total time spent in communal chanting varies from two hours to about four hours. The eldest monk present, usually the abbot, indicates which text will be used by chanting the first word of that text. All the monks join in, with loud voices at the same pitch.

An inexperienced monk usually does not know many Pāli suttas by heart, and therefore he is allowed to take the Cettammaan with him during the communal chanting in the monastery when the ceremonies involve no laymen. With the printed text to guide him, he is able to chant in unison with the experienced monks. As he can use the printed text to help him while chanting, there would seem to be no need for him to memorize the passages. However, an industrious new monk can often be seen using a spare moment to sit in his cell and read Pāli texts in a loud voice in order to commit them to memory. The reason for wishing to learn the texts by heart is that during ceremonies when laymen are involved no textbooks may be used. Four times each month, on wanphra, a numerous lay congregation gathers in the monastery and watches while the monks perform various rites¹. In addition there are often ceremonies outside the monastery whereby a chapter of monks is invited to chant for a group of laymen. These ceremonies can be connected with the stages of the life-cycle such as birth, first

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The usual ceremonies of a wanphra during phansaa are discussed in Ch. VIII (pp. 254-256).

haircutting, marriage and death, or with the fertility of the fields, rainmaking, housebuilding, the inauguration of a house, or with the increase of the prosperity of a certain family.

During all these ceremonies when the members of the Samgha perform a ritual for laymen the monks sit on a dais facing the laymen. The monks recite Pāli texts for the laymen for a period varying from twenty minutes to over an hour, thus causing a bowl of water to be charged with beneficial power¹. Usually these texts are the auspicious ones from the Cettammaan. The laymen observe unobtrusively whether a newly ordained monk can already join in the chanting of texts or whether he has to sit silently while his fellow monks recite. After a man has been a bhikkhu for several months, it is expected of him that he take part in most chants. Inexperienced monks may feel quite embarrassed when the leader of a chapter of monks chooses a text which they have not yet mastered. Some monks may try to hide their lack of knowledge by extending a breathing pause, or by simulating a cough during difficult parts of the text, and then resuming the recitation during the easy, repetitive parts. However, they cannot hope to mislead the audience with such simulated knowledge of Pāli texts, because most of the adult men in the audience have been monks themselves and are quite capable of detecting the ignorance of the inexperienced monks. One of the incentives for learning the texts by heart is therefore the wish to avoid embarrassment during ceremonies involving laymen. In addition, a monk who is known as someone who

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For details, see Ch. IX, pp. 275-277.

chants well may be invited more often to perform ceremonies for laymen than the monk who cannot recite with ease¹. As it is the custom to reward all monks who preside at a lay ceremony with money as well as with other gifts, there is a financial incentive for learning to chant expertly. The money presentation is always kept apart from the presentation of additional gifts, because the rules of the order forbid a member of the Samgha to handle money².

The additional gifts are always identical for all members of a chapter of monks, and they consist of useful, practical objects³, together with the objects always accompanying a ritual object: incense, a candle and some flowers. Often, each member of a chapter of monks receives exactly the same type of gifts at the end of the period of chanting, and is promised exactly the same amount of money. On occasions, however, when one of the invited monks outranks the other monks by far, the lay organisers may decide to donate a greater amount to this monk than to the remaining members of the Samgha. On one occasion the laymen remunerated the experienced monks in the chapter of monks with a greater amount than the inexperienced ones:

1

Laymen can choose which monks will make up the chapter when the ceremony is held in a private house (see Ch. IX, p. 274).

2

The regulations of the Samgha forbid a monk to handle money, but in Thailand these rules are interpreted rather loosely and in many instances these rules are broken openly (see infra, pp. 160-162).

3

Examples of goods commonly offered to bhikkhus are: plates, cigarettes, matches, a toothbrush, toothpaste, soap powder, a cake of soap, toilet paper, a handkerchief and some medicines.

On this occasion¹, a well-to-do layman invited thirteen monks from three different monasteries to chant in his house. Many of the monks happened to be inexperienced, recently ordained bhikkhus, and the oldest, highest ranking monk present was more than 80 years old. This venerable bhikkhu chose to chant texts which almost none of the other members of the chapter knew, and the sound of the recitation became very meagre indeed.

The house-owner conferred softly with several other laymen present and after the ceremony, when publicly announcing the amount of the donation, he stressed: 'In this case we donate fifty baht to each of the four members of the Samgha who used their voices, and only half that amount to the remaining monks.'

During the morning chanting sessions in the monastery, the abbot seldom varies the texts chanted, but during the late afternoon periods of communal recitation the abbot of a monastery gradually works through all the chanting texts of the Cettamnaan. Each afternoon he begins at the point where he finished the day before, and it takes the monks six or seven days to repeat all texts. In this manner all the common chanting texts are regularly recited. Usually, it will take a monk two phansaa to learn all these common texts by heart, and it is only the exceptionally bright individual who commits all major texts to memory during his first rainy season in the Samgha. Most monks end their first phansaa being capable of reciting only the few texts which are used daily.

Even the most experienced monks find it difficult to chant individually. During the recitations together with other bhikkhus each individual can rely on the memory of

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1 June 1968.

others. The drone of many voices is slightly soporiferous, and the experienced monk often chants in a completely relaxed manner. If, however, asked to chant alone, even an 'easy text' suddenly becomes difficult, because when chanting alone a monk is suddenly forced to remember sequences of words which he normally produces automatically in unison with others.

C. Monastic Behaviour

In theory, every bhikkhu should follow the rules of behaviour as they are laid down in the Vinaya Pitaka. Apart from the 227 rules of the Pātimokkha¹, there are many more guidelines which can be brought under two headings: the thūlaccaya, or serious transgressions, and the dukkatā, or ill deeds². A newly ordained monk cannot be expected to appreciate the intricacies of all these different rules. The older monks who have never studied for the religious state examinations³ have only a vague idea of the wording of most rules. When such an older monk instructs an inexperienced bhikkhu on the rules of monkly behaviour, he will in the first place explain the four pārājikā rules of the Pātimokkha, which are the cardinal rules a monk cannot

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The exact number of precepts of the Pātimokkha varies in the different Buddhist schools of thought. 227 Precepts is common in the Theravāda countries (see the Venerable Nānamoli Thera, The Pātimokkha, 1966, pp. 118-119).

2

These further guidelines consist of all rules which came into existence after the final redaction of the Pātimokkha had been accepted (cf. SBE, Vol. XIII, pp. xxv-xxvi).

3

For further details about these examinations, see infra, pp. 154-159.

break without automatically losing membership of the order. Usually this monk knows that there are 13 less important rules which no monk should break under penalty of temporary expulsion from the order. It is rare, however, to come across an inexperienced monk in rural Thailand who can name all these 13 rules faultlessly.

The four pārājikā rules are the only rules which most older monks can recite from memory. When these four rules are mentioned in the literature on Thai Buddhism, they have sometimes been paraphrased rather carelessly. Kaufman, for example, translates them as follows: '1) Do not kill any human creature; 2) Do not steal; 3) Refrain from all sexual activities; 4) Do not tell lies.'¹ The Thai wording of these four rules is much more specific and closely follows the Pāli text², and can be translated as:

1. A monk completing sexual intercourse with a living being is no longer a member of the order
2. A monk₃ stealing an object worth more than five māsaka³ is no longer a member of the order
3. A monk who kills a human being intentionally is no longer a member of the order
4. A monk who lies about his magical powers is no longer a member of the order.

It is stressed to an inexperienced monk that breaking one of these pārājikā rules results in a disastrous situation. Not only would immediate expulsion result, but the person who had become a layman in such a way would be

1

Kaufman, Bangkhuad, p. 135.

2

SBE, Vol. XIII, pp. 3-5.

3

The māsaka is a small coin of very low value (PED, p. 531b); modern Thai exegesis takes five māsaka to be equivalent to one baht.

the subject of gossip for years to come. No one would want to be seen with such a man, no woman would marry him.

In these circumstances it is most unlikely that a man who broke such a precept would talk about it. It is not a subject on which frankness can be expected. This seems to be contradicted by Kaufman when he writes:

No doubt there is some homosexual activity, at least during the Lenten period, when so many young men are suddenly thrown into celibacy. Two men in the village informed¹ me of such occurrences during their stay in the wat.

To interpret this statement correctly, additional information is necessary. It is not clear what Kaufman means by 'homosexual activity', and in addition, his informants' statements need further clarification. It is most doubtful that the two men of Bangkhud referred to an activity which would automatically result in expulsion from the Samgha. In the region of Watsaancaaw all monks were aware that an ejection of semen with the aid of a living being, be it female, male or animal, would mean that a pārājikā had been broken, with expulsion from the order automatically resulting. All other types of sexual contact, not resulting in emission of semen, fall under less important categories.

Welch reports that one of his informants stated that a great deal of homosexual practices went on in monasteries, but when pressed for details it became clear that the informant meant emotional attachments and that there was no

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Kaufman, Bangkhud, p. 136.

evidence of physical consummation¹. It seems likely that Kaufman's informants referred to similar emotional attachments².

Most of the older monks cannot give the wording of any rules other than the pārājikā rules of the Pāṭimokkha. If not aware of the letter of the remaining precepts, the meaning of monastic behaviour is clear to all. A monk should be aware of his actions at all times, and behave in a subdued, friendly and calm manner. He should never let himself become excited, argumentative, angry or rude, and should therefore avoid running, jumping, gambling, dancing and drinking alcoholic beverages. Instead he should always be polite, sober, clean and unselfish. When a monk sits, his limbs should be arranged in a proper manner; when he walks, his arms should not swing, and the bhikkhu should continuously be aware of the proper position of his robes. It follows that a monk can laugh, but not unrestrainedly, can join in conversation with laymen but not take part in games, that he can bathe in the river, but not swim for pleasure or splash with water. When a monk eats he should show no greed and hunger, but eat slowly as if unaware of the quality of the food.

1

Holmes Welch, The Practice of Chinese Buddhism, 1900-1950, 1967, p. 118.

2

Two monks walking while holding hands, or with their arms around one another's shoulders, may not be regarded as evidence for homosexual behaviour. In Thailand it is a common friendly gesture which does not necessarily have connotations of aberrant sexual behaviour.

The inexperienced monk has to learn many restrictions regarding the consumption of food. A bhikkhu cannot consume food unless it has been officially presented to him by a lay person¹. After midday no solid food may be taken unless a monk is ill and his health depends on breaking the daily fast. The time of the day during which a bhikkhu may eat is during the morning, from sunrise till noon. Usually the monks eat communally in a restrained manner, but the amount of food is ample and the abbot grants his monks enough time to satisfy the appetite². During the afternoon and evening, the monks may drink tea, coffee or lemonade, chew areca fruit and betel leaf and smoke tobacco. Some monks may drink coffee mixed with condensed milk, or Ovaltine, but a strict monk will refrain from milk in the periods of fast.

One of the most important set of rules of behaviour centres around the avoidance of contact with females. No monk should touch a woman, a female animal or an object which is held by a woman. Even if the mother or grandmother of a bhikkhu wishes to present the monk with some medicine, or some food, the object cannot be transferred from her hand to his. The monk in question will have to produce a piece of cloth on which the gift can be placed by the woman while he holds the edge of the

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See Ch. III, p. 85.

2

The fact that the daily fast does not deprive the monks of adequate food is well illustrated by the great number of well-fed bhikkhus. No special reverence is bestowed upon an emaciated monk; in fact, many laymen prefer their monks to be rather obese since it indicates that the sustaining population is generous.

cloth¹. A woman cannot speak with a monk in private: all verbal contact should be within earshot of at least a third person. When walking in public places, monks must be aware and alert lest they inadvertently bump into a woman, and similarly, if a woman notices the yellow robes of a bhikkhu she should move out of his path. In public transport, monks are given seats where no women are near. Before stroking a puppy, a monk ought to make sure that it is a male dog, since petting a she-dog is not auspicious.

The stress on avoidance of contact with women is related to the Thai ideas on sanctity. A bhikkhu accumulates and generates a great amount of beneficial power by reading sacred texts, by chanting Pāli, by meditating, by following rules of good conduct and by avoiding that which is harmful and opposed to this power. In the previous chapter it has been shown that women are opposed to beneficial power because they regularly emit menstrual blood². If a monk touches a woman, or clothing of a woman, he comes into contact directly or indirectly with something diametrically opposed to his raison d'être: the accumulation and generation of beneficial power. Apart from the fact that women are carriers of harmful power, they should also be avoided because they are physically attractive and thus a challenge to monastic discipline. Women can cause a man

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The object cannot just be left in the neighbourhood of the monk because, although it complies with the avoidance behaviour, women prefer to see their gifts accepted by the member of the order. During the presentation on the piece of cloth, it is felt that some beneficial karma is transferred from the monk to the woman.

2

Ch. IV, pp. 117-118.

to wish to leave the order to raise a family, and therefore to stop generating much beneficial power.

D. Formulae

Twice a month, on the last day of the waxing moon and the waning moon respectively, one of the experienced monks has to recite the text of the Pātimokkha for the congregation of monks. In rural areas, where outside the rainy season an abbot may not be assured of a quorum, this solemn recitation takes place only during phansaa.

Part of the preparation for this ceremony consists of sadeṅ aabat, or the monks' confession¹. This confession always takes place between two monks, the confessing bhikkhu and the confessor. The confessing bhikkhu approaches another monk, squats and raises his hands palm to palm in token of respect, and the confessor acknowledges the situation by taking a similar position close by the confessing monk and by imitating the hand gesture.

In theory, the formula for confession should be repeated for each category of mistakes² for which the monk desires absolution, and the exact wording of each formula should vary according to whether the monk has transgressed only once, twice or more often in the category of mistakes. The confession per category of offences requires a thorough knowledge of the different categories of ecclesiastical offences as well as a working knowledge of Pāli and is

1

แสดงอาบัติ . Literally: exposing the āpatti or ecclesiastical offences (PED, p. 102a).

2

The different categories are mentioned on p. 157, footnote 1.

therefore seldom used in rural areas¹. Instead, a single formula which covers most transgressions is used. It consists of a short barrage of questions and answers in Pāli².

While sadεεη aabat is compulsory immediately before the recitation of the Pātimokkha, a monk may approach a fellow bhikkhu for confession any time he wishes. Especially after the main meal, many monks may take advantage of the proximity of a fellow monk to sadεεη aabat³. The formula is easy to remember, and one month after ordination most monks will be able to recite it without hesitation.

The confession is not an asking for forgiveness for specific misdemeanours, nor the relieving of a mind burdened by guilt feelings, and it is not a private discussion of specific breaches of precepts. The formula is said in a language many monks do not understand. It may be recited within earshot of other members of the Samgha, and there is no reluctance to perform the ritual. Sadεεη aabat does not 'wash away the sins' (laang baab)⁴ because in the Buddhist world view a mistake once made automatically produces harmful karma and no subsequent

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Types of formulae for confession are discussed in further detail in H.R.H. Prince Vajirañāṇavarorasa, Ordination Procedure, 1963, pp. 54-62.

2

For example, Mahāvagga, II, 27, 1; IX, 1, 9; and Cullavagga, V, 20, 5; VII, 3, 7.

3

The preference for this time of the day may also be related to a wish to avoid the communal task of cleaning the eating place.

4

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remorse will undo the effect of an evil deed. That is why a Buddhist 'is not weighed down by a great burden of guilt, the latter being thought of as a very unskilful mental attitude productive of future sufferings'¹. The meaning of the saddeṇṇa aabat ritual is a renewal of the 227 precepts of the bhikkhu; it is a ritual cleansing during which no feelings of shame or guilt are involved.

A special type of formula which a monk uses daily consists of Pāli words with which good karma is dispersed to individuals other than himself. The ritual of offering beneficial karma is not reserved to the Samgha; it is common among laymen as well, and generally known under the name kruadnaam² or 'sprinkling'. It seems related to the ancient Indian custom of satiating gods and deceased persons by presenting libations of water³. In the Tipitaka the dedication by pouring water is mentioned⁴, and thus there is little doubt that this Thai custom is derived from ancient India. In Thailand it is customary for a layman who has performed an act which carried a good deal of beneficial karma, to take some clean water in a vessel and pour it over the index finger of his right or left hand, whilst dedicating a share in the good karma to individuals of his choice. This dedication can take place in silence, by thinking intensively of those to whom merit is offered, or

1

Khantipālo Bhikkhu, Buddhism Explained, 1968, p. 33.

2

การรดน้ำ

3

The Tarpana ritual (MMW, p. 440B); cf. The Laws of Manu, II, 176; III, 70, 74, 81-82, 283; V, 69-70, 88-90; VI, 24 (SBE, Vol. XXV, p. 62 et passim).

4

Mahāvagga, I, 22, 18 and VIII, 30, 4.

the layman can use words in Thai or Pāli with which to transfer some beneficial karma. The individuals to whom the merit is offered may be living persons, but usually the ancestors are the recipients. This ritual may occur privately, for example when a layman has placed food in a monk's begging bowl, or it may occur publicly, for example after performing a ceremony in the bood. When monks are present in a public ceremony, the kruadnaam takes place while the bhikkhus chant a blessing in Pāli.

Members of the Samgha are continuously performing deeds which carry good karma and it is considered proper that they transfer some of it to their benefactors, the people who sustain them and their own ancestors. The bhikkhus do not kruadnaam in public and do not pour water during this ritual; their kruadnaam is communal and verbal. After the late afternoon chanting and meditation session each day, the abbot will guide his monks into one of the texts for transferring merit¹. After the communal recitation of such a text, a short period of silence is observed during which the monks think of those on whom they wish merit bestowed.

Most inexperienced monks will write down in a private notebook those useful formulae which do not occur in the Cettamnaan. Experienced monks may instruct them to say certain auspicious syllables when cleaning and rubbing the begging bowl so that laymen will feel induced to donate food. Another spell may be used by a monk when he pins an amulet to his robes so that he will be protected from

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The most common Pāli chants for kruadnaam are given in the Cettamnaan, pp. 74-75.

harm¹. He may learn a few syllables which when whispered over the first spoonful of rice will induce the food to strengthen and embellish the consumer. In their private notebook the inexperienced monks may collect various formulae which they may need later after leaving the order. There are spells which reputedly will stop a bullet from hurting, others which will make a knife miss, and some which cause a person to be invulnerable to clubs and sticks.

There is a rich lore in protective formulae, and each formula is commonly accompanied by instructions for use. Sometimes a simple yantra may be drawn to ensure the desired effect. Some of the most common spells consist of syllables, arranged in a seemingly haphazard manner:

'i ka vi ti'
 'i sa vā su'
 'pā su u jā'
 'ka ra ma tha'
 'thī ma saṃ aṃ khu ā pā ma u pa saṃ i dhā pu ka ya pa'

These collections of syllables are often transmitted from one monk to another without mention of the meaning or origin of the particular spell, and as such they can be seen as part of an esoteric tradition. Sometimes the syllables can be traced to a Pāli text. For example, the syllables 'i svā su' can be traced to the words itipiso, svākkhāto and supattipanno which are prominent words in one of the best-known Pāli texts². In a similar manner,

1

Monks are not allowed to adorn themselves, and therefore they cannot wear a string of amulets like laymen. Many monks pin their favourite amulet on the inside of their robes, out of sight of laymen's eyes.

2

Cettannaan, p. 15.

'bā mā nā u ka sa na du' is related to another well-known chant¹. The four syllables 'na ma ba da' reputedly epitomise the four elements: earth, water, fire and wind, but the reason for this particular choice of syllables is not clear. It appears that the seemingly unrelated syllables represent abbreviations of more complex words and ideas. They can be seen as an extreme example of abbreviation of canonical passages common in some Indian schools of thought. The mantra, the paritta, the dhāranī, the yāmala and the kavaca are examples of such abbreviations².

E. Preaching

It is customary to hold two preaching sessions on a wanphra during phansaa³. Traditionally, the abbot appointed an experienced monk to preach. The bhikkhu chosen for this task had the time to select a text inscribed on palm leaf from the ornamental chest in the bood, and to familiarize himself with the inscriptions. The texts on palm leaf were written or printed in the Mūl alphabet⁴ and it required considerable preparation before the text could be read with ease. Thus it was only a very experienced monk who

1

Cettamaan, pp. 15-16.

2

For a more detailed discussion of the different types of formulae in an Indian context, see Agehananda Bharati, The Tantric Tradition, 1965, p. 102 et passim.

3

See Ch. VIII, pp. 255-257.

4

See Ch. III, p. 79, footnote 3.

preached for the lay congregation and for those fellow-monks who wished to be present. The lay supporters and the monks were fully aware of the difficulties involved in reading from the palm leaves, and realized the exalted nature of the text which often consisted solely of Pāli sentences¹. The laymen attending a sermon would each light a candle and some incense, so that the monk would be provided with sufficient light and be enveloped in a pleasant fragrance. All persons present lifted their hands palm to palm for as long as the preaching lasted. The meaning of the text read was beyond the understanding of most of the audience, and could even be unintelligible to the preacher himself. The main task of the monk in the preaching chair was to transform the sacred words on the palm leaf into sound. The best preachers used a special type of chanting, reading the words in an even pitch until the last word of a stanza was reached, when some variations in tone indicated the end of a sentence.

Since 1940, however, the government has stopped printing and distributing preaching texts in Mūl script, and instead uses palm leaf texts in Thai writing². These later texts consist usually of a single Pāli sentence which is explained word by word in the Thai language. Most inexperienced monks have little difficulty in reading these palm leaves fluently, and with the proper intonation. Experienced monks have lost their former advantage, when they were the sole persons able to decipher the sermons.

1

It is only since the 1850's that Thai words have been introduced in sermons.

2

Full details about Thai palm leaf manuscripts can be found in Christian Velder, "Die Palmblatt-Manuskriptkultur Thailands", NGNVO, Vol. LXXXIX/XC, 1961, pp. 110-114.

While the first sermon of wanphra usually is still reserved for the experienced monks of a monastery, the abbot may ask recently ordained bhikkhus to preach the second. The relatives of the inexperienced monk will not fail to attend, and will proudly witness how the sacred message is read by the man who only a short while ago was a common layman. The parents of the newly ordained monk may even invite their son to preach in his ancestral home so that they will be able to show the ancestors, relatives and neighbours to what height of scholarship their son has risen.

F. Meditation

One of the skills which carries great prestige and increases the store of beneficial karma, and which all inexperienced monks have to learn, is concentration in a proper manner: the practice of samādhi¹. There are two types of meditation: the communal sessions and private practice.

During phansaa the abbot leads all monks in the afternoon chanting. After the recitation of Cettammaan texts and before the kruadnaam² he usually inserts a period of communal meditation. At a sign from the abbot all monks depart from their polite chanting position and seat themselves comfortably with the legs folded in front of the body and the hands placed palms upwards in the lap. The abbot instructs the inexperienced monks in techniques

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PED, p. 685.

2

See earlier in this chapter, pp. 147-148.

of samādhi: one should close the eyes and breathe slowly but deeply. As an aid to breathing properly, he advises them to think of an auspicious word each time they breathe. When the auspicious word is Buddho, the meditating monks should think of the syllable Bud- while breathing in and of -dho during the exhalation. If the word arahant is used, ara- is reserved for inhalation, -hant to breathe out.

Apart from the instruction on purely technical matters, the abbot may introduce a theme upon which to concentrate. Usually the abbot will hold a short monologue during which he introduces a subject which will help a monk to obtain the proper attitude towards his environment. Common themes are: the inevitable decay of everything (the houses they live in as well as their own bodies deteriorate in quality); the futility of pleasures which cause a person to accumulate harmful karma. The abbot may recite the pañcakakammattāna, a formula which mentions five elements present in all creatures¹. During the abbot's monologue, all monks sit with their eyes closed, and practise the breathing technique whilst concentrating on the topic the abbot has chosen. When the abbot has finished speaking it becomes very quiet in the bood; only the sounds from life outside may penetrate the building. Each monk should try to lower his consciousness while remaining fully alert.

The inexperienced monks may find it difficult to relax and remain quiet. After a few minutes some usually start to fidget, look around or cough. These interruptions are

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The formula is: 'kesa loma nakha danta taco; taco danta nakha loma kesa', in which kesa is hair, loma is body hair, nakha stands for nail, danta is tooth and taco can be translated as skin.

usually soon followed by the abbot's announcement that the meditation is finished for the day, and that the kruadnaam ceremony is to begin. Near the end of phansaa, when all monks have been members of the Samgha for at least two months, the communal meditation sessions can be prolonged without any disturbance from the inexperienced monks.

The precepts of the monks forbid any monk to talk about extraordinary experiences during meditation¹. Although many monks will therefore not speak about their feelings when practising samādhi, it is commonly known that there are some people who are rewarded for their efforts by visions of colours and unidentifiable shapes and by hearing extraordinary sounds. The communal sessions, however, are of too short a duration to bring about such experiences, and many a monk will try to induce them in the privacy of his kuṭi. Times which are especially recommended for private meditation are before going out begging early in the morning, and before lying down to sleep late at night.

Recently Introduced Learning Tasks

A. State Examinations

Since the first major reformations and streamlining of the Buddhist church in Thailand by King Mongkut (1851-1868), many new aspects have been introduced. His son Prince Vajirañāṇavarorasa, the late Supreme Patriarch of Thailand, planned and began the organization of the State

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The fourth pārājikā rule forbids a monk to tell a deliberate lie about his extraordinary powers, and the eighth pācittiya rule forbids the monk to speak about such powers, even when telling the truth.

examinations for all newly ordained monks. He revised the curriculum, wrote new textbooks and created a ranking system for those who passed certain examinations. His efforts resulted in changes in the organization of the Samgha on all levels over the whole country.

At present, there are ten different levels of scholarship recognized in Thailand, in order of increasing difficulty: Naktham¹ III, II and I, followed by Parien² III to Parien IX. The Parien religious education is confined to municipal regions, but the preparation for the Naktham degrees lies within the scope of most bhikkhus in rural areas. In most monasteries the newly ordained monks are instructed and prepared for the Naktham III examination by an experienced fellow monk, but even if no classes are held a monk can study privately from textbooks.

There are several textbooks written especially for Naktham III students, and the three most important ones are:

1. The Navakovāda³ which contains a commentary on selected parts of the Vinaya Pitaka, with special reference to the Pāṭimokkha. The second half of this book is devoted to Buddhist ethics.
2. The Buddhapravati, or the biography of the Buddha.
3. The Pathamasambodhi⁴, a book with stories which provide insight into the Dhamma. Most of these stories are based on incidents in the life of the Buddha.

¹ นักรวม . Literally: 'Skilled in the Dhamma'.

² เปรียญ . Probably derived from the Pāli pariñña, which means 'knowing, recognizing, understanding' (PED, p. 425b).

³ นวโถวาท Nawakowaad. Literally: 'Advice to the newly ordained monk' (PED, p. 171a and p. 348a).

⁴ Literally: 'The first insight'.

To illustrate how widely distributed these books are: in 1966 the Navakovāda was printed for the 64th time, with an issue of 100,000 copies. In that year also the Buddhapravati, part 1, was printed for the 40th time, in an issue of 60,000 copies, and the Pathamasambodhi appeared in 1967 in its 15th printing in an edition of 15,000 copies.

In the monasteries where the inexperienced monks are instructed in the subjects for the Naktham III examination, lessons are held during five days of the week. On wanphra and the day before wanphra no lessons are given. Most of the teaching time is devoted to the first part of the Navakovāda, in which many rules of behaviour are discussed and in which a Thai translation of most of the Pātimokkha is given. By way of preparation for the lessons, the students are told to learn a certain number of passages of the Navakovāda by heart. The teacher will explain these passages during the following lesson, and he will instruct his pupils to memorize a few subsequent paragraphs. In this manner the pupils work through most of the Navakovāda.

In order to depict the teaching methods of a good teacher a fictitious example of instruction has been set up, based on actual experience¹:

It is a day in the beginning of August, 1.30 p.m. The saalaa commonly used to teach Naktham III students is occupied. The teacher sits in front of the class at a desk, well elevated above the level of the desks of his students.

1

We are indebted to the abbot of Watphanænpluu for his patient instruction in the subjects necessary to sit for the Naktham III examination. This fictitious example epitomises the skill and humour with which he gave his lessons.

The teacher has just reached the fifth category of precepts in the Pātimokkha, the pācittiya¹. He asks one of his students to stand up and recite the first of the 92 pācittiya rules. The student indicated immediately stands up and in a glib and rapid manner recites the rule in question. For good measure he will add several more of the rules before the teacher can stop him. After acknowledging the student's skill in memorising, the teacher will repeat the first rule of the pācittiya, but this time in a slow manner:

'A deliberate lie is a pācittiya.'

He continues with a detailed explanation of this rule:

'A bhikkhu who is aware of the fact that he makes a false statement and is not deterred by that awareness commits this offence, and then there is a case for expiation. If, however, no one has heard the lie, the monk can consider himself lucky, for he will then not have broken a precept of this category; the precept broken will fall into a less important group.

'Under the first of the pācittiya rules must be included false statements made in writing, and even a lie by a gesture. If a bhikkhu answers a question by nodding affirmatively whilst knowing that the reply should have been negative he commits pācittiya. Whether the person who is the recipient of the false statement believes the lie or does not believe it does not make any difference. In both cases the precept in question has been broken.'

After this careful explanation of the first rule of the pācittiya the teacher may ask:

'If a monk told that during meditation he saw the god Indra, and if this statement were not true, what type of precept did this monk break?'

The teacher chooses a rather dull student to answer his question first, and in the circumstances the answer is likely to be:

'Pācittiya, sir!'

1

The eight categories of precepts of the Pātimokkha are, in order of decreasing importance: pārājikā, saṃghādisesā, aniyatā, nissaggiyā-pācittiya, pācittiya, pāṭidesaniyā, sekhiyā, and adhikaraṇasamathā.

The teacher will ask the students one by one until he obtains the right answer.¹

Almost all lessons dealing with the Navakovāda will proceed in the manner indicated by this example. The lesson lasts about two hours, and at the end of the lesson the teacher selects a few questions from a book dealing with previous Naktham examinations. Usually the questions selected are related to the subjects discussed during the lesson. To continue the fictitious example, the teacher might write on the blackboard:

1. A monk writes a letter to a friend in which he tells a deliberate lie. The letter gets lost and never reaches its destination. What precept has the monk broken?
2. A person is asked: 'What time is it?' and answers: 'Two o'clock'. Later he notices that it is much later, but that his watch indicated wrongly. What precept has this person broken?
3. The teacher of a monks' school asks a pupil whether he has studied the previous night. The student has not even opened his books during that night, but nods his head affirmatively. Has this student broken a precept, and if so, what precept?

The teacher then instructs the class to write the answers in their notebooks. He may tell the class to place the notebooks with the answers neatly written down on his desk as soon as they are ready, and he then leaves the room. Most students will look in the Navakovāda to see if they can find the answers to the questions. They may discuss

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The attentive reader will have noticed that the right answer to the question is: 'The monk in question would have broken the fourth precept of pārājikā, and would be expelled from the order' (cf. supra, p. 140).

the possible answers with one another and most students may copy the answers that the brightest among them has written down. By 5.00 p.m. all notebooks must be placed on the desk of the teacher, because at that time the late afternoon chanting session begins in the bood.

Apart from the exegetical exercises with regard to the rules of the Pātimokkha, the students must be taught to write a page-long treatise on the definition of a religious term. In addition they must obtain a reasonable knowledge of the life of the Buddha, and they should take note of the ethical aspects of the teachings of the Buddha as they are discussed in the latter half of the Navakovāda. Usually the teacher will order the students to write a page of prose on a certain concept during the day before wanphra and wanphra itself when no classes are held. One of the teaching days may be devoted to communal reading in the biography of the Buddha, so that four days per week remain for the discussion of the rules of behaviour and precepts of the monks.

Shortly after phansaa, the yearly State examinations are held in hundreds of the most important monasteries throughout the country. During the examination the students are not allowed to consult one another or to look into their textbooks. Figures for 1965, 1966 and 1967 indicate that about 20 per cent of those who sit for Naktham III pass the examination¹.

1

In 1965 there were 95,848 persons who sat for Naktham III, and 17,662, or 18.4 per cent, passed. For 1966 the figures were respectively: 96,539, 19,182, 19.9 per cent; and for 1967: 112,736, 26,380 and 23.4 per cent (sources: รายงานการศาสนาประจำปี ๒๕๐๘ ๒๕๐๙ ๒๕๑๐).

B. Behaviour

In the section on the traditional learning of the inexperienced monk, the subject of monastic behaviour was broached, and it was shown that traditionally, the behaviour of the monk should be oriented towards calmness, tranquillity and peacefulness, and that very few precepts were memorised word by word. In contrast, for the Naktham III examination a thorough knowledge of the wording and interpretation of most of the rules is a prerequisite. During the training in the jurisprudence of the precepts it becomes clear to many monks how they should behave in specific circumstances. Many of the rules of the Pāṭimokkha will fit in exactly with what they learned from the experienced monks before and soon after ordination. These rules may strengthen and confirm a bhikkhu in his resolution to behave in the proper manner. Other rules of behaviour of the Pāṭimokkha simply cannot be applied to monks in present-day Thailand; they refer to circumstances which have disappeared in the more than two millennia since the Pāṭimokkha was composed. Under these rules fall especially those dealing with behaviour towards bhikkhunī, a class of female members of the Samgha not found in Thailand.

While most conscientious monks in Thailand feel that they adhere fairly closely to the 227 rules of the Pāṭimokkha, there is one precept which is often broken by many bhikkhus. This is the 18th of the nissaggiyā-pācittiya:

Whatsoever Bhikkhu shall receive gold or silver,
or get someone to receive it for him, or allow it

to be kept in deposit for him — that is a Pākittiya offence involving forfeiture.¹

According to this precept, monks may not possess nor handle money; if they wish to rectify a breach of this rule they must forfeit the money handled. In principle, it would be possible for Thai monks to live without handling any currency because they are provided with all the basic material goods: a monk receives free clothing and food, free medicine in state hospitals and is assured of a roof above his head. Often he receives presents which include common household materials.

In practice, however, most bhikkhus would be very inconvenienced if they did not receive any financial assistance. When travelling monks need money, not only for transport² but often for meals as well. Many monks buy tobacco, tea or Ovaltine and they may occasionally charge a lay friend to purchase a lottery ticket³.

Apart from the fact that the monks appreciate gifts of money and that they use these to improve their circumstances and bring some extra luxuries into their lives, many laymen, for their part, insist on offering money. It will be

1

SBE, Vol. XIII, p. 26.

2

It is only the municipal bus services of Bangkok that provide free travel for members of the Sangha; in the rest of the country bus companies charge a monk half price, and other kinds of transport usually have to be paid for in full.

3

The habit of many rural monks of engaging in this form of gambling is not approved of by the ecclesiastical authorities.

argued later¹ that there is a connection, from the villager's point of view, between the amount of beneficial karma received by him and the amount of money he offers to members of the Samgha. It would be unthinkable to invite a chapter of monks to chant at a private ceremony and not to remunerate them. All the invited monks come to the layman's house expecting to be rewarded financially, and it is not by accident that a chapter of monks often chants considerably longer in the house of a rich farmer than in the house of a farmer who cannot afford to donate much money. Therefore, it is likely that laymen will continue to reward monks financially, and monks will continue to accept these offerings, notwithstanding the fact that it is contrary to a precept of the monks.

In order to overcome the prohibition of the 18th nissaggiyā-pācittiyā rule, several patterns of behaviour have developed. In the first place, laymen may donate money using a formula stating that the money involved is for buying new robes and new begging bowls². With this formula, the acceptance by the monks does not look so wrong. A common method used to avoid giving cash to the bhikkhus in public is to present them with declarations of intention. These declarations can be obtained from stores, and are usually printed leaving the name of the donor and the amount donated open. At the end of a private ceremony, the householder may present each monk with an envelope containing such a declaration of intention, on which a certain amount has been filled in. Later, in the privacy

1

Ch. IX, pp. 300-305.

2

See Ch. VIII, p. 248.

of their kuṭi, the monks will receive the equivalent in banknotes. Another method commonly used to avoid embarrassment is to wrap money in paper so that a monk does not actually physically handle the currency. The farmers realize that a monk does act improperly when handling money which has been wrapped in paper, but at least it is not so bad as openly handling that commodity.

Many a monk will avoid handling cash in public places, knowing that his public image suffers by touching it. When in a shop, monks are often allowed to perform money transactions in the private atmosphere at the back, out of the public gaze. There are many monks who behave completely correctly with regard to money by using a degwat to handle all cash.

A factor which enhances the trend towards monastic behaviour according to the letter of the rules is the existence of the Dhammayuttikanikāya¹, the assembly of monks who adhere closely to the Teachings. Since 1894 this assembly has formed a separate sect in the Thai Buddhist church. In 1967 4.3 per cent of the monasteries and 4.8 per cent of the number of bhikkhus belonged to the Dhammayuttikanikāya². The monks who belong to this sect take great pains to adhere to the precepts and other rules laid down in the Vinaya Piṭaka. When a group of 'reformed' monks beg for food in the morning, they will not speak with each other or with the laymen who donate food. Their

1

ธรรมยุต , or Thammajut.

2

Of 185,921 monks, 8,939 were Dhammayuttikanikāya, and of 24,634 monasteries, 1,054, were counted under the reformed sect (รายงานการศาสนา๒๕๑๐หน้า๘๗).

robes are folded around the body in a less glamorous manner than that of many monks of the 'unreformed' sect, which is known by the name Mahānikāya¹, or Great Assembly. While Mahānikāya monks may be seen to handle money, a Dhammayuttikanikāya member will take care always to bring a layman to handle currency. The 'reformed' monks adhere to a slightly different lunar calendar, and their chanting methods are at variance with the methods used in most monasteries. The former will not drink beverages which contain milk during the afternoon and they are instructed not to use sandals.

Many laymen believe that the monks who behave strictly according to the precepts are generating more and stronger beneficial power than less strict bhikkhus, and that such monks should be supported in preference to those who do not make these efforts. In areas where Dhammayuttikanikāya monasteries have been in existence for some time, the behaviour of Mahānikāya monks shows a tendency towards closer adherence to the Vinaya. The inexperienced Mahānikāya monks may be instructed not to allow an occasion to arise where people can make a comparison between the sects which would be unfavourable to themselves. Many Mahānikāya monks have begun to dress and behave like the 'reformed' sect. They may refrain from talking during begging, they may refrain from smoking whilst walking in public, and they may take more precautions not to be seen before handling money.

¹

มหานิกาย , or Mahaanikaaj.

Through following many precepts, a bhikkhu places himself in a special position within the whole community. From the moment of ordination onward, a man is ritually exalted and ranks above all laymen. Traditionally, the special position of the monk has been explained by referring to the fact that a bhikkhu engages in activities which increase his own store of merit, as well as the store of beneficial karma of his benefactors and ancestors¹. Moreover, the monk offers opportunity for many laymen to perform meritorious deeds.

Such a picture is just and valid, and the ritual of kruadnaam² especially points to the importance of the aspect of merit. Whilst the idea of the acquisition of beneficial karma is of assistance in explaining the religious behaviour of the monks, the role of the Buddhist monks can be further interpreted by taking the frame of reference established in the previous two chapters into account. The fundamental ideas surrounding the origin and value of beneficial power have bearing upon the behaviour of monks and the attitudes of laymen towards the bhikkhus. It has been established that monks who chant Pāli texts, who meditate or who preach emanate protective power, and objects in their proximity can become charged with this beneficial power. This magical aspect of the

1

For example in Kaufman's Bangkhuad, p. 183, deYoung's Village Life in Modern Thailand, p. 130 et passim, Kingshill, Ku Daeng, p. 8 et passim.

2

Supra, pp. 147-148.

activities of the members of the Samgha is not incompatible with the fact that the monks perform activities which increase their own good karma; on the contrary, it reinforces that idea, and the greater the store of beneficial karma a monk possesses, the stronger the power he generates. The monk who follows his precepts and who performs meritorious activities can be seen as a source of protective, beneficial power. This may be a reason for the farmer to kneel in the dust upon meeting a bhikkhu. Knowledge of this can induce a father to present his youngest son to a famous monk, and see this infant 'bask' in the beneficial emanation of the monk. It is a factor underlying the tradition of inviting bhikkhus to chant some texts during rituals in the private homes of the farmers. It is an aspect to be considered in answering the question of why laymen listen for hours to sermons they barely comprehend.

The belief in beneficial power thus does not oppose Buddhism. In rural central Thailand both are part of the same religious norm complex.

CHAPTER VI

LEAVING THE ORDER, COURTSHIP AND MARRIAGE

Leaving the Order

Unless a bhikkhu commits one of the pārājikā offences, he cannot be disrobed against his will; every monk decides for himself if and when he will become a layman again. However, outside pressures usually influence his decision. If a monk passes his Naktham III examination and behaves in a manner considered befitting the Samgha, he shows that he has an aptitude for a monastic career, and elder monks as well as laymen will urge him to remain a monk. The longer such a man stays in the order, the better, for not only will his skill in chanting Pāli texts increase, but he may be willing to relieve the abbot of some of his tasks, such as teaching newly ordained monks and chanting the Pātimokkha.

If such a promising monk succeeds in passing the remaining two Naktham examinations, he arrives at the crossroads in his career. Either he remains in his rural monastery and waits until he is asked to become an abbot in one of the monasteries in the neighbourhood, or he takes up residence in one of the municipal monasteries in order to be trained for the Parien degrees¹, thus opting for the higher ecclesiastical offices. At this point in his career a monk seldom considers leaving the Samgha; it would mean leaving a position which carries great prestige, a

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See Chapter V, p. 155.

reasonable income¹ and social security². Those who do leave the order after several years of service are often men who have failed to pass the highest of the Naktham examinations, or who do not see a chance to be elected as abbot³. The monks who become laymen after many years of service will find that their profound knowledge of chanting and ritual will bring them some standing in lay life, as they will be able to lead the lay community during major religious ceremonies.

Most newly ordained monks decide to leave the order after completion of their first phansaa, after the kathin⁴

1

The rule of poverty is generally not adhered to. Most of the income of the monks is derived from payment for religious services. After some years in the monastery, a bhikkhu can be elected to be preceptor during the yearly recurring ordinations, which assures him of additional cash. If he passes an examination which enables him to ordain, his yearly income from that source alone may be as much as several thousand baht. Additionally, the government pays a small stipend to all monks above the rank of abbot.

2

Every monk enjoys free food and lodging, and medical service in all state hospitals is free of charge to members of the Samgha.

3

A new abbot is appointed by a Buddhist monk who is in charge of the religious affairs of a canwat (a 'province'), and who assures himself beforehand of the wishes of the lay supporters of the monastery. The lay people usually have to consider deeply before recommending a certain monk for the post; ideally an abbot should possess leadership qualities, be able to receive guests in a proper manner, take the initiative in ventures to enrich the monastery, give guidance to monks and laymen alike and be respected and liked by all.

4

กฐิน . The kathin ceremony originates from the custom of presenting some of the monks who have passed phansaa in good order with some cloth (see Ch. IX, pp. 296-297).

ceremony has marked the end of the season when religious life is most intensive. The man who decides to leave the order must ask advice about an auspicious moment for doing so. A person with astrological knowledge tells him the most propitious day and usually insists that the ceremony should take place at the time of sunrise of that day. The insistence upon the moment of sunrise, the 'birth' of a new day, is an indication that leaving the Samgha can be seen as a ritual rebirth; a man who 'died' to the world when ordained is 'born anew' when he leaves the order. Consistent with this view is the fact that ordination can take place on any day. People do not try to select an auspicious day for becoming a bhikkhu; after all, no special day exists for death¹.

Although it is recognized that the man who leaves the order breaks with what is noblest in a man's life, the ceremony is not a sad event and no stigma is attached to such a man. A man who has passed at least one phansaa in the Samgha has the right to claim a position in adult lay society. It is advisable that a person who is going to

1

Discussing the view that leaving the order can be seen as a man's rebirth, Rabibhadana writes: "A man who was born at an unfortunate time, i.e. when the stars are not favorable, could select a propitious time for leaving the monkhood. He might then have his horoscope made, taking the time of his leaving the monkhood as the time of his birth. It is believed that by this means, the man would be able to escape the bad influence of the stars..." (Akin Rabibhadana, The Organization of Thai Society in the Early Bangkok Period, 1782-1873, p. 123). In present-day central rural Thailand all men, regardless of the date of their original birth, seek the most auspicious time for leaving the Samgha; it is of course even more advisable for those who were born at an inauspicious time.

leave the order should be happy and content about his decision; a man who is dejected and unsure of himself should remain in the security of the Samgha until he feels more certain.

The day before leaving the order, a man must take leave of his fellow-monks by prostrating himself in front of each of them and by asking forgiveness for any offence that he may have caused through his negligence. On the morning of the ceremony, the monk should dress in clean robes and renew his vows with sadḍeṇ aabat¹. He must take some lay clothes, candles, incense, flowers, his begging bowl in which he has poured some clean water and a bundle of twigs which still possess their foliage. These twigs are taken from plants which have auspicious names, such as bajthoṅṅ², bajṇṇ³, jaaphrēeg⁴ or maajmajom⁵. With all these paraphernalia the monk must go towards the place where the ceremony will take place; usually this is the office of the abbot or the bood. The monk lights a candle and the incense and offers these together with the flowers while prostrating himself before the image of the Buddha.

¹
See Ch. V, pp. 145-147.

² ใบทอง Literally 'goldleaf'. Graptophyllum hortense (McF., p. 491b)

³ ใบเงิน Literally 'silverleaf'. The same species as bajthoṅṅ but a variety with slightly lighter leaves.

⁴ หญ้าแพรก Cynodon dactylon (McF., p. 600). This is a hardy grass which is generally considered to epitomise sturdiness and health.

⁵ ใบมะยม Phyllanthus distichus (McF., p. 638a). The leaves of this plant are regularly used as a medicine.

Meanwhile, the leader of the ceremony¹ has taken the begging bowl with water and quickly murmurs some Pāli formulae whilst holding a lighted candle above the surface of the water², thus consecrating the contents of the vessel. The bhikkhu on whose instigation the ritual takes place is told that, if he wishes to change his mind about becoming a layman, he has a last opportunity to do so. When he has indicated that he is certain, he must repeat three times the prescribed formula: 'sikkham paccakkhāmi gihīti maṃ dhāretha' or: 'I leave the discipline, you should recognize me as householder'. From the moment that the word dhāretha has sounded for the third time, the man is a monk no more, and he must change into lay clothing. Upon returning to the scene of the ritual, the leader of the ceremony proceeds with several activities intended to protect and guard the man who has just left the Samgha. The monk sprinkles some consecrated water with the leaves that had been brought for this purpose over the man, whilst other monks who were invited to witness the event chant some auspicious stanzas. The ex-monk is instructed to go and bathe himself thoroughly and to return to the abbot after the washing. In the privacy of the room of the abbot, the layman may receive several protective objects:

1

Usually the leader of this ceremony is the abbot of the monastery where the monk stayed for his last phansaa. However, if the bhikkhu prefers to leave the order somewhere else, he can travel to another monastery and ask the abbot there to perform the ceremony.

2

See Ch. IX, pp. 276-277.

Usually he receives a cotton cord around his neck¹, and the abbot may accompany this by drawing a simple jan on the head of the layman, or pressing some goldleaf on his forehead whilst saying a blessing in Pāli. Before receiving these protective measures, the layman has to receive the Five Precepts².

Unless pressing reasons prevent him from doing so, the man who has left the order is expected to remain several days and nights in his monastery, where he must remove the traces he left as a bhikkhu; he ought to clean his former cell, the communal eating place and the toilets, and he should fill the communal vessels with fresh water³.

When he arrives home for the first time since leaving the order he must prostrate himself before all his older relatives, especially his parents, and offer them a share in the beneficial karma (beṇṇ kuson⁴) which he has accumulated during his period in the Samgha⁵. After a man has left the monastery, he may remain at home for a considerable time, mainly to let his hair grow; baldness

1

This cord is made up of nine strands of unspun cotton. The similarity between the use of this cord and the yajñopavīta of the upayana ceremony in ancient India is striking (Cf. KHD, Vol. II, Part 1, p. 287 ff.).

2

See Chapter VIII, pp. 228-234.

3

For a more detailed description of the ritual of leaving the Samgha, see ระเบียบการลาสิกขาบท โดยพระธรรมเสนานี

4

แบ่งกุศล

5

The custom of offering a share in the merit obtained is not confined to this moment; it is common polite behaviour for anybody who has attended a ceremony of major importance. See Ch. X, p. 308.

of a layman is generally regarded as a shameful embarrassment¹. After the length of his hair has become respectable and there is no physical indication of his period as a bhikkhu, a man is expected to select a bride, marry and raise a family.

Courting

Some men, especially those who are relatively wealthy, have little difficulty in finding a suitable marriage partner, but most men feel insecure and anxious during the time of courtship. Traditionally, courting is an activity which should take place in the home of the maiden, and the young man feels exposed to the scrutiny of the relatives of the woman he wishes to know better. She is continually chaperoned so that there is virtually no opportunity for a private tête-à-tête. Until her family has accepted a formal marriage offer, any suitor may come and try to impress the family with his good manners and engaging personality². Rivalry between different suitors is not uncommon, and the traditional place to outdo a rival is in the home of the girl, under the eyes of her relatives. This rivalry may express itself in a match in politeness and wit; aggressiveness or brute force openly expressed does not win respect.

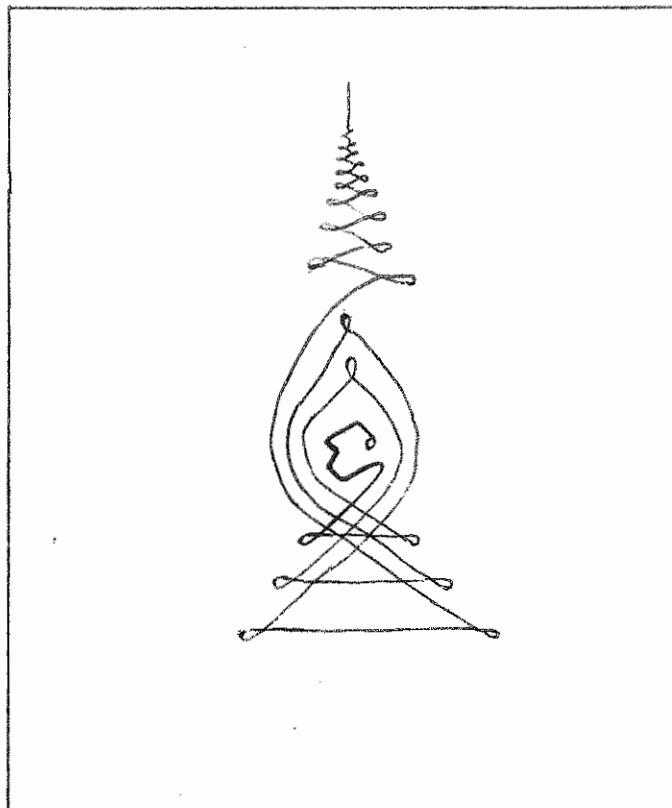
1

The ugliness of a bald head is commented upon in detail in the famous story of Khun Chaan and Khun Phean, and has also been mentioned by Chandruang (My Boyhood in Siam, 1969, p. 8).

2

Since many young people nowadays take temporary work in the provincial capital, courting has become less formal, because members of both sexes can meet at work beyond the supervision of elder relatives. Still, competition exists and many boys resort to magical practices to ensure success.

Fig. 3. A jan napaṭhamam



In these circumstances, a man can avail himself of magical means in order to increase his chances of winning a bride. Thus, when courting, he will be sure to wear amulets which reputedly increase the popularity of the wearer. If he has been tattooed with designs which are alleged to possess the same power, he raises this energy by saying the appropriate khaathaa over them. Another method to ensure increased popularity is to say a khaathaa over the powder used to make up the face¹.

1

People of both sexes and of all ages can use make-up. Some fragrant white powder is mixed with water and applied to the face. The face can be completely blanched (thaa p̄eṅṅ ၵၢၼၵၢၼ်), or white dots can be distributed over the face with the fingertips (pa p̄eṅṅ ၵၢၼၵၢၼ်). Nowadays the bottled mixture is readily obtainable from shops.

If these practices which are directed to increase a man's popularity in general do not have the desired results, the man can resort to goal-directed magical practices. One man reputedly won his wife by drawing a simple magical diagram, one of the class of the jan napathamam¹ (see Fig. 3), whilst thinking intently of the woman he wished to marry, and saying an appropriate khaathaa. He waited seven days for the magic to take effect and, when approaching her, he saw that she was more favourably inclined towards him².

Another method to ensure the love of a woman³ is to sit close by her while smoking a cigarette. The man should draw smoke deep into his lungs and, whilst softly saying the right spell, blow out the smoke so that it envelops her. A much stronger method consists of scooping up some earth with the big toe of the right foot, taking the earth in the right hand and rubbing it on the top of the head, whilst invoking the goddess of the earth ('Mother Thoranii'⁴) to assist in the acquisition of a bride.

1

Literally: 'The first, or the foremost letter N'. The letter N is quite common in the mystical diagrams, probably because it is the first letter of the words namo buddhāya (Hail to the Buddha). There are many jan called napathamam. See for example พจนานุกรมคำพูด หน้า ๑๒๗. Jan very similar to this are found in คัมภีร์คาถา ๑๐๘ หน้า ๒๓ and คัมภีร์ย่นต ๑๐๘ หน้า ๒๒.

2

Somkhuān Sutticaj, 7 July 1968.

3

This practice has also been reported by Textor (An Inventory, p. 144).

4

ธรรณี. Related to the Sanskrit Dharanī (MMW, p. 510b). See Ch. VII, pp. 220-223.

The last two examples reveal that, as the magical practices become more strong and persuasive, less attractive material is used. Not many people will find it pleasant to be enveloped in smoke, while rubbing earth over one's head is an action no Thai would perform lightly. The earth is frequently polluted by human waste and animal droppings. Scooping up a bit of earth with the foot must be regarded as an abnormal, 'inverted' activity; the feet are the most polluted parts of the body by their frequent contact with the earth, and reaching for something with the foot is regarded as very bad manners¹.

The use of polluted material in love magic is most overt in the strongest magical means to which a man can resort to ensure the love of a woman. If a woman swallows food in which a man has put a single drop of nammanphraaj², she will automatically become enslaved to him. A man cannot obtain nammanphraaj easily. Only a magical specialist with great powers will try to obtain this liquid from the corpse of a person who has died inauspiciously, preferably from the most dangerous kind of corpse: that of a woman who died whilst pregnant or during childbirth. Reputedly, during the night the magical specialist approaches the place where such a corpse lies. He grasps the dead body firmly in his arms, and extracts some liquid from the skull by holding a lighted candle under the chin

1

This is well illustrated by the fact that, when a rich landowner who had hired labourers to dig a channel pointed with his foot to some earth that still had to be removed, all his workmen walked off the job, deeply insulted (Suriya, 11 November 1969).

2

See Ch. IV, p. 119.

of the cadaver. A terrible struggle may ensue before the corpse releases some of this nammanphraaj. The liquid is extremely dangerous, and in present times there are only a few magical specialists who are reputed to possess nammanphraaj. Only a desperate man will try to use it as love magic, for whilst it certainly causes a woman to be enslaved to a man, it may make her very ill at the same time. It is said that a woman may become mentally deranged for the rest of her life by consuming some nammanphraaj.

Hitherto the magical means by which a man can win the attention of a woman have been discussed. Women on the other hand can sometimes resort to magic to attract a man. A young, unmarried woman usually does not practise magic; ideally she should be passive and demure. The magical practices of women are usually reported from older females, who often are already married but who feel that they are no longer the favourite of their husband. Women who are of the opinion that their spouses give cause for jealousy may make a potion or a powder which contains some of their vaginal excretion. When a man consumes some food which contains some of this potion or powder, he will lose interest in all other women, and devote all his attention to the woman from whose secretions the mixture was made. A woman who resorts to these means should take care to practise this kind of magic in secret; if the man finds out that his food has been treated in such a manner he has reason to punish her severely, for her vaginal excretion will have destroyed the power of many of his tattoos and amulets and rendered him vulnerable.

It is said among men that prostitutes use a similar magic. Reputedly a prostitute sprinkles some water which contains vaginal excretion at the doorposts and above the

door of the house where she lives. A man walking near the door may suddenly be irresistibly drawn over the threshold. If he is wearing his string of amulets he should try to take it off and give it to a friend in safe keeping before entering such a house.

The principles involved in the magical practices of women are well illustrated by a passage in Textor's thesis where the ritual for undoing the effects of having come into contact with vaginal excretion is described¹. He reports that, if a woman fears that her husband has been treated with the vaginal excretion of another woman, she should obtain water from the bottom of three or seven taxi boats, and some moss from around the sanctuary of a monastery, or from the boundary stones of a bood. If her husband eats food containing a mixture of these materials, his previously alienated affection is restored.

The woman's choice of materials to counter the effects of magical practices of another woman indicates that these materials are evaluated as magically powerful. The slimy wood of the bottom of a boat is probably seen as ambiguously charged. On the one hand it is material which grows algae and rots easily, on the other hand it is continuously rinsed while the boat speeds through the rivers and canals. Moss which grows on the most sacred place of the monastery may have been permeated with some beneficial power from the rituals in the bood. On the other hand, its being near the ground may connect it with the soil and thus render it associated with aggressiveness.

1

Textor, An Inventory, p. 152.

Thus this moss is mentioned as one of the ingredients of a magically highly potent substance used to kill enemies¹.

The magical practices to ensure the attention of a person of the opposite sex differ depending on whether the practitioner is a man or a woman. A man can resort to a wide array of practices. He can use sources of beneficial power, such as amulets and tattoos of the upper part of the body, but he can also resort to aggressive, harmful power to persuade other people. A woman has hardly any access to the beneficial powers and if she wishes to influence the attention of another person by magical means she has to apply powers which can be seen as ambivalent or aggressive.

This difference in magical practices corresponds with a ritual opposition of the sexes. In the earliest childhood there is a marked difference in treatment between boys and girls: a boy is encouraged to reconnoitre his environment, to be assertive and proud; a girl should stay at home, be obedient and calm. A boy can walk around naked for many years, a little girl will have her lower abdomen covered from a very young age. Young men are free to roam around in groups when work is slack; girls are kept under the supervision of their elder relatives. When a young man becomes a member of the Samgha great emphasis is laid on avoiding all contact with women. Many rules of the monks may be broken from time to time, but in their behaviour towards women the bhikkhus follow their instructions meticulously.

1

Phya Anuman Rajadhon, Essays on Thai Folklore, p. 149.

Marriage

The meeting par excellence of the ritually opposed sexes is sexual intercourse, and such a meeting cannot be lightly engaged upon. Unmarried couples can meet each other secretly in the fields, away from the homes of people. Any overt sexual advancements¹, such as touching or fondling a member of the opposite sex in a home, whilst they are still unmarried, is discouraged. The reason for the general prohibition of physical contact between unmarried couples is usually given as: 'it insults the spirits of the ancestors'. Wood tells an anecdote concerning a cook who had committed a 'horrible outrage' by stroking the hand of the daughter of some Thai people, and writes amusedly of the reactions of the parents:

... not in our house. We have a spirit living in the roof which is extremely strict in morals, and which is rendered furious if it observes even the slightest familiarity between unmarried persons.²

The reaction of the parents of the girl indicates precisely the attitudes of rural people. The ancestors are loth to leave their former property in the hands of their descendants and wish to be formally introduced to a person before physical familiarities can take place. If an unmarried couple stays overnight under the same roof and engages in sexual intercourse, the spirits of the ancestors, who never sleep, are deeply mortified and insulted and they are prone to retaliate. Any misfortune that occurs in a community

1

Unmarried couples are little restrained in verbal advances, and flirting with gestures of the eyes and hands is an art which is approved of as long as no physical contact is made between the parties concerned.

2

Wood, Consul in Paradise, pp. 94-95.

while an unmarried couple lives together will be seen as the possible result of the wrath of the spirits. The couple in question will be held responsible for the fact that their neighbour suffers from nightmares, that a child becomes ill or that a house burns down, and pressure will be brought upon them and their relatives to stop flouting the spirits.

The parents of a girl will take care that she does not find herself alone with a suitor; they guard her closely, especially when the time of marriage draws near. In the region of Watsaancaaw, however, older persons find it difficult to guard their daughters, because recently a road has been built between Watsaancaaw and the provincial capital and, during the slack periods in the field, many young people meet in town.

The essential, elementary marriage ceremony is a ritual during which the spirits of the ancestors are informed that a certain couple will be husband and wife. The ancestors are made aware of the fact that a contract is made between the parties involved, and thus these spirits should not be offended when sexual intercourse between the young people takes place¹. Two meals for the ancestors are prepared² on two trays, each containing, for example, a banana, a small ripe cocoa-nut, some boiled rice, some raw meat, an alcoholic beverage and some sweets, the kinds of food which

1

Similar beliefs are indicated for northern Thailand by Krairī Nimmānahaeminda in her article "Ham Yon, the Magic Testicles", Essays Offered to G.H. Luce, Vol. II, 1966, p. 134.

2

A recurrent aspect of the marriage ceremony is the even number, symbolising that there are two parties involved.

these spirits like to receive. Incense and candles are lighted and some fragrant flowers are donated to attract the attention of the ancestors. The oldest members of the families involved will be spokesmen for those who have gathered to inform the ancestors, and they will introduce the match in carefully chosen words. It is customary to indicate to the spirits that the contract is legally binding by showing the brideprice whilst speaking to them. The brideprice need not necessarily be a very great amount of money; it depends upon the negotiations previous to the marriage. It must always be an even amount and can be offered in coins or bullion. Sometimes it represents years of savings of the bridegroom. If a woman deserts her husband for no reason considered valid, the brideprice can be claimed back.

The bride and groom prostrate themselves before the place where the ancestors usually reside¹, and also before their older relatives who bless them and wish them happiness. To ensure that nobody will be offended, the people usually place some food and liquor at the shrine of the spirit of the soil (saan Phra Phuum)², and inform the spirit who resides there of the marriage.

While the elementary marriage ceremony centres around propitiation, the elaborations cover a wealth of non-religious aspects as well as some details of interest to the student of Thai religion. Elaborate marriages usually unfold in three distinct parts, and the exact moment for the

1

Usually near a shelf on the eastern, most honourable side of the house (see Ch. VII, pp. 198-199).

2

ศาลพระภูมิ . See Ch. VII, p. 217.

beginning of each part can be fixed at an auspicious moment by a ritual specialist.

An elaborate marriage ceremony begins with an official betrothal. From the family of the prospective bridegroom an emissary is sent to the family of the bride-to-be. This deputy can be male or female and to be chosen for this task is considered to be an honour, for usually only a person with an unblemished reputation, a thorough ritual knowledge and a ripe age is asked to represent a bridegroom's family. The deputy takes two vessels, one containing some money or gold, unhusked rice, puffed rice, green peas, sesame seed and some leaves with auspicious names¹; the other holds eight areca nuts and an even number of betel leaves². If the bride's family agree in principle with the prospective match, they accept the gifts and discuss the details of the marriage with the deputy. It has to be decided whether the ceremony will take place in the house of the bride (a wiwaaha³ marriage) or at the home of the groom (an aawaaha⁴ ceremony). Other topics that have to be discussed during this meeting are the amount of the brideprice and the date of the marriage. Auspicious times

1

Such as bajṇen, bajthoṇ, see supra, p. 170.

2

The contents of the trays are determined by tradition. The different plants probably have each a symbolic meaning, and the total must be seen as a polite request for a betrothal. There is only one vessel with areca and betel, symbolising the approach of one party.

3

विवाहः From the Pāli vivāha.

4

आवाहः In Pāli: āvāha. The same distinction between their meanings can be found in Pāli.

for marriage are usually days in the waxing phase of the moon of the second, fourth, sixth, eighth and twelfth lunar months¹.

On the day of the marriage the groom's family provides three ceremonial containers, one holding the brideprice and plant material similar to that which accompanied the engagement money, the other two vessels holding areca nuts and betel leaves². The persons carrying the containers are received with proper hospitality. It is a common elaboration to invite a chapter of monks to chant sacred texts in the home where the ceremony is held. The monks arrive at around ten o'clock in the morning, their degwats carrying begging bowls. The Five Precepts are recited³ and immediately after the laymen have promised to adhere to these precepts, the monks chant several auspicious chants from the Cettamnaan. The begging bowls of the monks are placed immediately in front of the dais on which the bhikkhus recite Pāli texts, and during the chanting rice is offered into these begging bowls by all laymen present. The bride and bridegroom should be the first to place some rice in each begging bowl, and they use a single spoon which they should hold together while donating the rice.

1

Obviously these months are chosen for their even numbers, symbolising the fact that two families are involved in the ceremony. The tenth lunar month is excluded, possibly because around that time most dogs in rural Thailand are on heat and make a spectacle of copulation.

2

The betrothal indicated the approach of one party by using one such vessel; marriage symbolises the coming together of two parties and two areca and betel containers are used.

3

See Ch. VIII, pp. 229-234.

In this manner they perform a meritorious deed together, thus linking their individual stores of good karma, ensuring that they connect their future happy moments, in this life and in future existences¹.

After the monks have consecrated a bowl of water through their chanting, rice and other items of food have to be ceremoniously presented to the bhikkhus, and again, the bride and groom should prakheen² together. While the monks receive food, a token of each kind is offered to the Buddha image in the house, another tray with these foods is placed before the place of the ancestors, and a third food offering is brought to the saan Phra Phuum, the shrine of the guardian spirit just outside the house.

Traditionally, the morning ceremony ended when the monks finished their meal, just before noon, and the next stage of the marriage, the sprinkling of the couple, took place at the next auspicious moment of the day, usually around four o'clock in the afternoon. It was customary in central Thailand to invite the chapter of monks back so that they could begin the sprinkling ritual. This lapse of time between the morning meal of the monks and the sprinkling was inconvenient for the bhikkhus as well as for the laymen. The monks would have to wait four hours before proceeding with the ritual, and if the house of the marriage was far away from a monastery it would not be worth while to walk to and fro. It was also inconvenient for the organisers of the marriage ceremony for, if the

1

See Ch. X, pp. 309-310.

2

See Ch. III, p. 85.

monks left the scene early in the afternoon, they would have to receive the bhikkhus twice, and if the monks remained in the house, they would have to be constantly attended to according to their ritual position. Therefore, in rural central Thailand, it has become customary to link the sprinkling ritual with the meal of the monks in the morning¹.

Immediately after kruadnaam², therefore, the bride and groom prostrate themselves before each monk successively, and each bhikkhu takes the bowl with sacral water, dips a small bundle of leaves which carry auspicious names³ and splashes some of the water over their heads while reciting an auspicious Pāli phrase. After the sprinkling, each monk returns to his monastery and the remainder of the marriage ritual is in the hands of the laymen, who continue the aspersion of bride and groom. To the laymen, however, the couple do not prostrate themselves as they did for the monks.

Bride and groom sit side by side, the bride on the left hand of the groom. A person who knows an appropriate formula, usually a ritual specialist, approaches the couple

1

It would be impossible to shift the meal of the monks to the afternoon, since the rules of the Samgha forbid eating of solid food after midday.

2

The polite offering of the beneficial karma to relatives and ancestors whilst pouring some water over a finger of the hand (see Ch. V, pp. 147-148).

3

For the marriage ceremony, a common plant from which to use twigs is the Calotropis gigantea, a plant of which the leaves are called bajrak (ใบจอก), words, associated in the Thai language with love.

and anoints their foreheads with a fragrant paste. He can say, for example:

sunakkhattaṃ sumangalaṃ supabhātaṃ suhuṭṭhitaṃ sukhaṇo
sumuhutto ca suyitṭhaṃ brahmacārīsu padakkhiṇaṃ
kāyakammaṃ vācākammaṃ padakkhiṇaṃ padakkhiṇaṃ manokammaṃ
paṇidhi te padakkhiṇā padakkhiṇāni katvāna te labhantaṃ
te padakkhiṇe

This spell, recorded by Wirijabuurana¹, is made up of Pāli words, but the text seems slightly corrupt. A translation can be rendered as follows:

A good constellation, a good blessing, a good dawning, a good rising, a good span and a good period. Perform a circumambulation, well offered among the brahmacārīs. Circumambulate with the action of the body, (circumambulate) with the action of the voice, circumambulate with the action of the mind. May they who are auspicious (circumambulate), having performed circumambulations,² achieve (the fruit of) those circumambulations.

A circle of cotton thread is laid on the head of the bridegroom and on that of his bride and these pieces of thread are connected with a third strand.

¹ ประเพณีไทย หน้า ๒๓๘

²

Circumambulation refers to the ancient Indian custom of paying homage to a person or object by walking round that person or object while keeping the right side of the body turned towards it. In Thailand this is still done on special occasions round a temple or person. As far as could be determined, it is not an aspect of the marriage ceremony. The fact that the circumambulation is repeatedly mentioned in this formula may indicate that in former times it was part of marriage, either through walking round the couple or round a sacrifice.

Parents, relatives and other guests now come forward one by one to sprinkle the hands of the couple with scented water whilst wishing them prosperity and happiness. After everyone has done this, the ritual specialist removes the cotton threads simultaneously.

The third stage of the elaborate marriage ceremony is called rien moon¹ or 'arranging the pillows'. It is usually held in the home of the bride, so that in an aawaaha ceremony the couple, parents and guests have to move to the house in question. If the rien moon is held during the same day that the sprinkling took place, the astrologer usually decides that the most auspicious time for the final stage of the ceremony is at seven or eight o'clock in the evening.

In the house of the bride a sleeping place has been arranged with care. The brideprice and some leaves with auspicious names² have been placed on the bed. Bride and groom must lie down on this bed, on either side of the brideprice, the bride to the left, the groom to the right. Whilst taking their position they should take care not to bump their heads together, since such a mishap is interpreted as indicating that the marriage will be troubled by frequent vehement quarrelling.

A person who is reputed to have been happily married for a considerable period has been invited to instruct the recently wed couple. This marriage instruction usually covers a wide range of subjects. Among the subjects, the

1
 ၂၅၂၅၂၅၂၅

2
 Such as bajrak, bajnen, bajthoon.

proper behaviour of the marriage partners cannot be omitted. The husband is admonished to be just and considerate, whilst the wife ought to be gentle and understanding. In no circumstances should they forget to be respectful towards the spirits of the ancestors. Specific rules of auspicious behaviour can be mentioned. For example, when getting up in the morning, one should wash the face with clean water in a proper contemplative mood. The water can be blessed with a few Pāli words before using it to rub the face¹. Unless a person is sick he should not be in bed at the moment of sunrise or sundown. After a day's work a person should bathe and perfume himself. The married couple should sleep with their heads in an easterly direction. Husband and wife should not have sexual intercourse on wanphra, the day before wanphra or when the woman menstruates². If they break the latter rule they risk having children who are not healthy. During sexual intercourse, the woman should never be in a relatively higher position than a man lest the man loses some of his magical protection³.

After the instruction the couple is left alone for a few minutes. This short period of privacy symbolises the fact that from now on they are entitled to each other's company without a chaperone. Soon they join the guests

1

Many farmers say a very short spell like Namo Buddhāya, or Itipiso Bhagavā.

2

Parallels between these rules and the ancient Indian rules of behaviour are manifold. The avoidance of a woman whose courses appear are laid down, for example, in Manu, IV, 40-42 (SBE, Vol. XXV, p. 135).

3

See Ch. IV, p. 110.

for a final rejoicing in the occasion. There are no fixed rules for the place of residence of a newly married couple. The decision to settle in a compound with the family of the groom, to reside with the family of the bride or to live on their own depends largely on circumstances, which differ from case to case.

The discussion of leaving the order, courting and marriage on the previous pages broached several aspects of Thai religion which had not been mentioned before. In the first place, it appears that the paraphernalia used during ceremonies are chosen for a symbolic reason. A certain plant may indicate agreement, harmony and understanding¹; others are chosen because their names are associated with auspicious words. Almost invariably a gift to immaterial religious actors includes pleasantly scented articles: flowers and incense. The inclusion of these fragrant substances seems related to the idea that odour is immaterial and therefore easily appreciated by the phii and the theewadaa². Often, however, rural people have no knowledge of the reason why a certain leaf, fruit or object is included in a ritual gift. In many circumstances, the ingredients of a gift are clearly circumscribed. Therefore the total gift may be seen as containing a message which is hidden in esoteric lore.

1

This appears to be the role of the betel leaves and areca nuts.

2

เทพเทวี . Pāli devatā, or divine beings. In the eyes of the rural people, the phii and the theewadaa are classes of non-human beings which overlap widely: both are powerful and capricious. The phii, however, can be associated with corpses of dead people as well as with spirits roaming around. Theewadaa are usually not thought of in connection with dead bodies.

Auspicious Moments

In both the ceremony for leaving the order as well as the marriage ceremony, it has been noted that advice can be sought with regard to the most auspicious moment on which the ceremony can take place. For major ceremonies, the ordinary farmer usually cannot fix an auspicious time himself; he will have to consult a ritual specialist. This specialist can be a monk or a layman, and when approached, he usually cannot give an appropriate time without consulting a handbook. Each type of ceremony has its own auspicious and inauspicious instances. Sometimes a favourable moment is chosen, taking the lunar month into account; in other cases an astrologer needs to select a certain day of the week, whilst some rituals should be held during a certain period of an auspicious day.

Most farmers wish to choose auspicious moments for all decisive acts of their lives; they like to begin planting rice on the proper day, build a house on favourable days, travel only when the signs are right and discuss important matters only when the omens are good. For decisions of minor importance, most farmers will not take the trouble to visit an astrologer; instead they can consult simple charts which give information about auspicious times in general. Such charts are widely distributed and in almost every household an astrological timetable of one sort or another can be found.

One of the most common timetables is the jan ubaak๑๑¹ (see Fig. 4). Each day of the week is divided into five

1

The word ubaak๑๑ could not be traced to any known Thai word. Possibly it is related to the Pāli verb upāgacchati, 'to reach, arrive at'.

Fig. 4. The jan ubaakဝဝ၇

	1	2	3	4	5
Sunday	• • • •	✕		• •	•
Monday	•	• • • •	✕		• •
Tuesday	• •	•	• • • •	✕	
Wednesday		• •	•	• • • •	✕
Thursday	✕		• •	• •	• • • •
Friday	• • • •	✕		• •	•
Saturday	•	• • • •	✕		• •

periods: early morning, late morning, midday, early afternoon and late afternoon (in Fig. 4 these are numbered from 1 to 5). The squares marked with four dots are the most auspicious times; the squares with a cross indicate the most inauspicious periods of the week. A blank square indicates an indifferent period which can bring luck as well as disaster; the squares with two dots and those with one dot are mildly auspicious. The jan ubaakဝဝ၇ can be seen chalked on a wall in a home; it may be printed on the back of leaflets which advertise a major fund-raising ceremony; sometimes a man can have it tattooed on the thigh. Other charts indicate which days of the lunar month are auspicious for planting rice; there are tables

from which a farmer can find out which type of rice will grow best during a certain year of the twelve-year cycle¹.

The widespread use of astrology in daily life is indicative of feelings of insecurity among the Thai farmers. Each year a crop can fail through lack of rain, or through excessive rainfall at the wrong period of the year, pests can destroy the most promising fields, and manpower can be afflicted by illness. In recent times modern irrigation techniques and pest control have diminished the risks of farming and it is to be expected that the reliance upon astrological practices will accordingly diminish.

During the discussion of the different techniques used in love magic, several basic religious attitudes were clearly demonstrated. The whole gamut of different magical powers can be used to influence the attitudes of a woman, beneficial power may be used to increase a person's popularity, aggressive power can be manipulated to persuade an unwilling partner. The dangerous, aggressive charge of polluted things was illustrated in the use of earth, and body secretions.

1

The Thais reckon the years in cycles of twelve in which each year is known by the name of an animal. The sequence is: rat, ox, tiger, hare, dragon, serpent, horse, goat, monkey, cock, dog and pig. This method of counting is usual in China and Tibet as well; probably the Thais adopted the system from Chinese astrologers. According to Chao I, the practice was introduced into China by the Tartars as far back as the second century A.D. (Chao I, Kai Yü Ts'ung K'ao, ch. 34).

The marriage ceremony has been approached from a religious angle. It has been stressed that the elementary ritual consists of informing the ancestors of the new alliance and asking the blessing of these spirits as well as elder relatives. The elaborations cover many aspects of religious as well as non-religious life. They involve the arrangements between the two families, financial dealings, creating a festive atmosphere for the many guests and incorporating the newly wed couple in a network of social obligations. However, it is not purely a secular affair; the ancestors are provided with pleasant gifts, and this is also done to the Buddha image and the saan Phra Phuum. A common elaboration consists of the recitation of Pāli texts by a chapter of monks.

When Nash summed up the relation between monks and marriage in south-east Asia and wrote:

... monks are present at marriage ceremonies in Cambodia, while in all other Theravada communities the Buddhist cleric is symbolically antithetical to marriage and procreation;...¹

he was obviously not fully informed about the marriage rituals of central Thailand². The farmers wish their monks to chant some sacred texts, to charge some water with their beneficial power and to sprinkle the couple with the consecrated liquid. Contact with the monk's power is seen to add to the auspiciousness of the occasion.

1

Manning Nash, "Introduction", ASTB, p. viii.

2

Abhay indicates that for Laos, the monks can also be involved in the marriage ceremony, a fact which weakens Nash's statement further (Thao Nhouy Abhay, "Marriage Rites", Kingdom of Laos, edited by René de Berval, 1959, pp. 137-143).

CHAPTER VII

BUILDING A HOUSE

Houses in rural Thailand are rectangular and built on posts, so that temporary floods do not interrupt residence. A home on posts has additional benefits: it gives protection against enemies, and is easy to defend. Also it provides a place where a man can lie down to sleep without putting his head in an inferior position to that of any passer-by. The simplest houses are made mainly of bamboo, their roofs covered with the dried leaves of the Nipa palm tree¹. More expensive houses are made of hardwood. Recently the wealthy farmer has been able to procure other materials: the posts upholding the house can now be manufactured from concrete, and roofs can be covered with sheets of corrugated iron.

The floors of Thai houses are on different levels. The difference in height between adjacent levels varies between about 20 and 40 cm. The simplest home has a floor with two levels, but more elaborate structures have a floor plan with three or more. The differences in height between different parts of the floor play an important role in the lives of the farmers. They provide the means with which to order objects, persons and activities according to their relative importance at any given instant: important ones should be on a higher level, the less important ones

¹ ใบจาก . bajcaag, leaves from the Nipa fruticans (McF., p. 243a).

ought to be lower. For example, the objects used during the reception of an honoured guest, like the crusher of areca nuts and a mat of good quality, are kept on a high level, together with other prize possessions. A wiping cloth, pots and pans, mortar and pestle belong to a lower level. When persons of markedly different age or status converse, those who are elder or who possess a higher status can sit on a higher level. If no raised areas of the floor are near, a simple mat spread out can serve as an elevation.

During the hours of daylight, when farmers are often covered in mud and perspiration, activities in the house, like eating and resting, tend to take place on low areas of the floor. In the evening, however, after bathing and changing into clean clothes, everyone feels free to use the higher level(s). Sleeping at night-time takes place on a higher layer. Even in the relaxed atmosphere during an evening en famille, some rules of comportment are strictly adhered to:

When somebody stretches out, the feet should not point in the direction of another person's head.

When moving about and passing close by a person who is older, the head should not¹ be in a higher position than that of the older person¹.

1

When an older person passes close by someone junior whose head happens to be markedly lower, the former can show a polite recognition by slightly bowing his head. Monks, walking through a room filled with laymen sitting on the floor, often behave in this fashion. The polite recognition can be omitted altogether when the difference in age is too great to warrant any politeness: when, for example, an old person passes close by a sitting child.

Someone junior cannot engage upon conversation with someone older whilst the former is seated on a higher part of the floor than the latter.

Servants must behave as if younger than all non-servants, except when the latter is a young child.

When a member of the Samgha¹ is invited to enter a home, an elevated place must be allotted to him, and all laymen, irrespective of age, will have to sit lower.

The ordering of objects on different levels according to their relative status is not limited to different levels of the floor. The same principle is discernible in the distribution of the ornaments on the walls. The shelf for the ancestors will be placed high on one wall, about 1.60m from the floor below. On this shelf rest the urns with some ashes of the ancestors, and different objects which reputedly possess beneficial power can also be placed here. The shelf can contain pieces of paper or cloth on which magical diagrams (jan) are drawn; sometimes an object which has the appearance of a banknote is fastened here. On close examination, however, it becomes apparent that, apart from many characteristics of Thai currency, the banknote depicts the image of a monk and some khaathaas in Khəom script. This 'sacred banknote' reputedly has the power of increasing the prosperity of a household. If a farmer possesses a horoscope, a book with spells, or a table showing the different auspicious and inauspicious times, these belong on this shelf. Often the shelf

1

The 43rd pācittiya rule of the Pātimokkha is interpreted by Thai monks in such a manner that they feel that they cannot enter the home of a layman until the inhabitants have indicated that the bhikkhus are welcome. When visiting a layman, a monk will wait outside until asked to come up.

contains also the remains of some offerings: remnants of candles, incense sticks and flowers.

More secular ornaments, like a picture of a living member of the family, or a calendar, tend to be placed at a marked distance from this shelf, preferably on another wall. If an ornament of secular nature is put near the shelf it has to be fastened in a lower position. A photograph of secular nature, for example, cannot be placed above one depicting something ritually superior. It would thus be bad taste to hang a picture of the Queen of Thailand directly above a photograph of a monk; the Queen, although generally much admired in rural areas, is ritually inferior to a bhikkhu.

The arrangement on different levels is thus executed on the principle that a relatively more important object, person or activity should be placed higher. Apart from this vertical collocation, principles governing ordering on a horizontal plane can be added.

The east, where the sun rises, is associated with life and generally regarded as auspicious. The west, where the sun goes down, is associated with death and is inauspicious. A corpse is placed with the head in a westerly direction, but when a living person lies down to sleep, he should take care to position his body auspiciously¹. Nightmares would plague the person sleeping with his head in a westerly direction; the proper way to sleep is with the head towards the east.

¹ ประเพณีเก่าของไทย หน้า๑๘๗

Taking the auspicious position of the body of a sleeping person as point of departure, several architectural features of homes in rural central Thailand can be illustrated. The ancestor shelf has to be on the eastern half of the house; if it were on the western wall, the inhabitants of the house would insult their ancestors by stretching their feet in the direction of this shelf¹. The entrance to the sleeping area, on the other hand, cannot be on the eastern side, for thus people entering the area would walk too near the heads of those already resting. Ideally, a house should therefore be built with the high levels of the floor on the east, and the lower areas on the western side. The stairway to the lower floor region should not lead to the house directly from the west; that direction is associated with death. The lower floor space is therefore usually on the west side and the higher areas on the east.

In practice most houses are not built strictly according to the east-west axis, and deviations of up to 45 degrees to either side are common. The exact position of the home often depends on the advice of a ritual specialist who will take the topographical circumstances into account before deciding upon the direction of the house. Building along a north-south axis is generally avoided in rural central Thailand, as it would 'offend the sun'².

1

Nimmānahaeminda reports similar feelings among people of north Thailand in respect of a shelf on which a Buddha image stands (Kraisrī Nimmānahaeminda, "Ham Yon, the Magic Testicles", Essays Offered to G.H. Luce, 1966, Vol. II, p. 133).

2

See infra, p. 225-226.

Not every man will come into such circumstances that he is obliged to build a house of his own. Those who inherit a dwelling, and people who put up at relatives, may never need to erect their own home. The men who feel obliged to build their own house observe certain rituals during the erection of the building. It depends mainly on the wealth of the builder whether only essential ceremonial must suffice, or whether more elaborate ritual is chosen. Following the pattern of previous chapters, the elementary ceremony will first be considered, after which some common elaborations are discussed.

The Elementary Ceremony

If a man who wishes to build a house can ill afford the services of an astrologer, he decides for himself the exact location of the new home. At the selected spot he traces out a rectangle of the size of the floor of the future house, taking care to avoid planning the main axis of the house in an inauspicious direction. The rectangle is cleared of all growth, and great care is taken to level out the building site, and to remove all tree trunks, stones, pieces of glass and other impurities. It is believed that any such impurity interferes with the happiness of the inhabitants of the future house. When the site has been well prepared, the owner often engages a ritual specialist, either layman or monk, to pacify the non-human religious actors¹ who may be disturbed by the building.

If the specialist is a monk, the ceremony consists simply of a profuse sprinkling of the site with sacral water

¹

For a definition see Ch. I, pp. 24-25.

whilst uttering auspicious Pāli words. However, if the specialist is a layman, a placatory gift is made (tham bad phlii)¹. The lay ritual specialist can sprinkle the site with some sacral water, and place incense, candles, flowers and some foods on the earth, whilst invoking different powers to allow the building of the home to take place. It is interesting to note that a monk cannot offer an oblation to the spirits who may have a claim on the area of land. The fact that a bhikkhu should refrain from such behaviour can easily be misinterpreted. A Westerner who has pre-conceptions about 'pure religion' and 'superstitions' may use this fact as an indication of a dichotomy between Buddhism and propitiation. However, the correct interpretation of the fact that a bhikkhu does not offer gifts to these powers lies in the idea that a monk cannot lower himself to ask a favour from the spirits. The ritual position of a monk is more exalted than that of a phii or a thewadaa.

When the site has thus been 'placated', when the spirits who may feel a claim to the land have been propitiated, holes for the poles of the house can be dug, and building can proceed without further ceremonial.

Common Elaboration

People who can afford to build a wooden home instead of constructing one of bamboo usually take more precautions

1

ทำบุญพลี . Etymologically, the word phlii is related to the Sanskrit bali, meaning tribute, offering, gift, oblation (MMW, p. 723c). It is not related to the daitya Bali, whose name probably survives in the Thai Krunghphaalii (see pp. 218-220).

to ensure the happiness of the future inhabitants. They engage a ritual specialist (หมอ)¹, who will assist with the selection of the place on which to build, with the choice of wood and with the elaborate ceremonials.

In former times, the timber for building a house could not be bought from another person, but had to be gathered in a forest by the man who built the home, accompanied by his intimate friends. They often took a หมอ along in order to decide which trees were auspicious. The ritual specialist selected trees which grew in favourable positions, and made sure that the types of wood selected were considered auspicious in ritual lore. Wood considered auspicious was, for example, maaj ten² and maaj ran³; among the inauspicious woods the most important were maaj saak⁴, maaj krabok⁵ and the maaj takhien⁶. Most of the trees which were considered inauspicious were unsuitable for housebuilding; they rotted quickly, were easily devoured by insects, were too wet or too heavy. One tree,

1

หมอ . This word is a general term denoting the lay ritual expert. Often the Thais add one or more syllables to this word to indicate a specialization. Thus they know the หมอดู (หมอดู), the fortune-teller; หมอตาย (หมอตาย), the midwife; and the หมอจาย (หมอจาย), the herb doctor.

2

ไม้เต็ง . Shorea obtusa (McF., p. 373a).

3

ไม้รัง . Pentacme siamensis (McF., p. 701).

4

ไม้ซาก . Serianthes grandiflora, Erythrophloeum succirubrum (McF., p. 308a).

5

ไม้กระบอก . Irvingia malayana (McF., p. 37a).

6

ไม้ตะเคียน . Hopea odorata.

although useful as timber, was avoided because its name, maaj makhaamooṅ¹, sounded inauspicious since the syllable khaa was associated with the Thai word for 'to kill', 'to murder': khaa². The woodcutters took great care to let the trees fall in an auspicious direction, and the moo was at hand to interpret the creaking sounds in the wood before falling. These sounds were seen as communication from the spirit of the wood: Naaṅmaaj³.

Nowadays, the central area of Thailand has almost been deforested, and timber merchants import wood from forested regions. Therefore the customs regarding the selection and cutting of wood are disappearing from this region. While selecting timber is now commercialized, the choice of the most auspicious building site is still decided by the ritual specialist. The moo examines in detail several situational and topographical characteristics of the plot of land. Before finally giving his advice, he takes into account which different plants grow there and in which direction these plants will stand in relation to the new house. In addition he looks at the slope of the land and the occurrence and exact position of anthills.

Usually, the elaborate ceremonies connected with the actual building of the house fall on two successive days. On the first day, offerings are made to placate the appropriate non-human actors, and the holes for the

¹ ไผ่กะคำโพง . Afzelia xylocarpe.

² ข่า . In modern times, timber factories sell this wood under a new name, maaj carøensug (ไผ่เจริญสุข), a name suggesting an increase in happiness.

³ นางไม้ . See later in this chapter, 212-213.

supporting poles are dug. On the second day the poles are placed, the 'first pole' is raised and the house is constructed. Traditionally, a house had to be built completely during that second day. Therefore the ceremony of raising the 'first pole' had to take place early in the morning, so that building could start just after sunrise. Many friends and relatives would turn up to assist in the construction. In order to ensure that enough manpower would be available, the house building had therefore to be planned during the periods of the year when work on the fields was slack. The owner of the new house had to note carefully who had come to help him, so that this service could be reciprocated at a future date¹.

Although the custom of finishing the building on one day has disappeared largely, the raising of the 'first pole' still takes place at sunrise. Nowadays, a rich farmer feels obliged to build a home of such grandeur that it cannot be constructed in a single day. Moreover, he now requires a well-laid hardwood floor, windproof walls, and a roof covered with prefabricated sheets of board or

1

All tasks of major proportion were shared in the traditional village economy. Voluntary, unpaid help was always reciprocal. If, for example, two members of a family helped one day to build a home of a neighbour, the family from which these two came could be certain that it would receive a similar amount of man-hours in return whenever a similar task arose. Nowadays, the big tasks are often done by workers who are paid a daily wage and who receive free food. These paid workers toil shoulder to shoulder with the traditional-minded friends who help on a reciprocal basis.

metal. His fellow villagers cannot be of much assistance to him and he is obliged to engage a professional carpenter. After the first day of building usually only the outer framework of the modern house has been assembled, and it may take many weeks before the home is habitable.

Prior to the first day of the elaborate ceremonies, the owner of the plot of land will have turned and levelled out the earth where the house will stand. Close by the building site he has to construct a saan phientaa¹ or a 'shrine on eye level'. The ritual specialist has indicated to him exactly where this shrine should be erected, after having taken into account the astrological characteristics of the days of ceremony. This shrine rests on four bamboo stakes². The two front poles are about 1.60m high, the back ones much taller. A horizontal framework connects the top ends of the front supports with the two back poles, giving the whole the appearance of a chair on tall props. A bar between the back poles provides the 'back rest'. Just before a ritual commences in which the saan phientaa plays a role, a white cloth is draped over the top of the structure and a pillow in a white pillowcase is placed on the 'seat of the chair'. An umbrella fastened above the shrine completes the preparation of the saan phientaa.

1 ศาลเพ็ญสงฆ์ .

2 There are variants of saan phientaa on six or even on eight poles.

The moo brings his ritual paraphernalia: white cloths, a phaakhawmaa¹, a vessel with sacral water², a number of rectangular pieces of material cut from an inner layer of the trunk of a banana tree, and two ritual food baskets. One of these food containers is triangular, the other is square with a circular inner vessel. Both ritual baskets are divided into a number of compartments, often nine, in which food for the powers to be placated is laid. The owner of the future home usually provides for the other materials needed for the ritual, and will have an ample supply of candles, incense, flowers, food and alcoholic beverages.

The ritual specialist fills the compartments of the triangular and square baskets, each with food appropriate for the non-human powers: a bit of cooked rice, some puffed rice, green peas, sesame seed, a banana, a piece of sugarcane and different kinds of sweets³. He places the triangle on the saan phientaa, and the square container on a mat, together with other ritual objects which he will

1

ပာချာကမာ . This is a rectangular multicoloured cotton cloth, worn by men. It can be used as loincloth, bathing trunks, towel, sash or headcover. For ritual purposes it is worn over the left shoulder, tucked under the right arm, like the upavīta in India.

2

If the moo has to travel far, he may prefer to sacralize water at the place of the ceremony.

3

It depends on what is available; if there is meat, a piece of chicken or duck is considered to be liked by the spirits. The idea nowadays seems to be to offer a variety of foods which are of good quality and fragrant. Quantity seems to be immaterial, and therefore it can be presented in miniature containers.

need presently. When asked for whom the gifts on the saan phientaa are intended, one moo answered readily: 'For Phra Phuumcaawthii'¹. These words can be translated as: 'For Phuum'², the Lord of the plot of land'.

The ritual specialist then walks around the building site and, at every place where later a support of the house will stand, presses a twig into the earth to such a depth that, without falling over, it can support one of the rectangular pieces cut from the trunk of a banana tree. A twig upon which such a rectangular piece is fastened thus constitutes a receptacle, and every place where the earth will be deeply disturbed is indicated by such a small tray. On each of these platforms an offering is placed, such as a small piece cut from a banana, or some sugarcane, sometimes accompanied by incense. It is said that this gift is for Phajaanaag'³.

After these preparations, the ritual specialist proceeds with an official invitation to the non-human powers. A moo commenced this invitation on one occasion⁴ with the following words:

¹
พระภูมิเจ้าที่. Khim, 14 December 1968, Watsaancaaw.

²
Phuum is related to the Sanskrit or Pāli bhūmi, meaning 'soil, ground, earth'. For a closer examination of this power, see later in this chapter, pp. 215-220.

³
พญานาถ. The word Phajaanaag is made up from phajaa, king, and naag, serpent. This power is discussed in more detail later in this chapter (see pp. 208-211 & pp. 223-224).

⁴
Khim, 14 December 1968.

Om¹ Phra Phuum, Phra Thoranii, Kruṅphaalii,
 sahaparivarāya ehi sathāya āgacchantu paribhuñjantu
 svāhāya...

This formula seems rather corrupt and may be paraphrased
 as follows:

Om¹ Phra Phuum, Phra Thoranii, Kruṅphaalii, come with
 your retinue; ³ to the place², let them come, let them
 enjoy the gift ...

After the invocation, the mṃṃ sprinkles sacral water
 on the building site, and scatters some puffed rice, green
 peas and sesame seed. For a period of about a quarter of
 an hour all ceremonial action stops, in order to give the
 invoked powers the opportunity to enjoy the different gifts.

When the mṃṃ is of the opinion that sufficient time
 has elapsed, he removes the receptacles for Phajaanaaq and
 indicates where the first hole should be dug, and in which

1

Om cannot be translated; it is a sacred exclamation
 uttered at the beginning of a prayer. For this and other
 ritual purposes this syllable has been used in ancient
 India since Vedic times.

2

The word sathāya could not be traced with certainty to a
 known Pāli or Sanskrit word. It could have been related
 to sthāya, standing (MMW, p. 1262b). A second, less
 likely possibility is a derivation from sattra. Since the
 Thais rarely interchange an unaspirated t for an aspirated
 one, the relation to sthāya was chosen for the translation.

3

Svāhāya poses some problems. It may be related to
svāhā, the religious exclamation often used as an ending to
 an invocation. However, this word is usually not declined.
 In this case the ending -āya could have been formed to
 rhyme with parivarāya and sathāya. However, it can also
 mean a gift, an oblation (MMW, p. 1284c). In this meaning
 it would fit the situation better, and for this reason it
 is thus chosen in the paraphrase.

direction the soil should be thrown. For the decision where the first hole ought to be dug, the moo has to find out the position of the big serpent (naaq)¹. In order to find out the position of the naaq, the specialist usually consults a handbook or private notes inherited from his teacher.

Two books on Thai ceremonies which we were able to consult² gave information from which Fig. 5 could be distilled. The year is divided into four equal periods, of three lunar months each. In each of these quarters, the naaq is in a different position. When the moo decides where to dig the first hole in the earth, he must imagine the naaq on the building site. He should not dig where the head of the naaq is, as that would cause the wife of the owner of the house to die soon. If the first penetration into the earth pierces the tail, it is almost equally inauspicious: the daughter of the house will kill another human being and have to flee the community. If the back of the naaq is first dug into, the owner of the house will become very ill. It is only through the belly of the naaq that there will be happiness and luck³. Following these instructions, it appears that during the months 4, 5 and 6, the first hole should be dug in the south, in the following quarter the first hole ought to be in the west, from the 10th till the 12th month the north is appropriate, whilst during the months 1, 2 and 3 the first hole should be made in the east.

1

Related to the Sanskrit or Pāli word for snake: naga. Later in this chapter the naaq is discussed in more detail (see pp. 223-224).

2

ประเพณีไทย หน้า ๒๕๕ , ประเพณีเก่าของไทย หน้า ๒๖๕.

3

ประเพณีไทย หน้า ๒๕๕ .

Fig. 5. The positions of the Naag during the year

<p style="text-align: center;">back N head W ——— E tail S belly</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Month 4, 5, 6</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">head N belly W ——— E back S tail</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Month 7, 8, 9</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">belly N tail W ——— E head S back</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Month 10, 11, 12</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">tail N back W ——— E belly S head</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Month 1, 2, 3</p>

The 7th, 8th and 9th month, which are completely unsuitable for building a house because they form the rainy season, and work in the fields demands all attention, coincide with a naag in such a position that the first hole ought to be dug in the west, an inauspicious cardinal point. Similarly, the months during which it is most auspicious to build, namely the first, second and third lunar month, are those when the naag is positioned in such a manner that the first hole has to be dug in the east, the most auspicious cardinal point.

Different rules govern the direction in which the earth coming from the holes ought to be thrown. For example, when the first hole has to be dug in the south,

the spare earth has to be deposited in a south-easterly direction¹.

Mme Porée-Maspero wrote a series of articles on Cambodian housebuilding², in which many details of great interest can be found. It appears that the practices and beliefs of the Cambodian farmers closely resemble those of the Thais. For example, the Cambodians believe in the existence of a serpent (nāk) which changes position every quarter of the year. In many details, however, Thai and Cambodian beliefs are at variance; for example, the Cambodians dig the first hole between head and belly of the serpent, whilst the spare earth is thrown in the direction of the belly³. It is not here the place, however, to make a full comparison between the customs and beliefs of the two different countries.

As soon as the first hole is dug, the other holes which will hold the supports of the house can be made. All holes will be about one metre deep. The มอจ then attaches newly lit incense to the square food container and deposits it in the hole first dug. If this occurs during daylight, the basket is placed upside down in the hole; at night an upright position is the proper one. A few drops of an alcoholic beverage and a coin can be added to this gift. On the bottom of each of the remaining excavations, an areca nut and some betel leaves suffice as offering.

1
ประเพณีเก่าของไทย หน้า ๒๖๕ .

2
E. Porée-Maspero, "Kron Pāli et Rites de la Maison", Anthropos, Vol. LVI, 1961, pp. 179-251, pp. 548-628 and pp. 883-929.

3
Ibid., p. 563 ff.

During the night all holes are covered, and the saan phientaa is bared of its white cloth, pillow and umbrella.

The following morning, at sunrise¹, the holes for the foundation of the house are uncovered and it is ascertained that no insects or lumps of earth have fallen in. A new gift can be placed in all the holes, for example, a small coin or a few leaves of which the names are associated with precious or semi-precious metals². The saan phientaa is provided again with its white cloth, pillow and umbrella, and new gifts of food are placed on it.

When the participants in such a ceremony were asked to whom the gifts were donated, the answer varied:

The moo declared that they were for Krunphaalii and Phra Phuum; an older informant interrupted with the information that Phra In (Indra) was included among the recipients of the gifts. Further questioning made it clear that no informant was completely certain of the exact number and nature of the recipients of the gifts; in general they were those powers who could have a claim on the plot of land on which the house was built³.

While the gifts to powers like Phra Phuum, Krunphaalii and Phra In, which are placed on the saan phientaa can be accompanied by some meat, such as a chicken, a duck or a pig's head, a gift to Naanmaaj should be free of meat. Naanmaaj, the female spirit who lives in the wooden posts of which the basic structure of the home is

1

The reason for the early beginning of the ceremonies on the second day has been mentioned earlier on p. 204.

2

See Ch. VI, p. 170.

3

Watsaancaaw, 15 December 1968.

made, should be placated by some fragrant gifts: candles, incense, flowers, some bananas and a small cocos-nut.

The main ritual of the second day is the tham khwan¹, or palliation of the sawεεq², the 'first' pole of the house. All the poles which will support the roof of the house are placed in a row, and the moo examines the general shape and the position of the knots in the wood of each of these pieces of timber. The pole which seems most attractive and auspicious is placed on one side, with the top part in an easterly direction. A 'second best' pole is singled out and placed next to the sawεεq. The remaining supports are ranged next to these two.

Near the top of the sawεεq, the ritual specialist fastens a shoot from a banana plant and a young sugarcane³. Ornaments normally suitable for a woman⁴ are attached to this pole, for example, a golden belt, earrings, bracelets and a piece of handwoven silken material. The 'second best' pole can also receive some ornaments, but these are of markedly less value than those of the sawεεq. All the poles which will support the roof, including the sawεεq, are given a candle and incense, some gold leaf can be

1

See Ch. III, pp. 66-67.

2

เส้าเอก .

3

Later in the day, as soon as the sawεεq is raised in its final position, these plants are set in the yard. If they thrive, it is interpreted as a good omen; if they die it bodes ill for the inhabitants of the new house. Cf. the link between a plant and a young child (Ch. III, p. 63).

4

I.e. Naanmaaj.

pressed near their top, and the moo may perfume them. Finally the ritual specialist places a lotus leaf, a square of red cloth and a white cloth on which he has drawn mystical diagrams on the top of each pole¹. Each jan is of a different design.

The builders can now put the supports in the foundation holes and fix the crossbeams on which later the floor will rest. As soon as the lower framework of the house stands firm, the sawegg is placed on its appropriate stilt, directly above where the first hole was dug. At the moment the sawegg is raised into the air, it is customary for one of the bystanders to raise his (or her) voice and chant the syllable Hoo, drawn out over a period of about five seconds, improvising on modulations and pitch, which is answered by all the other persons present by the shout: 'Hiiw'. This custom is also observed during the tham khwan of a person², and at the beginning of a procession. Its entertaining character is an important aspect, but at the same time there seems to be a more serious undertone; it is a means by which the assembled community jointly focusses the attention on the central person or object. It has possibly value as a means with which to scare away evil spirits. When this traditional chanting has been repeated several times, the construction of the building can proceed without further ceremonial.

1

If the specialist wishes to simplify the ceremony, he may provide only the sawegg with these three layers.

2

Cf. Ch. III, p. 66.

A Closer Examination of the Different Powers Placated

During the ritual of building a new home, fragrant substances and food are offered to a multitude of different powers: Naanmaaj, Phra Phuum, Phra Thoranii, Krunphaalii, Phajaanaag and Phra In. Some of these powers need little explanation for the fact that they are included in the ritual, others require considerable research.

Naanmaaj is the spirit of the wood, which can be heard crying before and during the time when a tree is felled. She may have become very unhappy during the cutting, transportation and fitting of the timber. The tham khwan ceremony of the sawεεg and the other supporting poles is intended to placate her.

The inclusion of Phra In (Indra) among the powers by one informant seems to be incidental. In Thailand, Phra In is regarded as the most important king among the gods in the daawady¹ heaven.

Phra Phuum derives his name from the word bhūmi which stands for earth, or soil. In Thailand he is often called Phra Phuumcaawthii; the epithet indicates that he is the owner of the plot of land, the guardian spirit. Phra Phuum is not conceived of as a single personification of the earth: there are said to be several different Phra Phuums, each with his own realm. While the ordinary

¹

ดาวดึงส์. This is the Thai way of pronouncing Tāvatiṃsa, the second of the six deva worlds in the Theravāda cosmology (cf. DPN, Vol. I, pp. 1002-4).

farmer usually knows only one of these Phra Phuums by name¹, a ritual specialist should be able to recite them all. Repeated questioning revealed² that there are nine different Phra Phuums. The information obtained is tabulated below (Table 4).

Table 4. Names and domains of the nine different Phra Phuums

Thai name	Thai name transliterated	Pāli or Sanskrit spelling	Realm
ชัยมงคล	Chajjamonkhon	Jayamaṅgala	houses
นครราช	Nakhonraadcha	Nagararāja	ladders, stairs, doors, fortifications
เทพน	Theepheen	Devena	domestic animals
ชัยศพน	Chajjasob	Jayaśabana	food supplies and the rice-storage hut
คนธรรพ	Khonthab	Gandharva	houses erected for festive ceremonies, bridal house
ธรรมโหรา	Thammahoraa	Dharmahorā	fields and gardens
เวทย์	Wajjathat	Vayadatta	monasteries
ธรรมิกราช	Thammikaraadcha	Dharmikarāja	vegetation
ท้าวธารา	Thaathaaraa	Dāṣadhārā	rivers and creeks

1

The Phra Phuum known to almost all farmers is the guardian of houses, Chajjamonkhon (see Table 4).

2

This information was found confirmed in ประเพณีไทย หน้า๒๘๗-๒๘๘.

Chajjamonkhon, who guards houses, is the best-known Phra Phuum in Thailand; he is the inhabitant of the saan Phra Phuum, the shrine attached to nearly every home in central Thailand¹. All nine appear to have names of Indian origin. Only in some cases can a logical connection between the name and the realm be shown. Thus the Gandharva, in later Indian epic poetry usually seen as a celestial musician and in Pāli sometimes seen as related to the conception of children, is well placed as guardian of bridal houses and houses erected especially for festive reasons. Similarly, the epithet dhārā in Dāṣadhārā seems appropriate, dhārā meaning 'stream, current'². Most names, however, cannot be traced to proper names in Indian lore.

In the fourth column of Table 4 the different realms of the Phra Phuums are mentioned. From this column it appears that the word Phuum here is not used by the Thais in its literal meaning, 'earth, soil', because there is a Phra Phuum of buildings, domestic animals, vegetation and rivers. The term Phuum is here used as 'guardian' or 'tutelary spirit'. All physical surroundings of a farmer seem to be comprised in this ninefold division.

According to a popular myth, all nine Phra Phuums are brothers, sons of King Thossaraadcha³ and his wife Santhaathuk⁴. One day this king received a visitor who

¹ In the background of Plate I (p. 113) a rather elaborate saan Phra Phuum can be seen.

² MMW, p. 515c.

³

For the possible origin of this name, see later in this chapter, p. 220.

⁴

Santhaathuk is sometimes also known as Sunanthaathuk; it may be derived from the Pāli śāntadukkha, 'sorrow appeased'. We are grateful to Professor Basham for suggesting this possible derivation.

asked him for some earth, as much as two steps. This visitor, however, was one of the former Buddhas¹. The King Thossaraadcha, not knowing that he granted it to a Buddha, thought that the wish for a few steps of land was modest indeed and assented. The Buddha, being immensely powerful, took two strides of such a size that he covered all the world. The nine sons of the king had nowhere to live and begged the Buddha to give them a place of their own. The Buddha assented and allotted to each of the sons of Thossaraadcha a realm. Chajjamonkhon obtained the guardianship of all homes. Thus it is that when a person builds a house, he must pay obeisance to Chajjamonkhon².

This myth is doubtless derived from the famous story in which Viṣṇu, in the form of a dwarf, dispossesses the demon Bali of most of his realm, leaving Bali only the underworld Pātāla.

The book Prapheeni Thai records a similar myth, from which some relevant passages are translated here:

Once there was a member of the ruling class, named Thossaraadcha, who was married to Sunanthaathuk³ and who reigned in Krunphaalii. He had nine sons. When he was of ripe age, he divided his kingdom as follows: Chajjamonkhon obtained the houses and their yards,

1

In Theravāda Buddhism usually five Buddhas previous to Siddhārtha Gautama are known, with their Pāli names: Vipassin, Sikhī, Kakusandha, Konagamuni and Kassapa. Only the latter three were known to the learned informants of Watsaancaaw. Landon also mentions only the last three among the previous Buddhas (Landon, Siam in Transition, p. 186).

2

Recorded from Somkhuon Sutticaj, 15 November 1968.

3

See supra, p. 217, footnote 4.

Nagararaadcha inherited doors, fortifications, stockades, stairs and ladders, Theepheen received different animals, Chajjasob received food storage and the rice-storage hut, Khonthab received buildings for ceremonies and bridal houses, Thammahoraa obtained orchards and ricefields, Wajjathat inherited monasteries and other honoured places, Dhammikaraadcha inherited vegetation and Thaathaaraa, finally, obtained the creeks, lagoons, rivers and streams.

Later, the Lord of Kruṅphaalii did not live in righteousness and this caused much unhappiness among the people. The awataara¹ of Phra Naraaj² came down to earth in the form of a small Brahman who came to ask from the Lord of Kruṅphaalii a plot of land, only three steps wide, so that he could perform a ceremony. The Lord of Kruṅphaalii did not hesitate, gave his permission and to solemnize this he poured uthakatharaa³...

... As soon as the water flowed, Phra Naraaj changed himself into Naaraaj with four heads, and he started to step. With a single stride the whole earth was covered, and the Lord of Kruṅphaalii had to leave and live in a forest in the Himaphaan⁴. When he set out for this remote region he felt extremely sad and returned to beg for mercy. Phra Naaraaj told him as solace: 'From now on, all humans ought to offer some food as beginning of their ceremonies to Phra Phuum, because he was the original owner of the earth. When this offer is performed, there will be happiness...'⁵

1

Sanskrit: avatāra, an incarnation of a deity on earth, used particularly in relation to Viṣṇu (MMW, p. 99a).

2

Sanskrit: Nārāyaṇa. In Thailand this name is commonly used to indicate Viṣṇu.

3

Sanskrit: udakadhārā. Udaka is a ceremonial water-offering (MMW, p. 183b), whilst dhārā is a common word for stream or flow. This seems closely related to the present-day Thai custom of kruadnaam (cf. Ch. V, pp.

4

Sanskrit: Himavānt, lit. having frost or snow, a name often used for the Himālayas.

5

ประเทศไทย หน้า ๒๘๗-๒๘๘ .

While this myth confirms beyond doubt that the Thais have access to the story of Viṣṇu's deception of the daitya Bali, a story known in Indian mythology since Vedic times¹, it also provides a clue to the problem why the name Kruṅphaalii was mentioned in an invocation before building a house. In the Indian prototype it is the daitya Bali who is deceived by Viṣṇu, in the Thai version recorded above, it is Thossaraadcha, the King of Kruṅphaalii, who is tricked.

The name Thossaraadcha can be traced to daitya rāja, whilst the kingdom of Kruṅphaalii probably derives its name from Bali. The reason why the daitya Bali became in the Thai version the daitya king of the city Bali cannot be established with certainty. It is possible that a prefix before the name Bali was needed to distinguish between the proper name Bali and the word bali as an oblation, as such known in the Thai language. Possibly the mistake originated in Cambodia where Bali is called Kròn Pāli².

Whatever the origin of the confusion between Bali and Kruṅphaalii may be, it appears certain that in the Thai version, Thossaraadcha is the owner of Kruṅphaalii, which comprises the whole earth. He forfeited his possessions, and his heirs, the different Phra Phuums, ought to be remembered in ritual at the appropriate times.

Another name frequently encountered in the ritual of building a house is Thoranii. This word is derived from the Sanskrit dharanī, meaning earth, soil, ground³. In

1

J. Gonda, Aspects of Early Visnuism, 1969, pp. 145-146.

2

Porée-Maspero, op. cit., passim.

3

MMW, p. 510b.

Thailand the word Thoranii is often used with the prefix Phra or mεε (mother). Mεε Thoranii is known to many villagers in several different contexts. Earlier in this thesis a case of love magic was recorded in which, whilst rubbing some soil over the head, she was invoked to help a man win the favour of a particular girl¹.

Many villagers hear of mεε Thoranii in connection with the story of the life of the Buddha. Before the Lord Buddha completed his awakening, he was assailed by Māra and his army. The Buddha is often depicted in the position of 'calling the earth to witness' (bhūmisparśamudrā), and mεε Thoranii as the personification of the earth appears beneath the Buddha, in the form of a beautiful lady who wrings water from her tresses of hair in such quantities that Māra's army drowns. Many monasteries possess a series of 32 pictures of the life of the Buddha, and the scene which depicts Thoranii is usually Plate 14 of this series.

Plate 25 of this same series of the life of the Buddha is also connected with Phra Thoranii, but this time in the role of the punisher of the jealous and evil Devadatta. After he had made attempts on the life of the Buddha, and tried to cause dissent in the Samgha, Phra Thoranii opened up and the earth swallowed him. The picture usually shows Devadatta, obviously startled, falling into a crack in the surface of the earth.

1

Ch. VI, p. 175.

Closely connected with the story of Devadatta's punishment is the custom of thoraniisaan¹, the appeasing of the earth. The thoraniisaan ceremony is held in order to prevent the earth from opening up under a person's feet, namely when something deeply embarrassing has happened to that person. Occasions which warrant an appeasing ceremony are: the birth of a child, which may cause both the mother and the midwife to hold such a ceremony; the occurrence of a very threatening omen, such as when a vulture descends on the roof of a house; the occurrence of a very unlucky event: for example, if a monk drops his begging bowl by accident in front of a house, the owner of the house should have the ceremony held; the occurrence of a disgraceful event: if a man, for example, falls head down in a dung heap, he should avert further mishap by purifying himself through the thoraniisaan ritual. The ceremony itself consists of the sacralization of a bowl of water with very intensive and difficult chanting from a chapter of monks, and the rinsing of the object or person with this purifying liquid².

The distinction between Phra Phuum and Phra Thoranii is therefore greater than their respective names would suggest. Phra Phuum is a legendary power who has a claim on a certain part of the environment, and the best-known Phra Phuum is conceived of as a tutelary spirit of houses. Phra Thoranii, on the other hand, is the personification of

1
 धरणीसंत . Sanskrit: dharanī śānti.

2
 Unfortunately the evidence for this ceremony rests purely on hearsay; this is probably related to the fact that it occurs only seldom and in extremely embarrassing circumstances.

the earth itself. Each of these powers, therefore, is placated in its own right.

A last power encountered in the building ritual is the Phajaanaaq, or naag¹, the serpent who is given food at every place where a hole will be dug in the earth and whose 'belly' has to be pierced first for digging the first hole. The idea of a chthonic serpent is widespread in Asia. In the thirteenth century A.D., the inhabitants of Cambodia believed in the spirit of a nine-headed snake, the owner of the soil of the whole kingdom². In Chinese geomancy, the principle of a dragon, visible in the outlines of mountains and hills, is considered before selecting a place to build a house³.

However, that the Thai customs regarding the naag have directly or indirectly been derived from India becomes most likely when reading Eliade's account:

In India, just before a house is built, the astrologer will decide which foundation stone must be laid upon the head of the serpent upholding the world. The master mason sticks a stake into the appointed spot, so as to 'fasten down' the head of the earth-serpent firmly, and so avoid earthquakes.⁴

1

नगा . In Sanskrit and Pāli: nāga.

2

P. Pelliot, Mémoires sur les Coutumes du Cambodge, 1902, p. 23.

3

This aspect of geomancy is discussed, for example, in Eitel's Principles of the Natural Science of the Chinese, Hong Kong and London: Trübner, 1873, pp. 48-54.

4

Mircea Eliade, Patterns in Comparative Religion, 1958, p. 380.

Other ritual details which indicate a link between ancient Indian and modern Thai housebuilding ceremonies can be found in the Grhya sūtras. To illustrate this, a quotation from a translation of the beginning of the fourth kāṇḍika of the third kāṇḍa of the Pāraskara Grhya sūtra is given:

1. Now the building of the house.
2. Let him have his house built on an auspicious day.
3. Into the pits (in which the posts shall be erected) he pours an oblation with (the words), 'To the steady one, the earth-demon, svāhā!'
4. He erects the post.¹

In the elementary ceremony, placation of religious actors is foremost, but there the non-human powers are not differentiated. During the elaborate rituals, a distinction is made between the different powers who may have a claim on the plot of land or be closely associated with the house: the spirit who lives in the timber, the guardian spirit of the house, the daiṭya Bali, the chthonic serpent and the personification of the earth itself.

During the elaborate ceremonies, two ritual baskets are used: a triangular container on the saan phienṭaa and a square one which is deposited in a foundation hole. Each of these containers usually possesses nine compartments in which different items of food can be placed. Similar receptacles are used in the housebuilding ritual of rural Cambodia, and Mme Porée-Maspero provides an illustration of one of them².

1

Translation by Hermann Oldenberg, SBE, Vol. XXIX, p. 345.

2

Porée-Maspero, op. cit., Plate V, opposite page 584.

Again, it is possible to relate the use of these ritual baskets to ancient Indian customs. Wales describes the Ceylonese foundation deposit box, which usually comprises nine compartments, and is filled with paraphernalia to ensure by magical means that the building has the properties of a microcosm¹. Later he refers to the placing of these boxes as: 'the usual custom when Hindu shrines were built'². The use of a multi-compartmented food container in the elaborate housebuilding ritual of the Thais may therefore be regarded as another indication of the striking parallels between the customs of ancient India and rural Thailand.

Avoiding Inauspiciousness

While choosing building materials, preparing the site and during the ritual of housebuilding, many actions should be avoided because they are apamonkhon³, inauspicious. If these recommendations are not followed, automatically some harm will come to the inhabitants of the future house. If, for example, a house is inauspiciously orientated, eye disease is believed to strike its inhabitants. A possible reason for this belief can be seen in the idea that a wrongly orientated home offends the sun (khwaan taawan)⁴. The sun, popularly called tawan, derives its name probably

1

Wales, Dvāravatī, p. 56.

2

Wales, ibid., p. 57.

3

อปมงคล . Sanskrit: apamaṅgala.

4

ชาวางตะวัน .

from the words taa and wan¹, meaning 'the eye of the day'². Being struck with eye disease seems a punishment consequent on offending the 'eye of the day'. Usually, however, the harmful effects of breaking such a recommendation are vague and unspecific: bad luck will occur, somebody in the house may suffer from nightmares.

When analysing specific rules on the avoidance of inauspicious behaviour, different aspects can be stressed. Some prescriptions provide clues concerning the evaluation of different directions and different parts of the body. The ordering of objects, persons and activities in a horizontal and vertical plane often indicates such evaluation.

Some recommendations for avoiding that which is apamonkhon can be based on associations of semantic character. An example of such avoidance is the case where a type of wood is not used as timber, primarily because the name evokes the thought of violent death³. Similarly, the inauspiciousness of the western direction is affirmed in the ears of the Thais through reference to its common name: tawantog⁴, 'sunfall'⁵.

1
ตาวัน (ตา-วัน).

2
TSD, p. 192a.

3
Supra, p. 203.

4
ตะวันตก .

5
The opposite also occurs. Some Thai regard Friday as auspicious, because the name of the day, derived from the Sanskrit name for the planet Venus, sukra (in Thai: ศุกร) is pronounced similarly to the Thai word for happiness, derived from the Sanskrit or Pāli sukha.

Other rules seem primarily related to a body of practical knowledge. When it is said that building a house is inauspicious from the sixth until the twelfth lunar month, this can be correlated with the fact that the rainy season falls within this period and that neighbouring farmers are too busy to come to help with the construction during these months. Removing mounds and tree trunks from the building site may displace jealous spirits, but at the same time it is technically sound to build on a smooth, level surface. Wood that is considered inauspicious for construction often proves to be that which makes poor timber. Elements of practical wisdom, acquired in the past through trial and error, are thus handed down with religious validation.

Whether an action is apamonkhon because of an ominous cardinal direction, through association with an unfortunate word or as the result of misfortunes in the dim past, all instances share this characteristic: if such a prescription is broken it bodes ill, it will sooner or later result in misfortune.

The great number of rules surrounding the erection of a house is an indication of the importance attached to the period of building. A mistake, an impolite act to any of the non-human powers can jeopardize the happiness of all the inhabitants of the new house.

CHAPTER VIII

THE PRECEPTS AND RITUAL

The Five Precepts¹

The first mention of the five precepts in Buddhism (in Pāli: pañca sikkhāpadāni or pañca sīlāni) is found in the canonical texts of the early Buddhist tradition².

Originally these precepts seem to have been:

a sort of preliminary condition to any higher development after conforming to the teaching of the Buddha (saraṇaṃ gamana) and as such often mentioned when a new follower is 'officially' installed...³

When Buddhism spread over various regions outside India, the use of the pañca sīlāni may well have diversified, depending on the situation of Buddhism in the different local contexts. In areas where Buddhism co-existed and competed with other religious disciplines, the link between the five precepts and official installation could have remained or have become even more pronounced. In China, for example, up to the present time, the five precepts are taken as a solemn lay ordination⁴. In regions where

1

An earlier version of the discussion of the pañca sīlāni was presented as a paper during the 28th International Congress of Orientalists on 11 January 1971, under the title: "The Meaning of Pañcasīla in Rural Thailand".

2

For example Majjhima-nikāya I, 345; I, 521; Samyutta-nikāya II, 68; II, 167; Aṅguttara-nikāya IV, 10, 97.

3

PED, p. 712.

4

Welch, The Practice of Chinese Buddhism, pp. 361-365.

Buddhism has been the state religion for many centuries, such as Thailand, asking for the five precepts may well have obtained a function different from the installation into the Buddhist faith. Farmers of Watsaancaaw are not installed in Buddhism; they are born as Buddhists.

The ritual of asking to observe the five precepts (khoo sin haa)¹ is a common event in rural Thailand. 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, at the beginning of each new ceremony. Whenever a chapter of monks and a group of laymen assemble for a religious service, the five precepts can be given.

The order of events at the commencement of the service seldom varies. At the outset, before the monks arrive, laymen prepare the dais on which the members of the Samgha will sit, by placing an image of the Buddha at one end of the room, and arranging mats and cushions in a single file on the left side of the image. When the monks enter, senior monks will sit nearest to the statue of the Buddha, junior monks further away. Where possible² they will be

1 ขอบศีล๕

2

If there is not sufficient space for all monks to sit in a single row, they will have to sit two or more files deep. In these circumstances the seniority rule is maintained only for the first row, and those behind will sit wherever there is space.

seated in a single row, facing the laymen. As soon as the elders among the laymen feel that the ceremony should begin, a spokesman will call everyone to attention by asking three times in Pāli in a clear voice:

Mayaṃ bhante viṣuṃ viṣuṃ rakkaṇatthāya tisaraṇena
saha pañca sīlāni yācāma¹.

Bareau, writing about Cambodian religious practices, translates this formula as:

O vénérables, nous demandons chacun pour soi les cinq préceptes avec le triple refuge dans un but de protection².

The three words viṣuṃ viṣuṃ rakkaṇatthāya are therefore translated as: 'Each person for himself, in order to obtain protection'. Presently, after considering some Thai data, an alternative translation of these words will be suggested.

In central Thailand, the five precepts can also be asked for with the formula:

Mayaṃ bhante tisaraṇena saha pañca sīlāni yācāma³.

1

If only one layman is present to receive the precepts, the formula is changed to the singular: mayāṃ is changed to ahaṃ, and yācāma to yācāmi.

2

André Bareau, "Les Idées sous-jacentes aux pratiques cultuelles bouddhiques dans le Cambodge actuel", Beiträge zur Geistesgeschichte Indiens (ed. by G. Oberhammer), WZKSA, Vol. XII/XIII, 1968/1969, p. 29.

3

Similar to the formula above, if only one layman is present, this formula can be changed to the singular. The formula seems to be often used in municipal centres; it is the only one for asking for the five precepts, for example, in หนังสือสวดมนต์แปล หน้า๘๘.

This second formula differs from the first one mentioned only in that it omits the words visum visum rakkhanatthāya. At first sight it would be expected that this more compact formula should be used in preference to the first formula, as it is easier to memorize. However, it appears that the second formula is only seldom used in rural Thailand. On one occasion¹, when a lay spokesman accidentally proceeded to ask for the precepts with the second formula, a senior monk interrupted him and made him recite the first formula. According to this monk², the difference between the two formulae is substantial. After receiving the five precepts by way of the formula with visum visum rakkhanatthāya, there will come a moment when a layman who received them will break a precept. If that happens, he retains still those precepts which he has not (yet) broken; if he breaks another precept, only three remain, etc. However, if the five precepts are taken without the words visum visum rakkhanatthāya, this leaves a person in circumstances where, if one precept is broken, all five are broken automatically.

The reason why the second formula should be avoided is therefore because it is believed that the promise resulting from the second formula is much more difficult to uphold than that resulting from the first. Therefore the second formula should be reserved for exceptional circumstances, when all laymen agree that a solemn promise is appropriate, for example, on the day that the kathin robes are presented³.

1

7 July 1968, Watkuṅkrathin.

2

The Venerable Phliig, Watsaancaaw.

3

See Ch. IX, pp. 296-299.

Considering the Thai interpretation of the difference between the two methods of asking for the five precepts, a re-examination of the words visum visum rakkhanatthāya is required. The words visum visum mean 'each on his own', but can also be translated by: 'one by one, separately'¹; and rakkhana has, apart from the meaning 'keeping, protection, guarding', also a second meaning: 'observance (especially with relation to the sīla)'². 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 more closely with the beliefs of the Thais. It would be interesting to know whether this alternative translation would also be more appropriate in other regions where the formula with visum visum rakkhanatthāya is used, such as, for example, in Cambodia.

In answer to either formula, one of the senior monks will recite the sentence: Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammā sambuddhassa³ three times. This is followed by the Three Refuges, repeated three times. After each sentence the bhikkhu pauses in order that the lay community may repeat it after him. When the Three Refuges have been repeated for the third time, the five precepts are prompted by the same monk:

1

PED, p. 640b.

2

PED, p. 560b. For a comparison with Sanskrit, see viśva (MMW, p. 992c-993c) and rakṣanārtham (MMW, p. 860a).

3

This famous sentence is often chanted as the opening sentence of a chanting ceremony, and can be translated as: 'Reverence to the Lord who is worthy and fully awakened'.

pāṇātipātā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi
 adinnādānā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi
 kāmesu micchācārā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi
 musāvādā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi
 surāmerayamajjapamādaṭṭhānā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ
 samādiyāmi

They can be translated¹ as:

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

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

I undertake (to observe) the rule of abstinence from base conduct in sensuous pleasures.

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.

The laymen sit in a polite fashion with the hands joined in front of the chest, the feet folded behind. During this interplay between the one senior monk and all² laymen, the other monks are not involved. They can smoke or softly talk to each other in obvious display that this is a matter which does not concern monks who, after all, are committed to many more precepts than the five being given. When the fifth precept has been prompted and

1

Whilst a translation like: 'I refrain from killing, stealing, adultery, lying and alcohol' may sound less cumbersome than the translation given here, in the course of this chapter it becomes clear that the subtle differences between, for example, 'killing' and 'taking life' are of importance to the Thais.

2

Sometimes not all laymen present are involved, for example when some of the laymen already adhere to the eight precepts.

repeated, the bhikkhu who presides over this part of the ceremony solemnly recites the following Pāli words, while all laymen show great attention:

imāni pañca sikkāpadāni sīlena sugatiṃ yanti sīlena
bhogasampadā sīlena nibbutiṃ yanti, tasmā sīlaṃ
visodhaye¹

While these words are proclaimed, some laymen will softly murmur some Pāli formulae which are known to be auspicious, others will remain quiet. One informant explained that this was the moment during which he said to himself for how long he would try to observe the precepts, 'for a few minutes, a few hours or even longer'². When the last syllable of the Pāli formula is recited all laymen bow their heads and raise their joined hands to their forehead.

From this moment onwards, when the laymen have committed themselves to the five vows, the ceremony can proceed, whether it be a sermon, a consecration of water or any other religious activity which requires the presence of both monks and laymen.

From the discussion of the occasions when and the manner in which the pañcasīlāni are given by the monks and received by the laymen, it appears that a function of the

1

Although many Thais do not understand the exact meaning of these words, it is of interest to record a translation: 'These five precepts lead, with proper behaviour, to bliss, with proper behaviour to wealth and success, they lead with proper behaviour to happiness; therefore I will purify my behaviour.'

2

Somkhuan Sutticaj, 3 November 1968.

ritual of promising to adhere to the five precepts is that of the preparation of the laymen for the ceremony which follows immediately afterwards. Receiving the five precepts can thus be seen as a ritual cleansing, a purification which enables the laymen to receive the benefits of the ceremony in a proper manner.

While the ritual of promising to adhere to the pañcasīlāni appears to function in a manner intended to bring the laymen temporarily out of the secular world, it seems justified to ask whether the Thai farmers know the portent of their promise to adhere to these rules. In theory, the people could utter Pāli sentences without realizing 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 learn in elementary school the meaning of each precept, but in general they 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 Samgha, can usually give a coherent picture of the precepts. Among the old people, those who consider themselves to be devout, especially those who from time to time adhere to the eight precepts¹, can give elaborate exegetical details. The views of these older

1

Later in this chapter when the eight precepts are analysed, the circumstances in which groups of older people exchange exegetical details about precepts are discussed, infra, p. 259.

people¹ on the subject of the five precepts can be summarized as follows:

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

Any form of stealing, whether it be taking goods against the wish of the rightful owner, 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 not only forbids the obvious breaches of proper conduct, like adultery, incest and rape, but also 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, apart from the fourth precept, also the second rule, and flirting with a woman who is married to somebody else involves the third and the fourth precept.

The last of the pañcasīlāni forbids the use of alcoholic beverages and all other stupefying substances like opium and drugs, unless taken for medicinal purposes.

1

This summary is the result of collecting the views of many people during periods of fieldwork in Thailand. These findings are borne out by the views of H.R.H. Prince Vajirañāṇavarorasa in Five Precepts and Five Ennoblers, 1963, passim.

A well-known story illustrates the evils of the fifth precept, and at the same time throws light upon the attitudes towards the five precepts 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, just for once. The good man thought as follows: 'The first precept cannot be broken by me, as I have great compassion for all beings. With regard to stealing, how could I take what is not mine, it would hurt the feelings of the rightful owner. The third precept cannot be broken by me, it 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 myself, only my own brain gets befuddled; so, if I have to break a precept I will 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 drinking spree. He staggered towards her and tried to rape her. When her husband came to help her, the 'good man' denied that he had behaved improperly. A fight ensued in which the husband was killed. In order to escape punishment our 'good man' had to flee and became a robber. The breaking of the fifth precept thus led to the breaking of all five.¹

While it can be concluded that the people in rural Thailand are usually well aware of the portent of the promise to adhere to the five precepts, the question immediately arising is, whether the Thais try to behave according to their vows, that is, whether the pañcasīlāni exercise a marked influence on Thai behaviour.

1

Told by Somkhuan Sutticaj, January 1968.

A crime like murder, armed robbery or rape certainly involves breaking a precept. If it were possible to prove that crimes involving breaking one or more of the precepts occur less among Buddhists than among non-Buddhists, then this could be an indication that observance of the five precepts markedly influences behaviour. Lack of reliable statistical data regarding crime in rural areas precludes such a line of investigation. Moreover, even if such data were available, it would be very difficult to assess to what extent people refrain from committing a crime through fear of sanctions, like the enforcement of the law, and to what extent abstaining from crime is caused by the fear of breaking a precept. It is necessary, therefore, to investigate other aspects of the situation.

In order to observe whether people in rural Thailand try to adhere to the five precepts, behaviour which unquestionably implies breaking a precept, but which does not automatically carry punishment by law, can be investigated. Under such behaviour fall, for example: gossip, mild deceit, drinking alcoholic beverages and killing animals.

A community without gossip is almost beyond imagination. Talking about other people, especially about aspects which these others would like to remain generally unknown, is a habit in which many people frequently indulge. On no occasion was it noticed in rural Thailand that a layman refrained from talking about other laymen because he was afraid of breaking one of the five precepts. It would have been unfortunate for the researcher if gossip had not been available to provide him with illuminating case histories of misconduct. Although the conduct of monks

can be the subject of conversation, people generally refrained from discussing the evil deeds of a bhikkhu. This restraint, however, seems to be part of the polite behaviour of the ritually inferior towards the ritually superior.

Mild forms of deceit are also part of daily life. A joke played upon an unsuspecting victim is appreciated by all (except perhaps by the victim), and whenever goods are sold or traded for other goods, some kind of deceit is almost unavoidable in order to make a profit. These mild forms of deceit are openly engaged upon, and when questioned it is readily admitted that such behaviour contravenes a precept.

Alcoholic beverages are sold openly, and can be consumed in all cafes and restaurants. Drunken people are no rare sight. Unless a guest has medical grounds upon which to appeal, it would be insulting to the host if he declined to share in a proffered drink. Making the excuse that one tries to observe the precepts would be in bad taste indeed. During some of the big community ceremonies, liquor is drunk by a great many people within the precincts of a monastery, and many a procession would not be so gay and spontaneous without the stimulant of intoxicating beverages. In the examples above, Thai people do not seem intent upon keeping the precepts.

Behaviour towards killing animals, however, reveals some different angles. Mosquitos are often treated mercilessly, and the farmer who can afford insecticide will not hesitate to spray a crop, thus killing thousands of small living creatures. However, behaviour with regard to the killing of animals which are bigger than insects is

often accompanied by marked embarrassment. A squirrel will be trapped and killed because it devours the best fruit, a poisonous snake will be beaten to death, rats are killed mercilessly, but the careful observer will notice that many farmers are uneasy about these acts of violence. Sometimes a farmer will avoid the act of chopping a fish to death by letting it die out of the water, or by ordering a servant to kill it. When fish or a chicken has to be killed for domestic consumption, it will be done out of sight, outside the house so that even the spirits of the ancestors cannot see this act.

On one occasion¹ when an old man struck up a conversation with a monk, an interesting situation developed. Upon being asked how he made a living, the old man replied: 'I work on the water.' The monk mistakenly thought that the old man was a sailor, and consequently asked whether he belonged to the navy or worked on a merchant vessel. The old man became very embarrassed and explained that he was a fisherman, and had avoided saying so because it was 'not nice to tell a monk that you live by killing fish'².

Animals bigger than chickens, like pigs and buffaloes, are usually not slaughtered by farmers. Sometimes, when buffaloes or oxen are too old to work, they are permitted to remain on the farm until they die a natural death, but often these large animals are sold to professional

1

Watsaancaaw, September 1968.

2

The evasion may not have been used in conversation with other monks. Probably the fact that the monk in question was a Westerner is relevant in this case. However, it remains that, when the man wanted to be extra polite, he used a euphemism to describe the profession of fisherman.

butchers. Most farmers shudder to think about the store of bad karma a butcher accumulates during his lifetime.

With regard to the question of whether or not Thai people seem intent upon trying to avoid breaking a precept, it must therefore be concluded that this appears to be the case only with regard to the first precept, the vow to abstain from destroying life, and then only in the case of animals bigger than insects. Other acts, which are not forbidden by law but obviously imply breaking a precept, are freely engaged upon. The attitude seems to be that these matters are incompatible with normal daily life and that people should not be sanctimonious.

The five precepts can be acted upon or ignored as is expedient. There are Buddhist laymen in Thailand who commit themselves fully to the pañcasīlāni. There are people, for example, who take a solemn oath (patijaan)¹ to observe the five precepts. Such people are assured of an exceptionally good rebirth and all devout farmers would gladly follow their example if they were able to do so. However, farmers cannot try to imitate such people because, in order to follow the precepts fully, a person ought to be so wealthy that he can shelter himself from society, so that no impure action or thought will reach him. Realistically, the farmer knows that within a few hours after receiving the five precepts, some of them will be broken. This realization may well be a reason for the preference in rural areas to receive them with visum visum rakghanatthāya in the formula when asking for the five precepts.

¹ ปลูกจวน .

Other people who take great pains to follow the five precepts are the female religious virtuosi, who dress in white robes, shave their hair and live a secluded life in the shadow of a monastery¹. Again, a woman must be rather wealthy to be able to afford such a retreat from society.

The marked exception in the easy-going attitude toward minor offences against the five precepts is the attitude towards killing animals bigger than insects. In the light of the argument above, it can be inferred that it is not for fear of breaking a precept that people refrain from killing the bigger animals as much as possible. After all, there is no apparent reluctance to break other precepts. The main reason why the killing of animals is surrounded with manifestations of feelings of guilt seems to lie in the belief in the karmic repercussions of the act of killing. The sanctions are clearly outlined in Buddhist lore, and they can hardly be ignored. The popular Jātaka stories abound with examples of extreme suffering which is ascribed to the fact that the afflicted person had in a former life killed an animal. The axioms regarding rebirth, which do not exclude the possibility that a human can be reborn in the form of a chicken, a dog, an ox, etc., certainly add to the uneasiness with regard to the act of killing animals of that size.

Moreover, most adult Thais are aware of the story of the Venerable bhikkhu Mālaya, the legendary monk who, on the way to visit Indra in the Tāvatiṃsa heaven, had the

1

The institution of the female religious virtuosi is discussed in more detail in Ch. X, pp. 316-320.

opportunity to inspect different kinds of hells¹. The tale of the adventures of Mālaya is sometimes recited as part of the elaborate death ritual. Many Thais have seen pictures of the Venerable Mālaya in their monastery. The details of the horrors seen by this monk in the seven hells are a recurrent theme in monastic art. One of the seven is reserved solely for those who have killed animals, and the picture dealing with this hell usually shows people suffering agonizing torture, while their heads resemble those of buffaloes, cats, dogs, chickens, ducks, etc.

It is plausible, therefore, that fear of karmic ill-effects, rather than fear of breaking a precept, is responsible for the attitudes towards the first precept. The fact that farmers are often obliged to kill animals as part of their circumstances in rural areas can be seen as a source of guilt feelings. There are farmers who feel that they will not be able to escape their unfortunate lot, and that they will probably not be reborn in better circumstances because of their way of life, which includes killing animals.

While the five precepts were originally probably intended to be given to a layman in order to initiate him into the Buddhist faith, the initiation aspect was bound to become less important² in a country like Thailand where for

1

The theme of the visit of a mortal to the heaven of Indra is quite common in Buddhist literature (cf. DPN, Vol. II, p. 963). A monk with the name Mālaya could not be traced outside Thailand in Buddhist literature, however. In the Thai tradition, this monk travels by his own power, not driven in a chariot like most other people invited to visit Indra.

2

There is an instant where the initiation aspect of the ritual of asking for the five precepts is recognizable. This is the moment immediately after a man has left the Samgha (see Ch. VI, p. 172).

many centuries most people were born in the Buddhist faith. It has been observed that the ritual of asking for the five precepts usually occurs at the commencement of a ceremony when a group of monks and a group of laymen assemble. The ritual seems to contain many signs which point to the idea that it can be interpreted as a rite of purification, performed to prepare the laymen for the ceremony at hand.

Exegetical details show clearly that each precept is interpreted as widely as possible. The emphasis on the idea that the five precepts are very difficult and hard to follow corresponds with a stress on the sacredness of the moment of taking the promise to adhere to these precepts; it can be seen as a function accentuating the cleansing qualities of the ritual.

While the scope and meaning of the pañcasīlāni are aggrandized for ritual purposes, the five precepts cannot retain much practical meaning for daily non-ceremonial life. Therefore, statements that the five precepts are 'the minimum duties of a householder'¹, or 'the moral code of Buddhism'², while true in theory, are not applicable to rural Thailand without major modifications.

The Eight Precepts

Every wanphra at sunrise, some elderly people leave their homes intending to adhere to the eight precepts for a period of one day and one night. They proceed toward the

1

Edward Conze, Buddhism, Its Essence and Development, 1951, p. 86.

2

Christmas Humphreys, Buddhism, 1962, p. 73.

monastery, bringing a day's supply of areca nuts and betel leaves, a quantity of incense sticks, several candles, a small amount of money, some food for the monks, other provisions intended for their own consumption and sometimes a mosquito net. After they have offered their contribution to the meal of the monks, these laymen gather in the bood. In this building they spread mats on the floor and arrange to sit in such a manner that they face the main Buddha image. The men sit in front of the women, with their phaakhawmaa¹ arranged over the left shoulder as befits a solemn occasion. One of the men is chosen² to lead these laymen during the ritual, which begins with the lighting of candles and incense by all present.

If the period of the year happens to be outside the rainy season, the ritual of taking the eight precepts is devoid of most elaborations and the sequence of events is as follows: under the guidance of the leader, Pāli verses are chanted which are identical with some of the morning chants of the monks, and following these suttas the laymen often chant a Thai version of the same texts. When the vernacular tongue is used, a style of chanting is chosen which is quite different from that in which Pāli is recited. Meanwhile the monks have terminated their first morning

1

See Ch. VII, p. 206, footnote 1. Only men wear this ceremonial garment.

2

When one of the men present is superior to all others in knowledge of ceremonial and in age, he automatically takes the role of leader in this ritual. When several candidates are present, the leadership is often shared. For example, one man will lead the Pāli chanting, another the singing in Thai, while a third can ask for the eight precepts.

meal, and a senior monk enters the bood, prostrates himself three times before the Buddha image and sits on the dais reserved for members of the Samgha, facing the laymen. When the monk is properly seated, the spokesman for the laity formulates his request:

mayam bhante tisanenena saha atthanga samannagata
uposatha yacama¹

The words atthanga samannagata uposatha are those with which the eight precepts are usually indicated in the canon², and the formula can therefore be translated as:

Sir, we ask for the Three Refuges with the eight precepts.

The bhikkhu then prompts the preliminary sentences, identical with those used before giving the five precepts³. When the time arrives for the eight precepts to be prompted, he recites solemnly the following sentences:

Panātipātā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi
Adinnādānā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi
Abrahmacariyā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi
Musāvādā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi
Surāmerayamajjapamādaṭṭhānā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ
samādiyāmi
Vikālabhojana veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi

1

When only one layman is present to receive the precepts, the formula is changed from plural to singular; mayam changes to aham and yacama to yacāmi.

2

PED, p. 712b-713a.

3

Supra, p. 230.

Naccagītavāditavisūkadassanā mālāgandhavilepanadhāraṇa-
maṇḍanavibhūsanatṭhānā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi
Uccāsayanā mahāsayanā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi
Imaṃ aṭṭhanga samannāgataṃ buddhapaññataṃ uposathaṃ
imañca rattiṃ imañca divasaṃ sammadeva abhirakkhitu
samādiyāmi.

Most laymen who participate in this ritual are aware
of the exact translation of these sentences:

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

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

I undertake (to observe) the rule of abstinence from
unchastity

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

I undertake (to observe) the rule of abstinence from
taking food at the wrong time

I undertake (to observe) the rule of abstinence from
dancing, music, visiting shows, flowers, make-up,
the wearing of ornaments and decorations

I undertake (to observe) the rule of abstinence from
a tall, high sleeping place

I undertake to observe in harmony during this day and
this night these eight precepts which are designed by
the wisdom of the Buddha.

The final, solemnizing sentence is not repeated by the
laymen:

imāni aṭṭhasikkhāpadāni uposatha sīlavasena
sādhukam katvā appamādena rakkhitappāni sīlena

sugatiṃ yanti sīlena bhogasampadā sīlena nibbutiṃ
yanti tasmā sīlaṃ visodhaye¹.

The laymen each donate a small amount of money² and hand this gift to their leader. He counts the total, places it on a tray together with some flowers, incense and candles, and presents the tray to the monk with a formula in Thai, stating that this amount of money has been collected so that this bhikkhu can buy a new robe or a new begging bowl³. The monk does not touch the money, but indicates his acceptance by chanting some Pāli blessings. Later in the day one of the laymen hands over this money to the monk in question in the privacy of that bhikkhu's cell. From the moment the Pāli blessings have been recited, the ritual of taking the eight vows has terminated,

1

Translated: 'Having performed these eight precepts with controlled behaviour, which are to be kept with vigilance; they lead with good behaviour to bliss, with good behaviour to wealth and success, they lead with good behaviour to happiness, therefore I will purify my behaviour.'

2

In Watsaancaaw, the usual amount offered for this purpose varied between one salyn and one baht per person.

3

This manner of presenting does not mean that the monk will be restricted in the methods in which he can spend the money. The monk spends it as he wishes and all laymen are aware of this. The formula probably stems from an interpretation of the eighth to the tenth of the nissaggiyā pācittiyā rules of the Pātimokkha, in which mention is made of householders who have collected money to purchase a robe for a bhikkhu. Although these rules are not intended to encourage laymen to present money (strictly, monks are not allowed to accept money), they can have been interpreted to mean that in these circumstances, when money is presented for a good cause, it is not in disaccord with the Vinaya.

and from this moment the men can be called ubaasok¹; the women are often known by the title ubaasikaa². The older people retain these titles until the following morning, when automatically they are released from their undertakings.

The monk who prompted the precepts often remains for a while in the bood, discussing religious subjects with the people in a relaxed manner until it is time to partake of the last meal of the day. While the monks eat the second morning meal, the ubaasok and ubaasikaa also use this last opportunity to take solid food. The laymen can eat in any place they choose, but when they select the building where the members of the Samgha take their meal, they must sit in a position lower than that of the monks. All afternoon the laymen tend to stay in the bood, as it is often the coolest place in the monastery. At night they sleep in one of the saalaas, and when the night is over they return home, having fulfilled their promise to observe the eight precepts for a period of one day and one night.

During phansaa, the religiously intensive period of the year, taking the eight precepts is a more solemn and elaborate ritual. While during most of the year relatively few persons become ubaasok and ubaasikaa, as soon as phansaa commences, the bood is often hardly spacious enough to receive all who wish to adhere to the eight precepts. This is illustrated for one community in Table 5. From this table it can be seen that during the eight wanphras preceding phansaa an average of 6.4 persons took the precepts, while the average during phansaa was

1

उपासक , upāsaka, devout layman, a word known in Pāli (PED, p. 150a) and Sanskrit (MMW, p. 215a).

2

उपासिका , upāsikā, the feminine form of upāsaka.

Table 5. Number of people receiving the eight precepts in Watsaancaaw from 11 May 1968 until 28 October 1968

Date	Men	Women	Total	Date	Men	Women	Total
May 11	3	3	6	Aug. 8	10	16	26
May 19	2	2	4	Aug. 16	13	16	29
May 26	2	4	6	Aug. 22	13	24 ^c	37
June 3	2	2	4	Aug. 30	14	15	29
June 10	2	7	9	Sep. 6	-	-	30
June 18	2	5	7	Sep. 14	-	-	28
June 24	2	6	8	Sep. 21	20	23	43
July 2	2	5	7	Sep. 29	17	28	45
July 9 ^a	20	29	49	Oct. 6 ^d	-	-	59
July 17	- ^b	-	29	Oct. 14	-	-	45
July 24	-	-	27	Oct. 21	-	-	10 ^e
Aug. 1	-	-	22	Oct. 28	-	-	11

a

On this day, phansaa started, as it was the fifteenth day of the waxing half of the eighth lunar month.

b

A dash indicates that the fieldwork data did not provide sufficient information to give an exact number.

c

The contingent of ubaasikaa was boosted on this day by a group of eight female visitors from a community several kilometres down river.

d

This day, the fifteenth day of the waxing half of the eleventh lunar month, was in 1968 the day that phansaa ended.

e

Although phansaa has ended, the intensive religious fervour lasts until the kathin festival, which was held in Watsaancaaw on 22 October.

34.7 persons. Although there are no reliable statistical data regarding the number of people who take the eight precepts in other communities, there is no reason why the picture should be different from that which was obtained in Watsaancaaw in 1968.

In order to understand why taking the eight precepts during phansaa differs from following this ritual outside the rainy season, it is necessary to consider certain economic aspects of the relationship between monks and laymen. For a regular supply of food, the inhabitants of a monastery depend largely on donations from laymen. Many members of the lay community are aware that it reflects unfavourably on themselves if there is a shortage of victuals in the monastery. Every day the food supply must reach the monastery early in the morning for, if the monks and novices are not fed properly before noon, they are obliged by their code of life to go hungry until the following day.

The most common manner in which provisions reach the precincts of the monastery is when, early in the morning, monks, novices and degwat walk past the houses of the laymen, carrying containers in which food offerings can be placed.

If a layman invites monks to come chanting in his home during the morning, he must make certain that the food supply to the monastery will not be affected. When he brings the invitation, he usually specifies whether the monks should go on their begging round as usual, or whether there will be a special food offering during the recitation of the chapter of monks in the house. In the latter event, all laymen attending the ceremony in question are given an

opportunity to deposit food gifts in containers brought along for this purpose by the monks and degwat¹.

Whilst donation of food is often part of a ceremonial when monks recite Pāli texts in private homes, there exists in Thailand a ceremony, called thawaajsaṅkhathaan², whereby the presentation of food is a major ceremony of its own. At least four monks must be present³ during such a ceremony, because this is the minimum number of monks required to make a valid decision in the name of the Samgha⁴.

Thawaajsaṅkhathaan always takes place in the morning because it centres around a meal of the monks, and monks cannot eat solid food after noon according to the 37th pācittiya rule of the Pātimokkha. As soon as all the monks taking part are seated, and the five precepts have been recited, a layman who knows the proper formula offers the food gifts amassed in front of the monks with the words:

1

The host ought to provide more food than the monks can eat immediately, sufficient to last the members of the Samgha for the second morning meal and to give the dependent laymen food during the whole day.

2

ถวายสังฆทาน . The word thawaaaj means 'to present, to donate (especially used with regard to royalty or monks)'; while saṅkhathaan is derived from Samgha and dāna. The whole expression can be translated as 'to present a gift to the Samgha'.

3

ประเพณีทั่วโลก หน้า๒๕.

4

The number of four monks is also the quorum needed to ordain a new monk, to chant the full version of the Pātimokkha, to expel a monk from the Samgha, or to receive kathin robes.

imāni mayam bhante bhattāni saporivārāni
 bhikkhusaṃghassa oṇojayāma; sādhu no bhante
 bhikkhusaṃgho imāni bhattāni saporivārāni paṭiggāhātu
 amhākaṃ dīgharattaṃ hitāya sukhāya

This is the standard formula for thawaajsaṅkhathaan¹ and it can be translated as follows:

We give as a present these foods and paraphernalia to the community of monks; may the community of monks accept from us these foods and paraphernalia with the word sādhu [yes] to our enduring benefit and happiness.

The leader of the chapter of monks questions his fellow monks in Pāli whether or not they can accept the gift, and then asks them to indicate their agreement. If there is no reason why the Samgha cannot receive this gift, all monks answer in unison: 'sādhu'².

At this moment, the Samgha receives the 'food and paraphernalia' into its possession. It is understood by all parties concerned that everything used during the meal of the monks is included in the gift: plates from which the food is eaten, vessels which contain the food, glasses, cutlery, the mats on which the monks sit and the spittoons used. It has become customary that the man who performs a thawaajsaṅkhathaan purchases these goods especially for this occasion and takes care that only things of very good quality are used. This ceremony can therefore represent a great expenditure. It is believed that the merit resulting

1

¹ This formula can be found in the Cettamnaan, and in หนังสือคู่มือวิชาอุโบสถ หน้า ๑๑๖-๑๑๗ ประเพณีไทย หน้า ๘๓๒.

2

The word sādhu is here used as an exclamation indicating approval (cf. PED, p. 703b).

from this ceremony increases the life-span of a person considerably, and consequently older people are often most interested in performing it.

On a wanphra during the period of the rainy season, the monks do not have to collect food. Instead, early in the morning, laymen come to the monastery in great numbers, laden with food, in order to perform a 'collective' thawaajsaṅkhathaan. This differs in several ways from the 'private' thawaajsaṅkhathaan discussed above.

Firstly, there is not one main sponsor for the 'collective' ceremony; anybody can bring a gift and join in the merit resulting. In the second place, the ceremony is not held in a private home, but takes place in the monastery. Often the biggest assembly hall is needed to house all participants. Thirdly, the 'paraphernalia' which are used during the ceremony and donated to the Samgha are not purchased especially for the occasion, but are borrowed from the monastery itself. Thus the expense for the lay participants is far less than during a 'private' ritual.

Despite these differences, the ceremony remains a thawaajsaṅkhathaan. After the recitation of the five precepts, the donations are presented with the formula mentioned earlier¹ and the monks accept and solemnize the ritual with the same word sādhu. The amount of food donated is often so great that the monks redistribute

1

Supra, p. 253.

certain trays to those laymen who wish to stay until after the monks have ended their first meal of the day¹.

As soon as the morning meal after the thawaaj-sangkathaan ritual is finished, and the merit resulting has been politely offered to the ancestors during a kruadnaam ritual², all the monks proceed towards the bood for the official morning chanting, a common event during phansaa. Many laymen who came to take part in the thawaajsangkathaan will grasp the opportunity to attend the service in the bood, which on wanphra during phansaa consists of three parts:

1. The solemn chanting service of the monks
2. The ritual of prompting the eight precepts to those older people among the audience who wish to become ubaasok and ubaasikaa
3. A formal preaching service, during which the monks and laymen listen to a reading from a palm leaf text by one of the monks. Often an ornate preaching chair is used by the monk who reads the sermon, so that he is highly elevated for the time being above laymen and fellow monks. During the sermon, the laymen collect money which is presented officially as soon as the monk descends from his throne.

The morning service is ended by another kruadnaam ritual, and many laymen return home, leaving the ubaasok and ubaasikaa in the precincts of the monastery. Those who

1

After the food has been donated, it is entirely up to the monks to decide what to do with it. They will reserve some for a second meal, some for the degwat, and a portion for the animals living in the precincts; if there is still a remainder, they can invite laymen to partake.

2

See Ch. V, pp. 147-148.

adhere to the eight precepts, and the monks and novices, have a last chance to take some solid food before noon. In contrast to the custom during wanphra outside the rainy season, during phansaa the laymen will not be able to remain all afternoon in the bood, as the monks require this building for their chanting and meditation during the afternoon. Therefore from noon onwards the group of ubaasok and ubaasikaa gathers in one of the saalaas. Early in the afternoon they can relax there, but after two o'clock their leader usually decides to begin the lay chanting session. These laymen are often still chanting when the monks begin their afternoon recitation. If the saalaa of the laymen is situated close by the bood the two groups can clearly hear each other: from the bood the well-trained voices of the monks and novices resound, whilst from the saalaa, independently, other texts are recited by the less skilled voices of the laymen. Later in the afternoon each group, following independent timetables, engages upon a period of meditation and closes the ritual with kruadnaam.

In the evening, the saalaa becomes a centre of activity; a dais is prepared for a chapter of monks, and apart from the big group of ubaasok and ubaasikaa, other laymen may come to attend the evening service which is centred around a preaching; the second sermon of the day. In contrast to the earlier preaching, not all monks attend the evening service; notably the older monks often prefer to remain in their cells and go to sleep early. The monk whose turn it is to give a sermon¹ asks whether or not

1

See Ch. V, pp. 150-152.

there are any laymen other than the ubaasok and ubaasikaa, and if the answer is affirmative, he proceeds to prompt the five precepts for those who wish to receive them¹. After the reading of the sermon, the kruadnaam ritual is performed and the laymen who wish to go to sleep can do so. Often some monks remain till very late at night talking with several ubaasok and ubaasikaa. After midnight the monks have usually all returned to their cells, and the laymen who observe the eight vows sleep on the floor of the saalaa. As soon as it becomes light enough to discern the small patterns of the epidermic folds on the palm of the hand², at around half-past five in the morning, automatically all are released from their eight precepts and all go home.

During the rainy season, therefore, wanphra constitutes a major festival for the community as a whole. At this time of the year the number of monks is markedly greater, and a throng of laymen of all ages gather early in the morning to take part in the thawaajsan̄khathan̄. This is an attractive social occasion, when there is ample opportunity to meet friends and to look at other members of the community. The fact that wanphra during phansaa

1

Those who have earlier in the day taken the eight precepts will not repeat the prompting of the five precepts, but they will politely raise their hands, palm to palm.

2

This is the traditional method of deciding whether a new day has started. This method is also used by monks; in the early morning during phansaa they wait until they can discern the small lines in their palms before setting out on their 'begging' tour. If they left earlier, they would feel that they were breaking their promise to stay in the monastery every night during phansaa.

has such importance for the whole of the community cannot fail to have an impact on the number of people who wish to take the eight precepts. It is part of the general intensifying of religious activities during this period of the year that the number of ubaasok and ubaasikaa increases so markedly. Many laymen try to follow the eight precepts every wanphra during phansaa, an accomplishment only few manage, and which is believed to assure great rewards after death. Many laymen who take the eight precepts feel that they partake in the intensive generation of beneficial karma during the rainy season.

Outside the rainy season, wanphra often hardly differs from any other ordinary day. There are fewer monks, and these bhikkhus do not chant communally; there is no thawaajsanjkhathaan to ensure a big audience, and there are no preachings from which to gain additional merit; most older laymen feel that it is not attractive to follow the eight precepts under such circumstances.

Outside the rainy season as well as during that period of the year, persons younger than 40 years of age seldom adhere to the eight vows. Although there is no rule which forbids young people to become ubaasok or ubaasikaa¹, nobody expects them to take the eight precepts. A retreat from the world does not correspond with the life of a young adult. Young people are expected to be concerned about their work, their children, the organization of an economical household and the solving of domestic problems.

1

Of all the ubaasok and ubaasikaa recorded in Watsaancaaw in Table 5, only one woman in her early twenties became an ubaasikaa. She accompanied her mother for personal reasons. All others were of ripe age.

Circumstances prevent young persons from dedicating themselves to asceticism for a whole day and a whole night; their minds are too capricious, too alive, their interests too earthly.

Only those whose children have grown up, who are incapable of much manual work, and whose passions have calmed down, possess the qualifications for the communal retreat. Moreover, the older people become, the more they will realize that death approaches. In rural Thailand the increasing awareness of the finality of the present life is often an incentive to grasp opportunities to obtain beneficial karma so that a good future in a next life becomes more likely. Life as ubaasok or ubaasikaa is very attractive to some older people. It brings persons together who have their age and memories in common. During the periods of fasting, chanting, discussing religious matters and sharing discomfort, a bond can be welded, and sincere friendship can result.

Table 5 reveals that the number of ubaasikaa generally outweighs that of the ubaasok. That women outnumber men in taking the eight precepts does not necessarily mean that the old women are more inclined towards asceticism than the old men of the community. It must be realized in this context that the number of available old men has been depleted because older devout men have the opportunity to become monks instead of ubaasok. In 1968 there were six older men in Watsaancaaw who had become bhikkhus. Adding these six to the number of ubaasok would make the total of men larger than that of the ubaasikaa. In theory, women can also join a group of religious specialists, shave their

heads and don white robes¹, but the number of women taking this opportunity is much smaller than the number of older men becoming bhikkhus.

The fact remains, however, that women are well represented among those who undertake to observe the eight precepts. It seems one of the rare instances in the life of women when they are accepted as full participants in a religious organization. Women cannot become degwat, which traditionally denied them access to the skills of reading and writing; they cannot, in present times, become novices or bhikkhuni². They do not learn the proper formulae, cannot be tattooed, are not allowed to wear the protective phra khryan or takrut. The reasons for this exclusion from religious knowledge appear to be centred upon two reasons; firstly they form a threat to the sanctity of the monks by making the members of the Samgha hanker after temporary earthly pleasures, and secondly they are self-polluting by their monthly flow of blood.

Women who become ubaasikaa usually do not fit any longer into the dangerous, anti-beneficial category. With the passage of time they not only lose much of their physical attraction and therefore cannot be regarded as a great potential danger to the concentration of the monks, but also they will automatically become less dangerously charged because they will have reached menopause.

The difference between women of childbearing age and the less dangerous older women is well illustrated in the

1
See Ch. X, pp. 316-320.

2
See Ch. X, pp. 316-317.

modes of covering the lower part of the body. While young women usually wear a piece of material wrapped tightly around both legs, older females commonly wear a loose garment tucked under a belt in such a way as to form loose 'trousers'. Young women are forced by their clothing to sit with both legs folded on the same side, the knees pressed together, while the clothing of older women permits them to sit on their haunches with the knees wide apart, or to sit cross-legged, in the manner in which the males often sit. Upon reaching menopause, a woman becomes less female, and need no longer behave in the formal manner required from a younger member of her sex.

Therefore the great number of ubaasikaa should not be interpreted as an anomaly, as a deviation from the usual reluctance to let women participate in religious knowledge, but should be seen as an indication of a change of status of women past childbearing age. As ubaasikaa they learn many Pāli suttas, hear many sermons, take part in discussions with other laymen and monks, meditate and obtain knowledge about Buddhist lore.

The eight vows are taken as a whole, and breaking one precept means breaking them all. This is borne out by the fact that the words visum visum rakkhanaṭṭhāya do not occur in the formula with which the eight precepts are requested¹. The wording of the first, second, fourth and fifth precept is identical with the corresponding numbers in the pañcasīlāni, and the interpretation is the same.

1

For the meaning of the words visum visum rakkhanaṭṭhāya, see supra, pp. 230-232.

The third of the eight precepts is differently worded from the third of the pañcaśīlāni. While those who promise to adhere to five precepts promise to abstain from 'base conduct in sensuous pleasures', people who take eight precepts commit themselves to refrain from unchastity. Wrong sensuous pleasures cover adultery, incest, rape and behaviour leading to such misdeeds. When adhering to the eight precepts, and vowing to refrain from unchastity, all behaviour leading to sexual intercourse must be avoided. The five precepts do not forbid copulation between husband and wife, the eight precepts do.

Not only must those who adhere to the eight precepts refrain from sexual intercourse, but it is also a general rule that on wanphra all laymen should not engage in such conduct¹. This link between wanphra and chastity has been handed down as a rule for all married couples. An interesting parallel is discernible in Indian literature. In Indian history it seems to have been the rule that on Parvan days (which correspond with Thai wanphra) one should be chaste².

The sixth precept, abstinence from taking food at the wrong time, is interpreted in the same manner as the 37th pācittiyā rule of the monks. Until noon the ubaasok and

1

See Ch. VI, p. 189.

2

Mention of this, for example, is made in the Manusmṛti (III, 45), and in the Mahābhārata (XIII, 104, 89). When Monier-Williams translated the word Parva-gāmin as 'He who approaches his wife' (MMW, p. 609) he may not have been aware of this rule, otherwise the translation would probably have been: 'He who approaches his wife on a wrong day', (or words to that effect).

ubaasikaa can partake of a meal. Their behaviour during their pre-afternoon meal is quite comparable to that of the monks: all take pains not to eat greedily, to offer items of food to their neighbour, not to ask for rice or sauces for their own use, not to speak with the mouth full and to avoid making noises with the mouth while eating. After the meal is over they can complete their imitation of monastic behaviour by raising the hands and chanting the after-dinner Pāli formula. In the afternoon and during the night, the ubaasok and ubaasikaa can consume tea, coffee or soft drinks, and most of them bring enough money to be able to purchase these refreshments.

The seventh rule which forbids make-up, ornaments, dancing, music, theatre and the like is usually not difficult to follow. When there is no major entertainment in the precincts of the monastery itself there is hardly occasion to break this precept. When entertainment is offered, this rule is often somewhat relaxed. Ubaasok and ubaasikaa are often of the opinion that they can witness a film-show or a shadow theatre performance from a distance. This relaxation of the rule brings the behaviour of the laymen into line with monastic behaviour. As long as the devout people do not mix with the other people, as long as they do not dance, laugh and enjoy themselves unrestrainedly, they feel they have obeyed the rules.

The eighth and last precept is very easy to follow. In their own homes rural people do not possess high beds. Most individuals sleep on a mat rolled out on a high portion of the floor. Therefore, ubaasok and ubaasikaa do not have to modify their usual sleeping habits; a mat spread out on the floor of the saalaa provides a comfortable sleeping place.

There is no rule which tells the laymen that they ought to observe the eight precepts within the precincts of the monastery. Indeed, sometimes there are ubaasok and ubaasikaa who return home during the period they have undertaken to adhere to the precepts, who prefer to sleep in the trusted atmosphere of their own house. The stricter laymen frown upon this practice. It is seen as giving in to a weakness, and undermining the communal effort of those who stay the full period in the saalaa. Although, in theory, a layman can observe the eight precepts at home, these devout laymen maintain that in practice it is hardly possible to observe these vows there. The risk of becoming involved in domestic life, the difficulty of refraining from taking part in idle talk, the evening meal, a quarrel or a feeling of annoyance are of such magnitude that the advice of conscientious laymen is that the eight precepts can only be safely observed in the guarded and sacred surroundings of the monastery, with the moral support of one's fellow devotees.

The Ten Precepts

A third fixed number of precepts mentioned in the Tipitaka¹ are the ten precepts, or dasa sikkhāpadāni. In the canon, as in present-day Thailand, the ten precepts are always reserved for members of the Samgha, especially the novices. The ordination of a novice is centred around the

1

For example Mahāvagga, I, 56.

promise to adhere to the ten precepts¹, which are requested by the aspirant novice with the words: 'Ahaṃ bhante saraṇasīlaṃ yācāmi', or: 'I, sir, ask for the Refuges and the precepts'.

After the refuges have been prompted and repeated, the ten precepts follow, the first six of them being identical with the first six of the eight precepts². From the seventh precept onwards the wording is as follows:

7. naccagītavāditavisūkadassanā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.
8. mālāgandhavilepanadhāraṇamaṇḍanaṅgaṇavibhūsaṅgaṇā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.
9. uccāsayanā mahāsayanā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.
10. jātarūparajatapaṭiggahaṇa veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.
imāni dasa sikkhāpadāni samādiyāmi.

Or in translation:

7. I undertake (to observe) the rule of abstinence from dancing, music and visiting shows.
8. I undertake (to observe) the rule of abstinence from flowers, make-up, the wearing of ornaments and decorations.
9. I undertake (to observe) the rule of abstinence from a tall, high sleeping place.
10. I undertake (to observe) the rule of abstinence from receiving gold or silver.

These ten precepts I undertake (to observe).

1

When a layman wishes to become a monk, he ought to pass the stage of novice first. This stage is passed in the ordination service itself by the recitation of the ten precepts.

2

Supra, pp. 246-247.

It appears that in the ten precepts, numbers seven and eight correspond with the seventh of the eight vows, and number nine is identical with the last of the eight precepts. Thus the ten precepts in fact only add one precept, the abstinence from receiving gold or silver, to the list already discussed.

From the final sentence which is added to the ten precepts, it is clear that, in contrast to the eight precepts, there is no time limit attached to the observance of the ten precepts. Novices are expected to adhere continuously to these vows, and whenever they feel that they have broken a precept, they can renew the dasa sikkhāpadāni with any monk of their choice. Novices are usually not preoccupied with the exact interpretation of the ten precepts. As members of the Samgha they live permanently in a monastery, wear the yellow robes, shave their heads and live in the shadow of the monks. Their behaviour is more an imitation of the behaviour of bhikkhus than a direct result of following the ten precepts.

From the Buddhist tradition the Thais received three distinct numbers of precepts: the five, the eight and the ten precepts. The function of these different groups of vows may well have changed considerably in the development of religion into the form now found in rural Thailand. Especially with regard to the five precepts, it seems probable that such a change took place. While originally the pañcasīlāni may have been primarily part of an installation ritual, it seems now mainly a purification rite.

The eight precepts prove to be essentially different in function from the pañcasīlāni, since only older persons tend to adhere to them during special days in the lunar calendar. Since the fixed period of one day and one night is laid down in the Pāli formula with which the eight precepts are taken, it is possible that the meaning of the eight precepts was originally quite similar to that in present-day Thailand.

The ten precepts are quite distinct from the five and eight vows, because they are firmly linked with the full members of the Samgha. Laymen do not follow the ten precepts; even the female religious virtuosi who shave their head and don white robes cannot adhere to them¹. As soon as a layman takes the ten precepts, he becomes a member of the Samgha, with all the solemn consequences thereof.

¹

See Ch. X, pp. 316-320.

CHAPTER IX

THE PURSUIT OF BENEFICIAL KARMA

A poor farmer can take part only in very few ceremonies. Sometimes he has the chance to witness an ordination procession or a kathin procession pass in the distance, and he is able to earn a minute share in the beneficial karma emanating from such an occasion by lifting his hands respectfully while saying: 'anumodana sādhu'¹. Other common ways of obtaining some good karma without much financial outlay are: attending a sermon, listening to the chanting of the monks, assisting a monk in the pursuit of his duties or offering relief to travellers by placing a pot of fresh water at the side of a path.

Farmers who can afford it often spend hundreds of baht each year during a series of varied events which increase their good karma. Usually they grasp every opportunity to contribute food for the upkeep of the monastery, and in the evenings they may listen in front of a transistor radio to a sermon transmitted from the capital². They aid friends and relatives who organize a ceremony, especially if those

1

These words can be translated as: 'I approve!' or: 'Assent indeed!'

2

In order to obtain the optimum amount of good karma, the farmer takes care to behave properly while listening to the broadcast of a famous monk. It is not unusual to see a villager sitting in front of his radio, listening to a sermon with his hands raised in a polite fashion, and his feet folded behind him.

friends and relatives can be depended upon to return the gesture in the future. They may join in many communal ceremonies in the monastery nearby, as well as in some rituals which take place in other communities¹.

Wealthy farmers, when they take part in a communal ceremony, often donate a greater amount of money than those in a less fortunate financial position. In addition, a rich man can invite a chapter of monks to his own house during elaborations of private rituals. If a wealthy man visits a monastery, he may suddenly arrange a meal for all members of the Samgha present; or, if the time when members of the order can take solid food has elapsed, he may arrange that soft drinks are brought. He may finance a kathin ceremony without the help of others² or pay for the construction of a building in a monastery.

The many different types of activity which carry beneficial karma from which a person in rural central Thailand can choose may be brought under four headings.

A. Beneficial activities during which only a small number of people are involved

Good karma can be accumulated by behaving in accordance with the five precepts, even if only for a short period. In addition, a person can gain such karma by concentrating on Pāli texts and meditating. Meditation is not reserved for monks, ubaasok and ubaasikaa³ but can be practised by

¹ Infra, pp. 298-300.

² See infra, pp. 296-298.

³ Ch. VIII, p. 256.

all laymen. Especially the men who have been members of the Samgha for several years during a previous period of their lives meditate at night for a few minutes just before lying down to sleep. This meditation consists of a few words repeated whilst breathing deeply and calmly. The habit of meditating before falling asleep reputedly carries some beneficial karma, and at the same time it is believed that it helps a man to sleep soundly without evil dreams¹.

A certain method of obtaining merit is the practice of munificence. At sunrise on the mornings when there is no special food offering in the monastery, members of the Samgha leave their monastery in order to offer laymen the opportunity to donate food. A layman will increase his store of good karma by thus helping in the upkeep of the monastery. In order to ensure that he obtains the maximum benefit, he must take care to behave in a proper manner. He should place the food gifts in clean containers. Many farmers possess a copper or silver container which is used for this occasion. The person who donates the food takes care to be properly dressed; in rural regions, work-clothes are considered to be a proper covering. Many adult men place a phaakhawmaa² over the left shoulder in the position used during rituals. When the monks approach the person who wishes to donate food, this layman can squat down, lift the rice container to the level of his forehead and say softly to himself: 'nibbāna paccayo hotu', or 'May it be a factor in reaching nibbāna'.

1

Personal communication with Somkhuan Sutticaj, 9 February 1969.

2

Cf. Ch. VII, p. 206, footnote 1.

The concept nibbāna is in Buddhist literature equated with the extinction of all passion, anger and ignorance. In the eyes of the rural Thai people, however, it means ultimate bliss, a total happiness without end. The farmers do not really aspire to reach nibbāna; usually they are aware of their firm links with life¹. A more elaborate formula² consists of the following sentence, which is repeated three times: 'Sudinnaṃ vata me dānaṃ āsavakkhayāvahaṃ hotu' or: 'May this well-given donation lead to the extinction of the āsavas'³.

If a layman cannot remember these formulae he can use any other Pāli words that come up in his mind, or say something equivalent in Thai. After the formula he will rise to his feet and ascertain that he approaches the monk without wearing any footwear, because it would be wrong to have the feet clad whilst the monk is obliged by the rules of the order to go barefooted when begging. While he deposits some rice in the begging bowl of the monk he usually refrains from talking, but if he has something important to communicate he can do so without raising his voice. The very poor farmer who has little to eat for himself and his family may add a piece of salt to the rice because rice alone is considered too frugal a gift. Most farmers place a piece of fish, some soup, a sauce, vegetables, some fruit or a sweetmeat, either together with

1

Ch. X, p. 310.

2

ประเพณีการทำบุญ หน้า ๘.

3

The extinction of the āsavas usually refers especially to the obtaining of arahant-ship (PED, p. 115a).

the rice in the begging bowl or separately in the food containers which the deqwat bring along for that purpose¹.

Usually a layman makes gifts chiefly to members of the Samgha, but giving to fellow laymen, for example giving alms to beggars or donating to charitable institutions, is considered to be among the activities which will certainly increase one's good karma. The practice of donating is not reserved for laymen only: a monk accumulates beneficial karma in the same manner every time he gives a book or an amulet to laymen or fellow monks.

B. Ceremonies in private homes at which a chapter of monks recites

A wealthy householder can elaborate upon his private ceremonies by inviting a chapter of monks to come and recite Pāli texts at them. The first haircutting of his child, the imminent ordination of a son, the first preaching at home of a son who has recently become a monk, a marriage ceremony, the first entering of a new house, a private thawaajsan̄khathaan², the death of a relative or the commemoration of the death of an ancestor are some of the best-known occasions that can be rendered more auspicious by the inclusion of the chanting of a chapter of monks.

Formerly, the recitation was usually held during the afternoon previous to the main ceremony, followed by a meal

1

Ch. III, pp. 84-85. In some areas where monks collect food by paddling in a small boat from house to house, the begging bowl is placed ornamentally in the bow, together with the containers for soups and sauces.

2

Ch. VIII, pp. 252-254.

for the same chapter of monks the next morning. In present times the recitation is often given during the morning, immediately followed by the meal of the monks. In the modern version the period of chanting has been considerably shortened. In the past the monks sometimes recited for several hours during the afternoon chanting, but nowadays the monks are often pressed for time because they ought to take their meal before noon.

The preparations which a householder has to make when a chanting session accompanies a ritual in his house are manifold. In the first place he has to decide how many monks will be invited. If less than five monks come to the house, the chanting of Pāli texts is likely to sound too soft and inadequate; especially if inexperienced members of the Samgha are among the small number of monks, the ceremony will lack impressiveness. On the other hand, if a great number of monks are invited, the householder will strain the resources of his household, and the house itself may not have adequate space for so many monks and their audience. Moreover, the householder should avoid inviting an even number of monks, because an uneven number is considered more auspicious¹. Therefore the head of the family usually decides to invite seven, nine, eleven or thirteen monks to come and chant.

1

An exception to this rule is the time immediately after a person has died; on such occasions a chapter of four monks can be invited to chant, among others, the story of Phra Mālaya. In this context it may be noted that uneven numbers are generally more auspicious than even. A ladder ought to possess an uneven number of rungs, lest ghosts can climb the stairs. Similarly, it is believed in Thailand, according to Dr Loofs, that an uneven number of shouts of the gecko bodes well, and an even number is considered a bad omen (personal communication with Dr H.H.E. Loofs, September 1971).

Secondly, the head of the family has to decide which members of the Samgha he will invite. If any close relatives are members of the order, or if the householder is friendly with some bhikkhus, these monks will have to receive an invitation. After they have agreed to come, the householder can calculate how many monks are still needed to make up the full chapter, and customarily he goes to the nearest monastery and requests the abbot to send the number of monks needed. It is part of the duties of an abbot to select monks for these chanting sessions in private homes. Since these recitations in private homes are occasions whereby the bhikkhus who partake receive presents, they are much sought after, and the abbot usually rotates the invitations in a manner that ensures that each monk obtains a fair share of them.

If the chanting is to take place during the morning, a meal has to be prepared for all the monks and the laymen who are expected to attend. Most rural households do not possess sufficient implements to prepare and serve food for more than a dozen persons, and the householder usually borrows pots, spoons and plates from the nearest monastery. Most rural monasteries possess a great amount of kitchen-ware, the accumulation of many donations. They are regarded as communal property, but the monks are custodians, and a careful record is kept of all articles borrowed by a layman, who has to replace any that are damaged or lost.

If the chanting takes place during the afternoon, the meal will be held on the following day, and the preparation for the recitation consists of buying an ample supply of soft drinks, cigarettes, betel leaves and areca-nuts. Along the north wall or east wall of the house (the most auspicious

side)¹ a dais is prepared, and the pillows and mats needed for this dais are usually also borrowed from the stores of the nearest monastery.

Before the monks are expected to arrive, the householder approaches the saan Phra Phuum² and, after lighting a candle and some incense, informs the guardian spirit of the imminent ceremony. Customarily he fastens one end of a long cotton thread, the saajsin³, to the top of the shrine and leads the thread towards his house, unrolling the ball of cotton. He hangs the thread high over some branches so that it does not touch the ground and cannot hinder passers-by. When he reaches his house, he encircles it with the strand of cotton at or just below roof level. If more than one household living in the same compound combine their resources for the duration of the ceremony, the other houses may also be encircled with the same thread. Finally, the thread is led through a window to a corner of the house where a Buddha image has been placed on a pedestal.

When the monks arrive they are received in a manner befitting their superior ritual position, and each monk chooses a place on the dais which has been prepared for this occasion. The most senior monk sits close to the pedestal and the Buddha image, while the monks who have been ordained at a later date sit on his left. When the laymen indicate that they would like to adhere to the five

1
Ch. VII, pp. 198-199.

2
Ch. VII, pp. 215-219.

3
Ch. III, p. 64, footnote 2.

precepts¹, the most senior monk usually delegates this part of the ceremony to a monk at his left, while he himself turns to the right and lights a candle which he fastens on the rim of a vessel containing clean water². On the pedestal he finds the remainder of the ball of cotton lying at the foot of the Buddha image and he leads the thread around the vessel before passing it down the line of monks. When the cotton reaches the youngest monk, the remaining cotton is placed on a plate or other object, so that it does not directly touch the floor. As soon as the five precepts have been repeated, the leader of the chapter of monks begins the chanting session, and each monk raises his hands palm-to-palm to chest level, holding the saajsin between index and thumb.

The chants are usually auspicious texts identical to those which the monks often repeat during the chanting sessions in the bood, and are usually taken from the Cettamnaan³. It is appreciated by the laymen if the monks chant loudly and the small house usually vibrates with the sonorous sound of Pāli words. It is believed that beneficial power, emitted by the monks chanting these sacred words, travels through the cotton thread and charges

1

The ritual of receiving the five precepts has been discussed in detail in Ch. VIII, pp. 229-234.

2

There are other ways of placing the candle; see Ch. IV, p. 100.

3

Ch. V, p. 132. It should be realized that the use of the saajsin and bowl of water in this manner is typical of ceremonies in private homes. The chanting in the monastery does not involve the consecration of water through the saajsin. If a bowl of water is present in the sacred area of the bood it can become charged without the link of the cotton cord.

the water. The candle alight on the rim of the vessel is fixed in a slanting position so that it drips wax into the water.

When the oldest monk is of the opinion that sufficient texts have been chanted, he begins the Ratana Sutta¹, and breaks the candle loose from the vessel. At the beginning of this sutta he holds the candle almost upside-down so that the molten wax drips quickly into the vessel, but when the words khīṇaṃ purāṇaṃ navam natthi sambhavaṃ² are reached, he extinguishes the candle in the water. The water has thus been consecrated, nammon has been made, and after a few more texts the recitation ends. Often the leader of the laymen asks the oldest monk to sprinkle all laymen present, and he hands him a handful of twigs with leaves which carry auspicious names³.

The bowl of sacral water is used by the members of the household in many ways. Some of the nammon may be tipped into the container with drinking water, some may be used to sprinkle the home, there are laymen who rub a little over their faces or over the top of their heads. It is generally believed that the water is charged with beneficial power, and that it can be used to ward off illness, unhappiness and misfortune.

1 สวดมนต์เจ็ดตำนาน หน้า๒๘-๓๑.

2 Translated: 'It is destroyed and exhausted, no rebirth is produced...'

3 Such as bajṇeṇ, bajthoṇeṇ and bajnaag ('gold, silver and copper leaves').

C. Public ceremonies in 'one's own' monastery

Farmers whose ancestors have helped build a monastery, who have been monks there and who contribute regularly towards its upkeep, are aware of a close link between themselves and this particular monastery. Their feeling is almost joint-proprietary, and while recognizing that on certain occasions the Samgha cannot allow laymen near¹, they maintain that the monastery is open to them at almost any time of the day or night. Many villagers realize that the monastery is dependent upon them, and therefore they feel that they ought to be able to influence its organization and to discuss matters concerning its future.

The laymen attending ceremonies during a regular wanphra are almost invariably people who 'belong to' the monastery. On the major annual religious days (see Table 6) almost the whole sustaining population comes to the morning service, and a great number of people attend other communal rituals. Most of these major festivals are marked by a public thawaajsankhathaan² and, in addition, each of these days is marked by a ritual of its own.

Maakhabuuchaa has been established relatively recently as a national Buddhist festival. It was only during the reign of King Mongkut (1851-1868) that this day was chosen to commemorate the miraculous meeting of monks during which the Buddha gave the Pātimokkha to the Samgha³. Its

1

During sadeṅṅ aabat, the chanting of the Pātimokkha and meditation exercises, for example.

2

Ch. VIII, pp. 254-255.

3

Wells, Thai Buddhism, p. 13.

relatively recent introduction may be the reason why this festival seems more popular in municipal areas than in rural Thailand¹.

Table 6. The major annual ceremonies in a monastery

Thai name	Transcription	Pāli or Sanskrit equivalent	Period of the year
มาฆบูชา	Maakhabuuchaa	Māghapūjā	January-February
สงกรานต์	Soṅkraan	Samkrānti	April
วิสาขบูชา	Wisaakhabuuchaa	Visākhāpūjā	April-May
บวชพระ	Buadphra	Upasampadā	All year ^a
สลากภัต ^b	Salaakaphat	Salākabhattam	May-September
ถวายผ้าอาบน้ำฝน	Thawaaj phaa 'aabnaamfon	Vassikasāṭikam dānam	June-July
อาสาฬหบูชา	Aasaalhabuuchaa	Āsālhāpūjā	June-July
เข้าพรรษา	Khawphansaa	Vassupanāyikā	June-July
ออกพรรษา	ออกphansaa	Pavāraṇā	September-October
กฐิน	Kathin	Kathina	September-November

^a While a man can, in principle, enter the order at any time of the year, it has been placed just after Wisaakhabuuchaa because most men join the Samgha just before the rainy season.

^b Also known as ซลากภัต.

1

Kingshill reports for his community in northern Thailand that it did not hold a Maakhabuuchaa festival in the year of research (Ku Daeng, p. 196).

During the month of April the Thai people used to celebrate New Year in a festival known as Sonkraan. Since 1941 the Thai government has brought the year into line with that of most other nations and begins the new year on the first of January. However, in rural areas Sonkraan remains a major festival. The celebrations can last for several days¹ and, apart from a communal food offering in the monastery, this festival is always celebrated in a ritual during which the ceremonial use of water is of foremost importance.

During the afternoon of the first day of Sonkraan in 1968 a great number of laymen came to the biggest gathering hall of Watsaancaaw² in order to participate in the ritual bathing of the monks. A dais was prepared and the abbot seated himself at the far end, followed by all other monks, who ordered themselves on the dais in decreasing seniority on the left hand side of the abbot. At the right of the abbot, a Buddha image was placed on a pedestal. All monks placed their hands, with the palms turned upwards, on their knees. The ritual leaders among the laymen approached the monks, while carrying a vessel filled with water, and all other laymen filed behind them. Each person now proceeded to pour a little water on the Buddha image, on the abbot and on each of the remaining monks. Some men had brought

1

The Sonkraan festival has been commented upon in detail by many authors and therefore it can be omitted almost entirely from this thesis. For the details, see, for example, Phya Anuman Rajadhon's Loy Krathong & Songkran Festival, Thailand Culture Series, No. 5, 1953, pp. 13-24; Wells' Thai Buddhism, pp. 85-89, and ปรีชาเวทย์พนม พจนานุกรม-๒๓๘.

2

On 13 April 1968.

a fragrant paste which they rubbed over the hands, arms, shoulders, heads or backs of the monks before sprinkling water over them. Women had, of course¹, to refrain from rubbing fragrant matter on the members of the Samgha, and had to limit their activities to pouring water from a 'safe' distance. Whilst nearly the whole lay community of Watsaancaaw thus filed past and the robes of the monks became thoroughly drenched in cold water, the bhikkhus themselves remained solemn and silent. The laymen, however, became less solemn, and young people especially started splashing each other with water. The monks ended their participation in the ritual by chanting a blessing and retreating to their cells to change into dry robes, leaving the laymen in an atmosphere of jocularly and general water-throwing. Nobody was angry when hit by water, since a bucketful of water was usually accompanied by a smile or a greeting. Young unmarried men used this occasion to attract the attention of young women and to flirt.

The aspect of jocularly and enjoyment should not obscure the fact that pouring water over a senior person is essentially an act of great respect and can be seen as a cleansing of ritually superior persons².

1

A woman has to avoid bodily contact with members of the Samgha and vice versa.

2

It is not reserved solely for the traditional New Year festival. On 27 October 1967 the population supporting Watsaancaaw performed the bathing ceremony of a single monk as part of the celebrations related to the monk's promotion to a high ecclesiastical rank.

Wisaakhabuuchaa in Watsaancaaw was celebrated¹ during the daytime like any other important wanphra with a food offering in the most spacious saalaa, with the promise to adhere to the eight precepts by several ubaasok and ubaasikaa for a period of one day and one night, and with the recitation of the Pāṭimokkha by all the monks residing in the monastery. At seven o'clock in the evening, however, the big bell of the monastery was beaten to warn the lay population that the Wisaakhabuuchaa evening service was impending. At around eight o'clock the temple was filled to capacity and one of the older monks read out in a clear voice the declaration of Wisaakhabuuchaa² in the Thai language, halting after each phrase to give his audience the opportunity to repeat his words. After this declaration everybody lighted a candle and some incense and, with all the monks walking in front, went slowly around the temple three times in clockwise direction³. After completion of the third circumambulation each person placed the remnants of the candle and the half-burned incense sticks at the marking stone near the main entrance⁴. The people re-entered the temple and listened to a sermon before returning home.

1

In 1968 this day fell on 11 May.

2

An example of a declaration for Wisaakhabuuchaa in English translation can be found in Wells' Thai Buddhism, pp. 73-75.

3

The padakkhina has been mentioned earlier, in Ch. VI, p. 187.

4

Around each temple, eight round stones are interred, and a ninth stone is buried in the centre of the building. The places where the eight outer stone balls are placed in the earth are indicated by eight marking stones.

Becoming a monk, buadphra, is not necessarily accompanied by a public festival. Customarily it is only for the young men who join the order for the first time in their life that elaborate ceremonies are organized. On the day before the ordination, several rituals can take place in the house of the main sponsors of the aspirant monk, often the parents of the monk-to-be. Among these ceremonies the most important ones are the hairshaving ceremony, the afternoon chanting session of a chapter of monks and a tham khwan¹ ceremony, often followed by a night of music and dance. These rituals are of a private nature and are usually not held in the monastery. The public ceremony takes place on the day of the ordination, when the ordinand is led in procession to the monastery. Anybody who has contributed financially to the ordination is welcome to join. The traditional order of the procession is not always strictly observed, but in principle the musicians and those who feel bold enough to dance go in front, followed by the three persons who carry the gifts for the ordainer and the two ritual preceptors². Then come some young girls in their best dresses who carry the gifts for the monks who have been invited to witness the ordination. Behind these girls is the place for the main sponsors of the ordination. They will proudly carry the robes of the future monk, his begging bowl and his ritual fan, while the aspirant monk himself follows them. At the rear of the procession are the people who carry the gifts for the new monk: his sleeping-mat, his pillow, a razor, a parasol,

1

See Ch. III, pp. 66-67.

2

อนุสรณ์กตัญญู หน้า๑๒.

a sieve to strain water, a blanket, a kettle and any other object that has been purchased for this occasion. When the procession reaches the monastery, the monk-to-be must prostrate himself before the shrine of the guardian spirit of the monastery¹, and inform this spirit of his intentions. The whole procession walks three times in a clockwise direction around the bood before entering this building. The young man who intends to become a member of the Samgha must prostrate himself three times in front of his main sponsors before approaching the ordainer². After the ordination all monks present chant a blessing, and this moment is generally seen by the farmers as the moment when the good karma which arises from helping a man become a monk is dispensed. Therefore this is the moment when the main sponsors, who obtain the greatest amount of beneficial karma, perform the kruadnaam ritual³. All persons who are closely involved in the organization of the ordination sit near the main sponsors, and may share this ritual act by touching the arm of one of them.

During the season when fruit is abundant, near the end of the hot period of the year and at the beginning of the rainy season, some important laymen and the oldest monks of a monastery will meet to decide on which day their monastery will hold the annual salaakaphat, the distribution of food by lot. This custom can be traced to the early

1

In Watsaancaaw this is the shrine of the Venerable Chaa (Ch. III, pp. 79-80).

2

Some aspects of the ordination itself have been discussed in Ch. V, pp. 132-133.

3

See Ch. V, pp. 147-148.

days of the Samgha and may originally have been designed to avoid quarrels over food when the supply was scarce¹. In Thailand monasteries usually have an abundance of food and the distribution of food by lot is therefore of a character different from that of the salākabhattam in the Tipiṭaka.

The day chosen for this ceremony is previously made known to everybody involved: the organizers have to ensure that neighbouring monasteries have not, by chance, already reserved that day for a salaakaphat, for if two neighbouring monasteries were to hold it on the same day, the reciprocal invitation patterns² that have come into existence would be upset. The organizers of a salaakaphat in rural areas can predict fairly accurately how many individual gifts of food will be available for the ceremony, because there will be scarcely a household that will not participate in this traditional festival, and each household usually comes with one basket of food to be distributed to the monks by the drawing of tickets. The number of households that sustains a rural monastery is invariably much greater than the number of its monks, and therefore it follows that there will be many more baskets of food than can be readily consumed by the inmates. Traditionally, each gift should consist of several pounds of unhusked rice, onions, garlic and shrimp paste, together with several kinds of fruit. Nowadays, however, it occurs only rarely that a family prepares a gift for salaakaphat which contains other food than fruit.

1

Cullavagga, VI, 21, 1-3 (SBE, Vol. XX, pp. 220-223).

2

These invitations are discussed later in this chapter, see pp. 286-287.

It is customary that the abbot of the monastery where a salaakaphat is planned invites a number of monks from other monasteries to share in the ritual lottery. The invitations are sent to the abbots of some monasteries in the region, requesting the presence of a specified number of monks for salaakaphat, but not mentioning any monk by name, leaving it to the abbot of each monastery to distribute the invitations. The number of monks invited varies from monastery to monastery and is based on a reciprocal relationship between the monasteries. The number of bhikkhus that can attend a salaakaphat depends on the number of gifts that will be distributed. In the region of Watsaancaaw, laymen present between one hundred and two hundred baskets of food, in addition to the usual offering in the morning. If there were more than fifty monks attending, there would be a chance that each monk would draw only two baskets and such an amount is regarded as not sufficient for a self-respecting monastery. On the other hand, if more than five baskets were distributed to each monk, the monks who had been invited from other communities would have difficulty in carrying the gifts back, and the community that organized the salaakaphat might be accused of trying to be ostentatious. Three or four baskets of food is regarded as a properly generous result, and therefore the total number of monks invited to attend salaakaphat seldom exceeds forty-five.

On the morning of salaakaphat each participating family will donate some food towards the meal of the assembly of bhikkhus. The lay organizers take their special salaakaphat-gifts and provide each gift with a number. The lay spokesman will ask for the five precepts and, after

the community has repeated the precepts, he offers the lottery gift to the Samgha with the following words¹:

'etāni mayam bhante bhattāni saparivārāni asukaṭṭhāne ṭhapitāni bhikkhusaṃghassa oṇojayāma; sādhu no bhante bhikkhasaṃgho etāni bhattāni saparivārāni paṭiggaṇhātu amhākaṃ dīgharattaṃ hitāya sukhāya'².

They can be translated as:

'We give as a present these foods and paraphernalia arranged in a certain place to the community of monks; may the community of monks accept from us these foods and paraphernalia with the word sādhu [yes] to our enduring benefit and happiness.'

In each gift the lay organizers place a wooden stick, of about 40cm. length, which has been partially slit. The heads of the families will slide banknotes in each stick; poor farmers will place a five-baht³ note to adorn their basket, but others give ten or twenty baht, while a rich farmer may add a hundred-baht note. The laymen will be most interested to know who will draw the baskets which carry the greatest amounts of money, since it is an indication which monks possess the greatest store of beneficial karma.

1

This formula is of a type generally used to present the Samgha with a gift; the wording is only changed slightly to fit the specific donation. In Chapter VIII (p. 253) the formula for presenting food in communal thawaaaj-saṅkhataan has been given, which illustrates this point (cf. infra, p. 291, footnote 1).

2

สวดมนต์เจ็ดตำนาน หน้า๘๑ , ประเพณีไทย หน้า๘๓๓.

3

In 1968 this was the smallest banknote in circulation.

The methods of distribution of the gifts vary from region to region¹, and from monastery to monastery, but the most common method of distribution in the region of Watsaancaaw was to place as many tickets as there were gifts in a vessel and let each monk select one ticket. The number on the ticket entitles the monk to a basket which carries the same number. The vessel with tickets is passed around until there are not enough tickets to make a full round among the bhikkhus. Then the lay organizers add a number of blank tickets and the monks proceed to draw the final round.

The presentation of bathing-clothes to the monks, in the ceremony called thawaa'phaa'aabnaamfon, can also be traced to the early days of Buddhism. According to a text in the Vinaya-pitaka², some lay people appeared upset at the sight of members of the Samgha bathing naked in the rain. According to these devout laymen, such behaviour seemed more in accordance with that of some ascetics who believed in the sanctity of nakedness, and did not befit Buddhist monks. The monks could not be expected to bathe fully dressed, since this would have forced the monks who possessed only one set of robes to wear heavy, uncomfortable, damp clothing. Therefore the Buddha ruled that special garments of small size³ could be used for bathing purposes. It was laid down that the monks could

1

Different methods of drawing by lot are described by Wells, Thai Buddhism, pp. 120-122, and for northern Thailand by Kingshill, Ku Daeng, pp. 204-6.

2

Mahāvagga, VIII, 15, 1-15 (SBE, Vol. XVIII, pp. 216-225).

3

See infra, p. 290, footnote 1.

only obtain these bathing-clothes during the last month of the hot season¹.

In accordance with this tradition, the Thai stipulate that the bathing-clothes of the bhikkhus are usually presented between the first day of waning moon of the seventh lunar month and the day of full moon of the eighth lunar month².

The monks and laymen decide upon the date of this ceremony in joint consultation, and usually it is decided to celebrate thawaaajphaa'aabnaamfon on a wanphra within the stipulated time, but sometimes it may be considered advisable to hold the ceremony one day after the day of full moon of the eighth lunar month, on the first day of phansaa.

Each family that wishes to take part in this ceremony prepares or purchases a bathing cloth which a monk can use: a rectangular piece of cotton material, about 130cm. in

1

This is the background of the 24th of the Nissaggiyā pacittiya rules of the Pāṭimokkha. In the SBE series' translation of this rule, the word vassika sātīkacīvaram has been translated as 'Materials for robes for the rainy season' (SBE, Vol. XIII, p. 28); probably it would have been more accurate to translate it by: 'Materials for bathing-robes for the rainy season'.

2

ประเพณีไทย หน้า๖๓๕.

length and about 60cm. wide¹, dyed in a proper colour². Together with this cloth they customarily present some incense, a candle and some flowers. Sometimes a farmer purchases a bathing-cloth that has been skilfully folded in such a manner that it resembles a hamsa³. A monk who receives such a folded bathing-cloth may decide to use another cloth for bathing and retain the 'hamsa-cloth'; he may place it among the beautiful objects on his private altar in his cell. To many householders, the gift of a bathing-cloth together with incense, candle and flowers appears small and insignificant. Therefore most families enlarge their donation by adding some useful household goods which the monks may need during the rainy season, such as soap, toothpaste, a toothbrush, a box of matches, toilet paper and a small amount of money.

On the morning of thawaaajphaa'aabnaamfon, the laymen will present their gifts with the official morning meal of

1

According to the 91st Pācittiya rule of the Pātimokkha (SBE, Vol. XIII, p. 54), the bathing-cloth should not exceed six sugatavidatthis in length and 2-1/2 sugatavidatthis in width. The tradition is uncertain about the size of a sugatavidatthi (PED, p. 716b). Popular tradition in Thailand reckons the measure to be greater than the vidatthi (for details see Nānamoli Thera, The Pātimokkha, 1966, p. 114). The size of the bathing-clothes given to Thai monks would indicate, however, that the sugatavidatthi is exactly equal to a vidatthi.

2

The colour of the robes and bathing-clothes of Thai monks usually varies from yellow to red. A few monks who are famous for their strictness in following the rules consider these colours too bright and dye their robes dark brown.

3

See Ch. IV, p. 112.

the bhikkhus. A spokesman will offer the gifts to the Samgha with the formula for thawaaajphaa'aabnaamfon¹.

The number of families participating in this ceremony is usually much greater than the number of bhikkhus and thus each monk receives several bathing-cloths. The distribution of the many gifts can be decided by lot in the manner discussed during the salaakaphat ritual².

Because the ceremony is held almost at the beginning of the rainy season, and because the clothes offered are traditionally called 'clothes to bathe in the rain' (in fact, they are used for bathing in general, in the river or in the rain, whichever is expedient), it is not surprising to note that many farmers believe that participation in this ceremony will help ensure good rains for the fields. This is another instance where taking part in a meritorious ritual is believed to have also direct, or almost simultaneous, practical results. The good karma arising from this ceremony and dispensed by the monks in their chanting at the close of the ritual is believed to result in good fortune for agriculturalists especially.

From an organizational point of view, thawaaajphaa'aabnaamfon is very different from salaakaphat, because the former ritual is reserved only for those bhikkhus who reside in one monastery, while the latter is

1

This formula differs from that of thawaaajsanjkhathaan only in that the word bhattāni is omitted and vassikasātīkacīvarāni substituted. The formula for thawaaajsanjkhathaan can be found in Chapter VIII, p. 253 (cf. also supra, p. 287, footnote 1).

2

Supra, pp. 286-288.

traditionally a ceremony whereby the abbot of a monastery invites monks from other monasteries on a basis of reciprocity.

Aasaalhabuuchaa is celebrated on the day of full moon of the eighth lunar month. In years when there is a second, intercalary eighth month in order to adjust the difference between the solar and lunar years, Aasaalhabuuchaa falls on the day of the full moon of the second eighth lunar month. The rituals for laymen are similar to those of Wisaakhabuuchaa described earlier in this chapter¹. During the evening the big monastery bell is sounded to warn all laymen of the impending ceremony in the bood. After the declaration for Aasaalhabuuchaa has been prompted and repeated by everyone present, the temple is circumambulated three times by all, holding a candle and some incense in their hands.

The first day of phansaa, known as the day of khaawphansaa², is the day when all monks gather in the bood, and one after the other, in order of seniority, declare three times in a firm voice:

'Imasmiṃ āvāse imaṃ temāsaṃ vassaṃ upemi'³.

While rural monks do not understand the exact meaning of this formula, they know that it binds them to the monastery for the duration of phansaa. The Thai interpretation of this rule is quite strict. Each morning at sunrise, all monks should be within the boundaries of the monastery they

1

Supra, p. 282.

2

Translated: 'To enter the rainy period'.

3

Translated: 'I enter upon the rainy season in this residence for these three months.'

selected for phansaa. From sunrise onwards, the monks can leave the monastery, but when they wish to depart from the immediate surroundings they must ask permission from the abbot or his delegate. If a monk travels beyond the boundaries of his monastery and is prevented from returning before the first moment of sunrise¹, he breaks his vow and will automatically forfeit the special beneficial karma of the pavāraṇā ceremony at the end of phansaa². The services for the laymen on the day of khaawphansaa are similar to those of an ordinary wanphra during phansaa.

Three lunar months later, on the day of the full moon of the eleventh lunar month, it is Ḍogphansaa³, the day when the rainy season ends. This is a wanphra and the services for the laymen are almost identical with those of an ordinary wanphra during phansaa. The differences are twofold. In the first place many laymen will offer flowers to the monks during the food-offering of the morning. In the second place, many laymen will bring a bucket, pan or other vessel to the hood, where they fill it with clean water before the monks begin the pavāraṇā ceremony. These vessels are placed near the main Buddha image, in front of the dais on which the monks usually sit. In the beginning of the afternoon, a monk places a candle on the rim of each vessel, in such a manner that, when alight, the candle will drip wax on the surface of the water.

1

In the case of illness, seven days' absence is allowed. This is in accordance with Mahāvagga III, 6, 2 (SBE, Vol. XIII, p. 306).

2

See infra, pp. 294-295.

3

Literally: 'Leaving the rainy season'.

The candles will not be lighted until the pavāraṇā ceremony has been performed and the bhikkhus begin their afternoon chanting session.

For the pavāraṇā ceremony, all monks who have successfully completed the phansaa gather in the bood, and one of the senior monks opens the ceremony by declaring:

'suṇātu me bhante saṃgho ajja pavāraṇā yadi
saṃghassa pattakallaṃ saṃgho pavāreyya'¹.

The most senior monk of the assembly has the right to answer first, and after him all other monks chant three times a prescribed formula, each monk for himself. The monks who have been in the order for a longer period than the spokesman will use the following formula:

'saṃgham āvuso pavāremi diṭṭhena vā sutena vā
parisaṃkāya vā vadantu maṃ āyasmanto anukampaṃ
upādāya passanto paṭikarissāmi'².

Those monks who have been members of the order for a shorter period than the spokesman must phrase this formula in a different manner, omitting the familiar āvuso, and using the more polite word bhante³ instead. After the youngest monk has completed the third repetition of his

1

This text is prescribed in the Vinaya-pitaka, Mahāvagga IV, 1, 14. In the SBE series it has been translated as: 'Let the Saṃgha, reverend Sirs, hear me. To-day is the Pavāraṇā day. If the Saṃgha is ready, let the Saṃgha hold Pavāraṇā' (SBE, Vol. XIII, p. 329).

2

Mahāvagga IV, 1, 14, which SBE translates as: 'I pronounce my Pavāraṇā, friends, before the Saṃgha, by what has been seen, or by what has been heard, or by what has been suspected; may you speak to me, Sirs, out of compassion towards me; if I see (an offence), I will atone for it' (SBE, Vol. XIII, p. 329).

3

ประเพณีไทย หน้า ๖๗๒.

formula, the candles on the rims of all the vessels are lighted and the monks begin their chanting and meditation session. During this session, it is believed, some of the good karma of the assembly of monks who have just completed their phansaa in a successful manner attaches itself to the water, and sacralizes it¹. After the final blessing the laymen can collect their vessels and use it for auspicious occasions.

On the morning after the pavāraṇā ceremony, many laymen will go to the monastery for a very special food-offering, the Tāvatiṃsa begging-bowl ceremony. All monks gather in the bood early in the morning, and when all the people are prepared a layman will come, carrying a Buddha image belonging to the monastery. This layman will slowly walk with the Buddha image in his arms round the monastery grounds, followed by all the monks carrying their begging bowls. The laymen have brought ample rice and fruit, and stand all along the route, eager to place some food in the begging bowls. Strong boys will help carry big containers into which the monks can empty their bowls each time they become heavy, so that all the laymen will have an opportunity to place some of their rice into all the begging bowls.

Informants were uncertain about the origin of this custom, but it could be ascertained² that it is probably related to the story that the Buddha spent the seventh

1

The sacralization is almost identical with that described earlier in this chapter, only the saaṣin is not used (cf. supra, pp. 275-277).

2

It was only while reading in Malalasekera's Dictionary that the explanation of this custom became clear (DPN, Vol. I, pp. 1002-3).

rainy season after his 'Awakening' in the Tāvatiṃsa heaven. This story explains why the Buddha image is carried in front of the monks: the custom is a commemoration of the return of the Buddha from his stay in heaven.

When phansaa has ended, the laymen sustaining a monastery know that the kathin robes must be presented within one month. The custom of the preparation and presentation of robes after the rainy season has ended is prescribed in the Tipiṭaka¹. Traditionally, in some monasteries in Thailand, these kathin robes were manufactured in the monastery grounds. Laymen and monks together would weave, dye, cut and sew at least one set of robes during the course of one day. The robes had to be ready before dusk, and if there was reason to fear that the robes would not be prepared by that time, everybody, including the oldest, feeblest monk, had to come and assist. This ceremony, known in Thailand as the Mahaakathin (the Great kathin), was only held in the most important monasteries in the country, and at present, the robes and other gifts of the kathin festival are purchased.

On the day that has been decided upon by the laymen to present kathin robes, two ceremonies take place. First there is the presentation of the phaapaa², the 'forest clothes'. A small tree, in which money has been fastened, is presented to the Samṅha, and under this tree a variety of gifts lies. This gift is usually presented by the community sustaining the monastery, and the gifts lying

1

Pāṭimokkha, Nissaggiyā-pācittiya rule 1-3; Mahāvagga VII, 1, 1-6 and Cullavagga V, 11, 3-7.

2

ผ้าป่า.

under the tree are often of a kind useful for the monastery as a whole. It often contains new pots and pans, brooms, vessels filled with oil, petrol, paraffin and a quantity of fruit. Usually the abbot takes possession of the gift in the name of the Samgha. Apart from this 'forest clothes' ceremony, there is the presentation of the kathin robes to one or more monks who have been selected for this honour during a meeting of the Samgha.

The presentation of the kathin robes is a ceremony reputed to bring a great amount of beneficial karma to the donor, and therefore sometimes laymen offer to present the kathin robes to the community sustaining a monastery. Presenting kathin robes carries great prestige and brings great honour to the main sponsors of the ceremony, because the donors customarily also give a lump sum of money to the monastery. It is not uncommon that a farmer saves for more than ten years before he becomes the sponsor of a kathin festival. In 1968, only a man who could spare several thousands of baht would offer to present kathin robes, and donors from municipal areas would sometimes give several tens of thousands of baht. Each year the lay community sustaining a monastery waits full of suspense to know whether a private individual will offer to become the sponsor of this year's kathin. As soon as an individual presents himself, it is up to the lay community to receive the donor with proper respect with a procession, music and good food. However, if no private individual offers to sponsor kathin, the laymen have to present the robes themselves, and often will try to raise a sufficient amount of money by organizing a fund-raising ceremony.

D. Public ceremonies in monasteries 'other than one's own'

The sponsor of a kathin robes presentation need not necessarily be a person living in the vicinity of the monastery where he performs the ceremony. The ceremony is open to outsiders, and the monastery where the gift is received is under no obligation to return the gesture. It is sufficient that the sponsor is received in a proper manner; the person who presents kathin robes is rewarded by the immense store of beneficial karma resulting from performing the ceremony, and by the prestige he gains. While the farmers can accept outsiders' performing kathin in their own monastery, they may, in a similar manner, decide to celebrate kathin in a community other than their own. It is quite common for farmers to organize a kathin ceremony in a monastery far away and, while retaining the right to be regarded as the main sponsors, offer to share the ceremony with anybody who wishes to donate money. It has become the custom in central Thailand to select a monastery in a region many villagers may want to visit, and to combine the kathin robes presentation with a holiday in that region. On every day of the month following Qogphansaa, buses and lorries gaily decorated with flags carry big groups of villagers to monasteries other than their own¹.

From time to time, laymen sustaining a monastery will organize a fund-raising ceremony. Usually such a ceremony

1

People in the region of Watsaancaaw had the opportunity to participate in two very adventurous kathin robes presentations, one in 1966 to the Phuket peninsula (about 600 km south of Watsaancaaw) and another in 1967 to Chiangmai (about 600 km north of Watsaancaaw).

will not be held more than once a year, and it depends on the circumstances which occasion will be grasped for such a purpose. It may be that no sponsor of a kathin festival can be found, it may be at any of the other major recurring festivals during the year, but sometimes a special ceremony is organized: a preaching by a famous monk, a phuttaphiseek¹ or the opening of a new bood.

As soon as the laymen, in consultation with the monks, have decided which occasion will be used to try and raise capital, they must advertise this event to all people who may be interested. Notices stating the event, the date, the place and the major attractions are sent to relatives living in other communities. At the entrance of the monastery, a big placard may announce the same information. Nowadays it is quite common for the lay organizers to hire a boat or car which has been fitted with a loudspeaker and to advertise the fund-raising ceremony in neighbouring communities. On the morning of the event, free transport to the monastery is offered to all people who are interested in taking part, and all participants will be brought home free of charge.

In central Thailand, where the population is dense and where there are many monasteries, the yearly fund-raising ceremonies have resulted in a network of mutual relationships between different monasteries. Leaders of a community may collect financial contributions for a fund-raising festival at a neighbouring monastery. All these contributions are attached to a small tree, or to an object manufactured of wire, coloured paper and glue which

1

See Ch. IV, pp. 98-99.

resembles a tree¹. The people who carry the money-tree to the monastery where the fund-raising festival is held are received with proper respect; they are treated as ambassadors from the neighbouring community. The amount of money on the tree is meticulously counted and written down, so that on a similar occasion in the monastery from where the communal gift came, a deputation with a gift not markedly greater, but certainly not less, can be sent. In this manner, the tree-gifts accumulating during a fund-raising ceremony reveal part of an intricate network of obligations between different communities.

Some anthropologists have tried to measure the villager's evaluation of different ceremonies through questionnaires. Kaufman, for example, asked 25 Thai adults to place ten different items in order of 'maximum merit', and the results of these questionnaires were computed until a single list of items appeared, noting from high to low:

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. Contributing towards the repair of a wat
6. Giving food, daily, to the monks and giving food on holy days
7. Becoming a novice

1

Presenting a gift on a tree, already mentioned at the donation of the 'forest-clothes', earlier in this chapter (supra, pp. 296-297), is a common theme in Thailand. It is related to the concept of heavenly plants such as the Kapparukkha, which yield any object that individuals may wish them to yield.

8. Attending a wat on all holy days and obeying the eight laws on these days
9. Obeying the five laws at all times
10. Giving money₁ and clothing to the monks at the Thaud Kathin¹.

While the idea of asking laymen to rank religious acts is a good one, the number of categories placed before the villagers was by no means exhaustive. Unfortunately common acts like: listening to a preaching, circumambulating a bood, charity to other laymen, listening to the chanting of the monks, or helping to finance a cremation were not included in the list of items. Moreover 25 adults, among whom were 12 women, seems a small sample of the 744 persons living in Bangkhud in 1953.

However, it is interesting to compare Kaufman's findings to those of Tambiah, who asked 79 family heads in north-east Thailand to rank an even more limited choice of 'meritorious' activities. With several items rated differently, the general trend of evaluation still becomes apparent when we note the result of his questionnaire:

1. Completely financing the building of a wat
2. Becoming a monk, 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
6. Strictly observing the Five Precepts².

1

Kaufman, Bangkhud, pp. 183-4.

2

S.J. Tambiah, "The Ideology of Merit", in Dialectic in Practical Religion, Cambridge Papers in Social Anthropology, No. 5, 1968, p. 69.

It appears to Tambiah that the first four categories are so rated by the villagers because these four represent an order of diminishing financial sacrifice. The last two items, however, cause Tambiah to comment that 'ethical and moralistic conduct' seem not to be valued highly because they

... have little positive interest for the villager, either because lay life is not possible without breaking some of the prohibitions or because one must renounce lay life altogether to pursue such aims. He therefore rates these pursuits, in so far as they have relevance for his life, low on the merit-making scale; this is not because he devalues them but because they are not normally open to them.¹

It is here suggested by Dr Tambiah that the Thai villagers rated 'observing every wanphra' and 'strictly observing the Five Precepts' so low, because they were of the opinion that these categories were not realistic, not applicable to their situation.

Indeed, it has been explained in Chapter VIII of this thesis how unrealistic a sentence 'strictly observing the Five Precepts' must seem to a farmer in Thailand² and, similarly, there is hardly a person in rural areas who attends the services of every wanphra in the year. However, non-applicability does not appear to be the reason why Thai villagers place these categories so low on the scale, for the item rated highest of all is by far the most non-applicable from the villager's point of view. Building a monastery of medium size is utterly beyond the scope of villagers. While a rich farmer may finance

1
Tambiah, ibid., p. 70.

2
Ch. VIII, pp. 236-242.

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1
Tambiah, ibid., p. 70.

2
Ch. VIII, pp. 236-242.

ceremonies which cost him several thousands of baht, building a monastery involves a man in amounts of the order of millions of baht.

Therefore it appears that their being irrelevant is not the reason for rating 'observing every wanphra' and 'strictly observing the Five Precepts' so low on the scale.

It can be remembered that observing the ceremonies of wanphra need not involve a person in great expense: many farmers bring only a few coins which they will donate at the beginning of the preaching services. Similarly, observing the Five Precepts need not involve a person in financial loss; on the contrary, by refraining from gambling and intoxicating beverages many a farmer would benefit financially. Therefore it seems that Tambiah's informants rated not only the top four, but all six categories along a financial scale.

Kaufman's informants seem to have followed a similar notion, with the exception of numbers 2 and 10. If a financial criterion is used, 'contributing enough money for the construction of a wat' should have been rated on the top of the list, and not in the second position, and the category of 'giving money and clothing to the monks at the Thaud Kathin' belongs somewhere halfway down, not at the bottom of the list. All other categories correspond with the findings of Tambiah. It can be suggested that a more meaningful comparison between these data is hampered by the smallness of the samples and the limited amount of categories chosen for the questionnaires.

The data presented earlier in this chapter support the idea that there is a belief among the Thai farmers that greater financial outlay results in a greater return in

good karma. Since most farmers possess only a limited income, and because during the year there will be many occasions to take part in ceremonies which carry considerable beneficial karma, each farmer has to decide whether he will attend a certain ceremony and, if so, how much he will contribute. We have seen that, on some occasions, an individual is obliged to attend and assist with a ceremony, simply because the ritual is given by friends or relatives with whom the farmer wishes to maintain friendly contacts. The fact that he will also increase his good karma may well be of secondary importance on such occasions.

During fund-raising ceremonies, not only may a man contribute because he thinks to increase his store of beneficial karma, but he may also be partly motivated by the fact that he cannot lag behind others. The organizers of a fund-raising ceremony will often write down all contributions and announce each gift over a loudspeaker, so that a rich man cannot hope to give a small amount unnoticed. The villagers will not openly shame a person into increasing his contribution; each person should give as much as he wishes and it is bad manners to indicate that a person should have donated more. However, while mores prevent the villager from stating openly that a person is trying to shirk his social obligations, most farmers are aware of what is expected of themselves and others.

There are occasions, however, when the prime motivation for contributing to a ceremony which carries good karma seems to lie in the special power emitted by the ritual. Attendance at the major yearly recurring ceremonies seems mostly motivated by the belief that the contributors will reap a reward in the near future. When

bathing-clothes are given to a monk, it is believed that it will rain in the fields, not in the unspecified future, but in the following weeks and months. Similarly many farmers believe that a chanting session in their house will ensure prosperity in the near future. It is in this light that during a major fund-raising ceremony the remark of the preaching monk should be understood. After giving his blessings in Pāli, he stated to all contributors: 'May you be lucky, may you all win in the lottery the coming week'¹. In the ears of the villagers, this remark was quite in tune with the blessing in Pāli which the same monk chanted a few minutes previously. Many farmers know persons who had a stroke of good fortune immediately or not long after contributing to an event which carried good karma. In this light, many adult Thais link events where bhikkhus chant their blessing with the emission of beneficial magical power. It is this magical power that charges the bowl of water during chanting sessions in private homes; the same power, but probably even somewhat stronger, is transferred to the bowls of water standing in front of the monks during and immediately after the pavāraṇā ceremony.

The people who do not experience any immediate beneficial result from having come into contact with the power of the chanting monks can rest assured that their financial contributions were not in vain. The doctrine of karma assures a person that each good deed will have its reward, if not in this life, in the life hereafter. This latter aspect, being in the background of the thoughts of many young adults, gains in importance as a person becomes older. When a man or woman has reached an age when death is imminent, it may become a motivation of prime importance.

1

Watbaanwanthoṅ, 1 November 1969.

CHAPTER X

OLD AGE, DEATH AND THE HEREAFTER

When the physical powers diminish and people become unfit for heavy work in the fields, they usually transfer most of their assets to some younger relatives in return for food, company and a place to sleep. The older persons often play an important role in the life of the family they live with: they care for small children, grow vegetables, help with the lighter household tasks or occupy themselves with some handicraft. They are often a mine of information for their younger relatives.

With increasing age, an interest in religion may be enhanced. However, not all aged people go to the monastery on wanphra in order to take the eight precepts; even during phansaa there are usually some who are prevented from attending and others who prefer to stay home. Many older people, however, regard the periods that they are ubaasok and ubaasikaa as the highlights of the year, when they have ample opportunity to meet their contemporaries. During the periods that they are together keeping the eight precepts they should refrain from idle talk, gossip or angry words, they should not laugh loudly or speak rashly¹, and therefore their conversations usually turn to religious subjects. A common topic of conversation is the life hereafter.

The gruesome details of the many hells of Buddhism are well known to them, and it is therefore not surprising that

¹

See Ch. VIII, pp. 261-264.

people do not like to envisage the possibility that they themselves may suffer in one of them. This horrible fate is reserved for people who commit hideous crimes, who, for example, kill their parents or a member of the Samgha, or who commit a less serious crime repeatedly. Many farmers have tried to assure themselves against going to hell by attending seven different inaugurations of temples. It is generally believed that a person who has pressed gold leaf on all the stones which are buried in and around a bood, on seven different occasions, cannot go to hell immediately after the present existence finishes. Apart from pressing gold leaf on all the stones, most people drop a packet, containing a candle, incense, flowers and a piece of paper, a writing instrument (usually a pencil), needle and thread into the hole where the central stone will be lowered. These objects ensure that in the next existence the person performing the ceremony will obtain access to knowledge, represented by the paper and writing tool, whilst the needle and thread symbolize a sharp and keen brain.

Apart from a period in hell, there are other unfortunate possibilities for rebirth. If a person has been continuously avaricious, he may become a pret¹, and roam around the world as a kind of ghost with an enormous stomach which craves for food, but with no adequate means to assuage its hunger.

A state even more unpleasant than that of a pret is to be reborn as a domestic animal or as an insect, since these have very little opportunity to accumulate good karma needed for a better rebirth. An existence which is

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Ch. III, pp. 74-75.

preferable to that of a pret, but still an unfortunate rebirth, is that as a jak¹ or an asura. The jak is commonly seen as the victim of emotional drives and passions, who possesses magical power. The asuras are conceived of as figures who can change their shape at will, travel through the air, and who can, in exceptional instances, come to the aid of human beings in distress².

While all these types of existences are possible after a person expires, most people envisage that they will be reborn in circumstances very similar to those of their present lives. They imagine that they will be rural Thai people and that they will meet all their friends and relatives again, as well as many of their enemies. This view is related to the idea that inter-personal relationships in a former life, in the present and in the future are not accidental, but are the direct result of interlinked karma. The person who becomes friendly with another individual knows that the present relationship is related to some action in one or more of the past lives, and that it may have consequences in their future lives. Therefore, people who love each other will share each other's beneficial karma³, and people who hurt each other may expect to continue doing so beyond the span of the

1 ยักษ์ .

2

In classical India, asuras were anti-gods, mighty beings who were the enemies of the gods and took little direct interest in ordinary human life. Yaksas were local spirits and could be quite benevolent (Professor A.L. Basham, personal communication, September 1971).

3

See Ch. VI, p. 172.

present life. Thus it is believed that a man who kills somebody will be killed during a future life by his reborn victim.

While many farmers are of the opinion that their destinies are linked with the destinies of the persons they interact with, it is considered an open question in what relative position the actors will stand towards each other in a future existence. A woman may well be reborn as a male; if a person is now the father of another individual, he may, for example, become that person's sister. In general, those people who think that the balance of good and bad karma of the present life is loaded in favour of the bad karma will expect to become people a bit lower on the social and financial ladder; others think they will be reborn in almost the same position; but the people who feel that their beneficial karma outweighs their bad karma hope to be born in a position better than the present. They may envisage becoming a wealthy merchant, a rich landowner or a happy government official.

A person who during his lifetime repeatedly performed ceremonies of major importance may expect great rewards. A man who, whilst a bhikkhu, learned to chant the Pāṭimokkha, and who often led the Samgha in its recitation, a person who financed kathin donations or a man who contributed greatly to the building of one or more monasteries, may temporarily go to one of the heavens to reap the reward of having accumulated such a great store of beneficial karma. A person can live in heaven either in human form as a guest of the gods¹, or he may become one of the gods himself.

1

The Tāvatiṃsa heaven especially caters for human visitors.

It is interesting to note that no farmer aspires to reach nibbāna. This exalted state is reserved for the Buddha and the arahants. Whilst nibbāna certainly must be equated, in the eyes of the farmers, with a feeling of eternal bliss, no normal person can aspire to reach such a state of perfection. Most farmers hope only that they may, during the course of time, improve their circumstances and be reborn in excellent conditions as wealthy men who will be so wise as to invest part of their wealth in meritorious activity.

Thai farmers do not aspire to escape rebirth; instead they wish to be reborn in better circumstances. Mokkha, the well-known term for salvation or deliverance in Buddhist literature, is understood by Buddhist philosophers as a freeing from the eternal cycle of birth and death; for the Thai farmers, who do not feel oppressed at the thought of rebirth, the term has a different meaning. Many unsophisticated Buddhists understand the word mokkha to mean a delivery from misery as a direct result of the acquisition of merit. Mokkha can be experienced temporarily; according to the farmers it simply means an intense feeling of well-being. In future lives, mokkha can thus be experienced by being reborn in very fortunate circumstances.

When assessing the past, older people may realize that they have accumulated a great amount of bad karma. They know that an evil deed of the past cannot be erased by any good deed in the present and that each evil deed inevitably will result in some kind of misfortune. This knowledge does not motivate them to a fatalistic resignation, and it often results in an increased feeling of responsibility. After all, each meritorious deed will result in some kind

of good fortune. Inevitably, the person who acquires good karma increases his chances of fortunate circumstances in his rebirth. Considerations of this kind induce some older people to consider joining a group of religious virtuosi. Men may think about becoming bhikkhus and women may want to become chii¹.

The older monks

While the accumulation of good karma may have become so important to a man that he decides to join the Samgha, other considerations may also play a role. The high status and exalted ritual position of a member of the Samgha attracts all but the humblest men in rural communities. In addition, the position of a bhikkhu is sheltered and secure: a monk can rely upon receiving food and shelter, and every monk receives free medical treatment in all state hospitals. Some of the aspects of monastic life which may deter younger men from becoming a monk do not seem so forbidding to a person of ripe age. Those rules of monastic behaviour which especially accentuate the fact that a bhikkhu should always be calm, passionless and peaceful may attract an older man rather than discourage him. Older monks do not have to prepare for the yearly Naktham examinations, and they will often be able to chant all common Pāli texts, so that their learning tasks are markedly lighter than those of younger monks.

Before an older farmer can become a monk he needs to be assured of continued support by at least one family.

1

The chii are discussed in more detail later in this chapter (infra, pp. 316-320).

Most rural monasteries are not very wealthy and depend for their food on the daily gifts from the lay supporters. The abbot of a monastery, who has the legal power to refuse a bhikkhu permission to live in his monastery¹, will only assent to the entrance of a new monk when he knows that this will not diminish the amount of food available for the other inhabitants of the monastery. It is only when a monk can claim that a group of laymen will continuously present food because of his presence in the monastery that an abbot will consider permitting a new monk to come and live there. In addition, the abbot will assess whether or not the new bhikkhu will fit in with the rest of the monks, but usually he will not exclude a man who has lay sponsors².

After the older aspirant monk has obtained permission to live in a monastery, he has to approach a monk who possesses the power to ordain. The Department of Religious Affairs in the capital recommends that ordainers should not admit men into the Samgha who are sick and feeble, or those who are over eighty years old, but the decision in each individual case rests upon the judgment of the ordainer. Usually an older man who has obtained permission to live in a certain monastery will be able to find an ordainer without much difficulty, regardless of his physical health or age. The ordination ceremony is often

1

This right has been laid down in the law, under Article 38 of the 1962 Act on the Administration of the Order, AAS, p. 54.

2

In municipal areas, the link between laymen and monks is much less close and these considerations may not be necessary for towns.

a simple affair, with only the nearest relatives attending and the minimum number of bhikkhus.

An older man who has been ordained can decide for himself whether he will remain a bhikkhu or whether he will later return to lay status. But, in general, older men remain members of the Samgha for a long time, in many instances until they die. It is not uncommon for a man who joins the order at a ripe age to live as a monk for a further decade or even longer. The longer he is a monk, the more exalted becomes his ritual position, and as more senior monks die or leave the order and newly ordained bhikkhus enter the Samgha, his relative position in the hierarchy rises.

A monk who remains in the same monastery for many years may withdraw almost completely from the world, content with the monastic routine, watching from a distance every year how religious life intensifies during phansaa, to ebb away into quieter months outside phansaa. Some monks find it helpful in remaining a bhikkhu to cultivate friendship with another monk. They may thus come to rely on each other for support and an understanding ear.

Many older monks will not be content to withdraw from the world and they may cultivate their relations with certain laymen, especially the persons who continuously support the monastery for their sake. These monks may be sought out by laymen to give advice in quarrels and disputes, or to help people make decisions regarding economic transactions. Their cells are always open to friends and relatives and they are always willing to discuss the daily events.

Some of these older monks may cultivate their relations with laymen to an even greater extent. They are the bhikkhus who are willing to organize and prepare major ceremonies. They are sought out by the lay leaders who wish to organize the yearly fund-raising ceremony, or to organize a pilgrimage. The abbot of the monastery may delegate some administrative tasks to those monks who show an aptitude for organization. Thus an older monk may take charge of the distribution of food, ensuring that every monk, novice, degwat and animal obtains a fair share. The abbot may ask such a monk to supervise the borrowing from the store of household goods of the monastery. The bhikkhu will write down in detail what goods leave the monastery, and see to it that they are returned in good condition¹. Sometimes older monks may be asked to enter all sources of income in a book especially designed for this purpose, and to supervise all purchases. The abbot of a monastery may thus depend heavily upon his senior monks for the daily administration of his monastery, and reserve for himself only the most important decisions, and the receiving of the more distinguished visitors.

Traditionally, the abbot of a monastery was chosen from among these older monks. Nowadays, however, it has become the policy in the Samgha to appoint younger

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See Ch. IX, pp. 274-275.

experienced monks, often in their middle thirties, to the position of abbot, rather than older men¹.

Some older monks may specialize in activities related to channelling beneficial power. Thus a monk may try to obtain a regular clientèle by offering medicine to the sick. Within the field of medicine several further specializations are possible. While one bhikkhu may make pills by grinding up sacred objects, another may make a name as a doctor by prescribing certain herbs from which a medicinal tea can be brewed. A common method of curing consists of making a bowl of nammon, with which the patients can rub their bodies. The monk's name as a doctor depends fully on his success in difficult cases. The monk who specializes in medicine does not receive a fixed payment for his services: it is up to the client to decide on the remuneration. Most farmers will only pay after they feel better.

There are older monks who specialize in esoteric knowledge. They may, for example, draw jan² on rectangular or triangular pieces of cloth. After drawing the diagrams and inscribing the proper letters and cyphers whilst pronouncing appropriate khaathaa, these pieces of cloth are capable of protecting a person or an object. The monk or layman who specializes in making them usually derives his

1

A monk in charge of a wide administrative unit will request the more senior laymen who live near a monastery to suggest a new candidate for the post of abbot as soon as the position becomes vacant. This senior monk will not usually go against the wishes of the laymen, but in private discussions he can influence the choice (cf. AAS, p. 6).

2

Ch. III, p. 65, footnote 3.

knowledge from another specialist, who transmits his skills orally. There are many publications circulating which deal with drawing jan, but most specialists will insist that these books do not transmit the full knowledge. The pieces of cloth inscribed with jan can be hung in an elevated place to protect a house, a boat or a car. They can be rolled up and used as takrut¹ around the neck.

A person who specializes in esoteric knowledge may become so proficient in these magical skills that he becomes the recognized specialist for many ceremonies. He may be asked to purify and protect the area of the house where a woman will give birth and where she will lie near the fire², or to inscribe a jan on metal to protect a male child. He may tattoo a young man or a monk with beneficially charged ink³, or prepare the jan which can be placed on top of the most important poles of a new house⁴. If a farmer buys a new cart, he may ask such a monk to bless the vehicle and draw some protective diagrams over it whilst muttering the proper spells. He is also the monk who makes phra khryan.

The Chii

In Thailand, no females are admitted to full membership of the order. In view of the fact that women are generally regarded as antithetic to monks, this should surprise no

1

Ch. III, pp. 77-78.

2

Ch. III, p. 62.

3

Ch. IV, pp. 106-107.

4

Ch. VII, p. 214.

observer. But the Thais often realize that women can, in theory, become members of the Samgha after all, for the Pātimokkha mentions the word bhikkhunī repeatedly.

Regarding the admittance of women to the order, Phra Khruu Wimonthiti commented that the practical difficulties surrounding admittance are too great to be overcome. The ordination of a bhikkhunī requires several years' novitiate and the ordination ceremony itself would be most embarrassing because of the intimate questioning prescribed in the Vinaya Pitaka¹.

It is certainly true that the Tipitaka does not encourage women to become bhikkhunīs. If the rules of the tenth chapter of the Cullavagga are strictly followed, it would be completely impossible to begin to set up this branch of the order anew. The separation between bhikkhus and bhikkhunīs is prescribed so rigorously that virtually two different organizations are needed².

Older women who wish to devote all their time to religion can become chii³. These women are not bhikkhunīs; they are not full members of the monastic Samgha and therefore they should not be referred to as nuns. They are an organized body of laywomen who live as recluses.

1

The Venerable Wimonthiti probably referred to the rules laid down in the Cullavagga X, 17, 1-6 (SBE, Vol. XX, pp. 349-353) - personal communication, Phra Khruu Wimonthiti, 31 August 1968, Watphanænpluu.

2

SBE, Vol. XX, pp. 320 et seq.

3

⁴. This word is probably related to the Sanskrit jīva. In Hindi there exists a similar word, jī, a title attached to names as a mark of respect (MMW, p. 442a).

Undoubtedly they are modelled upon the order of monks: they shave their heads monthly to indicate that they renounce vanity, and they wear robes similar to those of the monks. They are not allowed to wear yellow or red robes, which would make them indistinguishable from monks, and therefore they wear white. They always maintain a neat and clean appearance and observe an order of seniority, a senior chii having authority over a younger one. That they are a long-established institution in Thailand is demonstrated by the account of Schouten, more than three centuries ago:

Besides these Priests, there are a sort of old Nuns shorn, lodged in Chappels near the greatest Temples, who assist very devoutly in all their preachings, singings, ceremonies, and other Church services, but all voluntary, being tied to no rules or prescriptions.¹

The institution of female recluses is widespread over the whole country, and the Yearbook for Religious Affairs for 1967 reports a total of more than 10,000 chii in Thailand². Usually these recluses do not beg for food and therefore they must be able to sustain themselves financially before they can become chii.

There are some misconceptions surrounding the subject of the number of precepts that these female religious specialists follow. Whilst Schouten states that they are

1

Joost Schouten, A Description of the Government, Might, Religion, Customes, Traffick, and other Remarkable Affairs in the Kingdom of Siam, 1636, translated into English by Roger Manley in 1671, p. 141.

2

รายงานการศาสนา๒๕๑๐ หน้า๘๗ gives 10,013 chii for the whole of Thailand.

tied to no rules or prescriptions¹, Kaufman, three centuries later, reports that they follow 'only eight of the 227 rules'², and Kingshill maintains that the chii 'are required only to keep the ten precepts which the novices keep'³. In reality, these female recluses follow the Five Precepts during ordinary days and, like other devout laymen, they may join the group which adheres to the eight precepts on special religious days.

They try to follow the rules laid down in the formula of the Five Precepts strictly and meticulously⁴, and this compels them to avoid contact with the secular world. Because they live on the border of or within the monastery compound they are able to attend whenever a public ceremony is held, and thus they seldom miss a preaching service. In their private surroundings they may add to their store of beneficial karma by reading sacred books, by meditating and by chanting Pāli texts. Often the chii become very proficient in chanting Pāli suttas and it is not unheard of for a group of chii to be invited to chant sacred texts in private homes, as the monks commonly do⁵. In rural areas this rarely occurs, because there are seldom enough chii attached to a rural monastery to make up a chapter. Moreover, many farmers, whilst appreciating the chanting

1

Schouten, op. cit., p. 141.

2

Kaufman, Bangkhuad, p. 121.

3

Kingshill, Ku Daeng, p. 73.

4

See Ch. VIII, pp. 235-236.

5

Ch. IX, pp. 272-277.

skills of the female recluses, prefer the bhikkhus. The latter, after all, are full members of the Samgha and follow more precepts, and are therefore expected to sacralize water in a more thorough manner.

Death

The different ways of dealing with the phenomenon of death can be brought under two headings: there are procedures for handling deaths which are expected and predictable, and different methods for treating those which occur suddenly, tragically and unpredictably.

A. The expected demise

People who live to a ripe age and who, having become very feeble, expect to die soon should remain in their own homes. If they are staying somewhere else, for example in a hospital, they should be transported to their homes before dying. A man who dies away from home cannot be brought into a house. It is inauspicious to bring a corpse into a building and he would have to be brought to the monastery where all final rituals would take place. It is much better to perform these rituals in the house, so that the spirit of the deceased will become one of the phii baan¹.

When the relatives of a man are aware of the fact that death is approaching rapidly, they must try and make the dying person think of those activities of the past which were highly auspicious. A man may be reminded of the fact that he was ordained as a bhikkhu, or that he once performed

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Ch. III, p. 76.

a kathin ceremony. A woman can be reminded of the ordination of her sons or the periods of time she spent in the monastery as an ubaasikaa. In general it is always advisable to make a dying person repeat some auspicious words like the Triple Gem, or the words 'arahant, arahant'¹. It is believed that a person who at the moment of death thinks about a meritorious activity reaps the fruits of these actions immediately by heading towards a good rebirth, whereas a person who dies remorseful of the past immediately reaps the result of the evil deeds of the past through an inauspicious rebirth.

When a person has expired in his own home, surrounded by his relatives, signs of excessive grief should be avoided. If there are persons who are overcome by grief and cannot control themselves, they should be taken away from the corpse; it is inauspicious to let tears drop on the body of a dead person. The reason for this belief is that the soul of the dead person may not have realized exactly what has happened, and the crying relatives may make it difficult for the soul of the deceased to depart from this existence. When the eyes of the dead person remain wide open this is a sign that the soul is afraid to leave the body. A relative should close the eyes whilst saying in a soothing voice words like: 'It is all right, don't be afraid, you will go well'.

1

In Buddhist philosophy, an arahant (lit. 'deserving') is a person who has destroyed all karma influences, who will not be reborn and will therefore reach nibbāna. The fact that a dying person may use this word does not indicate that he believes he will become an arahant. The word is used purely because it is an auspicious one which may turn the thoughts of a dying person to a meritorious subject.

The bereaved family will usually call on the services of a man who is prepared to act as undertaker in return for a small fee. He will instruct that water be fetched and that the body be washed. Clean clothes are then draped around the body and all relatives are invited to take part in a ritual washing of the corpse. Everybody files past the body, sprinkling a little water over the hands and feet of the deceased¹. If the person who died was fond of areca fruit and betel leaves, a small quantity may be placed in the mouth. In the mouth is invariably placed a coin, which the dead person's soul needs in order to pay the fare to cross the underworld river, guarded by Phra Ketkəcwculaamanii². Further preparation of the corpse entails the colouring of the face with turmeric³, the arranging of the hands on the chest, palm to palm, with a candle, incense and a flower placed between them. The ritual specialist binds the wrists, arms and legs with the

1

In this context it is not only a gesture of cleansing, for in Thailand the act of sprinkling can be interpreted as an act of paying homage (see Ch. IX, pp. 280-281).

2

The Thai name of the person receiving the coin can be translated as: 'Bright Gem Cūlāmaṇi', in which the word cūlāmaṇi means 'a jewel worn in a crest or diadem' (PED, p. 271a). Probably it refers to Yama, the Hindu god who presides over the dead and who is described as '... with a glittering form, a crown on his head...' (MMW, p. 846a).

A parallel practice existed in Ancient Greece: 'As all the dead were obliged to pay a small piece of money for their admission, it was always usual, among the ancients, to place under the tongue of the deceased a piece of money for Charon' (F.A. Wright, Lemprière's Classical Dictionary, 1963, p. 144a).

3

Powder obtained from the Curcuma domestica (McF., p. 141b).

cotton thread, so often used in ceremonies. This thread, saajsin, is wound in such a way that one end will hang free for a length of about one metre. The body is placed in a wooden coffin, and the loose end of the cotton cord is hung over the side so that a second cord can be knotted to it when monks come to chant. In the coffin is placed a small ladder with four rungs, made from the stem of a banana tree. This little ladder should enable the soul of the dead man to leave the coffin at any time. It is necessary that it should have an even number of rungs because it is believed that spirits cannot climb a ladder which possesses an uneven number¹. During the time that the corpse is in the house, a candle and incense ought to be alight continuously.

Whilst the corpse remains at home, it is believed that the soul hovers in or around the body, and the behaviour of the inhabitants of the house is adjusted accordingly. Several times a day one of the relatives approaches the coffin, places a little plate with food on a tray near by, raps softly on the wood of the coffin and warns that it is time to eat. After a suitable time has elapsed, during which the spirit partakes of the essence of the food, the plate can be removed and the contents can be thrown to the domestic animals.

During the evenings a wake is observed by the relatives and their friends. If the family can afford the expense, they can elaborate on the ritual wake by inviting a chapter

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See Ch. IX, p. 273, footnote 1.

of four¹ monks to come to chant during one or more nights. When the monks arrive at the house, a relative should politely knock on the coffin and inform the soul of the dead person that the monks have come. During the night the monks chant appropriate texts from the Cettamnaan², whilst a saajsin is attached to the cotton thread enveloping the body. In former days, the monks would bring the text of the story of the Venerable Mālaya and his adventures in the heavens and the hells³, and this text was chanted in Thai for the dead person and for the audience of family and friends. At present, however, very few monks know how to chant Thai texts in the proper manner, and in rural areas this story is not told any more. In addition to a chapter of monks, a wealthy family may order the presence of a small orchestra to play music between the periods of chanting.

The corpse may remain in the house up to seven days. According to one informant, it is on the seventh day that the dead person suddenly realizes that he cannot remain in the decaying body. This is the moment when he has to go to the underworld and wait till he is reborn, in a heaven, a hell or back on earth. During the time that the corpse

1

An even number of monks is usually regarded as inauspicious. It is only during the ceremonies dealing with the spirits of the dead that a chapter of four monks is needed. Another inversion from ordinary auspicious behaviour is the changed circumambulation, from the auspicious clockwise direction to the anti-clockwise direction.

2

Cettamnaan, pp. 11-14.

3

Cf. Ch. VIII, pp. 242-243.

rests in the house, no food or incense should be offered to the Buddha image of the house, or to the saan Phra Phuum, the shrine of the guardian spirit of the house. Both these powers can be informed of the bereavement only after the dead body has been removed.

The removal of the corpse from the house to the monastery usually requires the supervision and assistance of the ritual specialist. He binds some saajsin around the wrists of the persons who help carry the body in order to reassure their khwan and to prevent it from being frightened and chased away¹. He then walks three times around the coffin in an anti-clockwise direction, rapping several times on it and urging the spirit of the dead man to remain in the body for a while during transport. The door and stairway have been temporarily transformed with branches so that the spirit does not recognize from which house he is carried. As soon as the coffin has been lowered on to the ground, the undertaker will say a spell, whilst drawing a line in the sand with his knife, to make sure that the spirit will not re-enter the house. The same procedure takes place at the point where the remains of the person leave the compound. As soon as the corpse has left, all water containers of the household should be emptied and filled with fresh water. If the coffin on its way to the monastery must cross a bridge, the undertaker binds some incense, a candle and some flowers to one of the posts².

1

Cf. Ch. III, pp. 66-67.

2

In the region around Watsaancaaw, a piece of paper was sometimes also attached. On this paper some streaks of gold and silver had been painted. According to most informants, the inclusion of such paper is derived from a Chinese custom.

Upon reaching the monastery, it depends on the circumstances what will happen to the body. If the family is poor and cannot afford a ceremony of major proportions, it may be arranged with the abbot to organize a cremation on the first suitable day. It is inauspicious to cremate people on a Friday or Saturday, or to burn a person who has died on a Saturday on the following Tuesday, because those are the days when 'the spirits of dead people are strong'¹. On other days of the week, however, a cremation can be held. The family asks a chapter of monks to chant some appropriate Pāli texts and, after the chanting, the procession towards the funeral pyre takes place. In front walk the monks, holding a saajsin which is knotted to the cord with which the corpse is bound. The family members and friends follow the bearers and the coffin. At the cremation grounds, the procession circumambulates three times in an anti-clockwise direction and the coffin is placed on top of the pyre.

In front of the funeral pyre, relatives will place several trays with household goods and tools. On these trays should be a lamp, some fuel, a box of matches, a knife, some medicine, seed rice, onions and garlic to plant and some tools to work the soil. Sometimes a piece of paper is included, on which it is written that the bearer is entitled to receive a plot of land from Thossaraadcha,

1

It is on such days that an evil person could capture a spirit which would provide him with a great amount of power. Or, on the other hand, a spirit may seek shelter in a human being without showing any signs of its presence until the person sleeps. (See the phii krasyy, Ch. III, p. 75).

the original owner of all earth¹. The trays with goods are dropped from a small height on to the ground at the moment the pyre is lighted. It is believed that the dead person is finally despatched at the moment of cremation, and the dropping of useful objects is probably a symbolic destruction in the belief that anything destroyed during cremation will accompany the dead person on his destination.

When a monk is cremated, no objects are dropped on to the ground. After all, a monk needs no special equipment and he is not allowed to work on the land. Modern funeral customs, imported from the towns, tend to leave out the offering of useful objects.

After the cremation, the tools and objects of which the essence has been given to accompany the dead person become the property of the monastery where the man was cremated. If a monk lighted the pyre, he might inadvertently kill many insects which live in the wood; therefore it is always a layman who performs this act. The cremation lasts several hours on a traditional wood pyre², and it needs constant supervision by some older men who carry long poles. They must ensure that the body is properly consumed. When the fire is finally allowed to die, the ashes are raked out in order to find several small pieces of bone. These bones are arranged along an east-west axis somewhere near, and an older monk is invited to perform the final ritual of the cremation.

1

See Ch. VII, pp. 217-220.

2

Modern monasteries nowadays often boast an incinerator which works more efficiently.

A piece of cloth is laid over the bones. Then the bhikkhu grasps one end of the cloth and chants the famous lines

aniccā vata saṃkhārā uppādavayadhammino uppajjhivā
nirujjhanti tesaṃ vūpasamo sukho.

This is the ancient Buddhist proverb which is most closely connected with death. Mrs Rhys Davids translated the lines as follows:

O transient are our life's experiences!
Their nature 'tis to rise and pass away.
They happen in our ken, they cease to be.¹
O well for us when they are sunk to rest.

The laymen turn each piece of bone a half-circle, leaving the rearranged pieces along the same axis². The same piece of cloth is draped over the bones again and the bhikkhu recites another famous proverb connected with death:

aciraṃ vata yaṃ kāyo paṭhaviṃ adhisessati chuḍḍo
apetaviññāṇo niratthaṃ va kalingaraṃ³.

It can be translated as:

Before long, alas, this body will lie upon the ground,
cast aside, with no consciousness, like a useless thing.

1

Psalms of the Early Buddhists, PTS, 1964, p. 385.

2

It was suggested that the first time the bones were arranged towards the west, pointing to death, and the second time they are placed towards the east, indicating a rebirth (personal communication, Somkhuang Sutticaj, 5 December 1968).

3

Dhammapada, 41.

The bhikkhu receives the cloth¹ and the laymen fill an urn with ashes and pieces of bone. The remainder is thrown back into the smouldering ashes.

Cremations are occasions for great elaborations. Families which can afford to spend a few thousand baht will lose face if they dispose of the body of an honoured member of the family in a quick and simple manner. For elaborate cremations (ṅaansob)² a long period of preparation is needed and the corpse will therefore be stored in a temporary grave for a period of time ranging from a month to more than a year.

The family arranging an elaborate cremation will be helped financially by relatives and friends. Visitors, attracted by the news that a great cremation is to take place, may also contribute. Giving assistance to a family in order that they may cremate a dead member is a common method of obtaining beneficial karma. In order to attract and occupy many friends and relatives, the ceremonies can be accompanied by music, theatre performances or films. The coffin is enveloped in ornamental panels and surrounded by beautiful tables, enveloped in flowers. A great number of monks can be invited to chant appropriate texts whilst holding the saajsin which is attached to the cord around the body. Hundreds of bhikkhus may be invited each to receive a piece of cloth which is draped over the coffin,

1

The presentation of cloth to monks during cremations seems related to the early days of Buddhism, when cloth was scarce and monks were instructed to obtain robes from discarded rags at funerals.

2

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and all laymen present may be asked to come forward and place a candle and some incense in the coffin, whilst asking forgiveness for any ill feelings that they may have caused the deceased¹. On this occasion, copies of a little booklet can be distributed among the guests. This book contains a short biography of the deceased, some articles connected with ethics and Buddhist philosophy and a list of persons who sponsored the cremation.

Before the pyre is lighted, the ornamental panels are removed from the coffin and fireworks may accompany this. After the corpse has been consumed by the fire and the urn has been filled, some ashes may be placed in a separate container and deposited under a shrine erected for that purpose near the bood.

Once a year the family may invite a chapter of monks to come to their house and chant for the dead. The urns of the ancestors will be placed at the right hand of the leader of the chapter instead of the customary Buddha image and bowl of water². When the appropriate texts have been chanted, the monks may take the saajsin after it has been attached to the urns and place it on the floor in front of them. The monks hold the saajsin loosely between index and thumb and chant solemnly in unison the famous lines connected with death:

aniccā...³

1

The candle and incense are the common objects needed for a polite conversation with the spirit of a deceased person. The fact that these are placed in the coffin does not mean that everybody adds fuel to the pyre; this is an accidental result of the custom.

2

See Chapter IX, pp. 275-276.

3

See supra, p.328.

B. Sudden, unpredictable death

In all cases of accidental death some modification of the ritual discussed above is necessary. When a person expires away from home, all rituals have to be performed in the monastery to which the corpse has been brought, since a dead person should not be carried into a house. The undertaker can prepare the corpse in the usual manner and negotiations between the relatives and the abbot are needed to ascertain a day for its cremation. If the accidental death involved no violence from another person, for example in the case of a sudden illness or a suicide, a wealthy family may defer the cremation until they can organize several elaborations.

When someone dies from a violent attack by another person, the spirit of the killed man is a phii taajhoon¹ and, when dealing with such cases, caution is required. Especially dangerous phii taajhoon come into existence when a woman dies while pregnant or during childbirth. The body of a person who expired in such an inauspicious manner must be cremated as soon as possible. The corpses can be used by evil magical practitioners to draw nammanphraaj², or to perform other necromantial rituals. Formerly the monks were not prepared to chant Pāli texts for people who died so inauspiciously, but in present times this restriction is no longer in force and the unfortunate victim is not deprived of the chanting of monks.

1

See Ch. III, pp. 75-76.

2

Ch. IV, p. 119.

It would be a terrible occasion if a murder took place in the monastery grounds. This would stain the reputation of the monastery: people would not come to its ceremonies any more; laymen would be ashamed to live near it. As soon as there are signs of violent quarrels during big ceremonies, the laymen are ready to stop the fight or to move the fighting people away from the monastery. A murder committed one yard outside the gates is bad for the family of the victim, and it is a serious occasion for the community because a new phii taajhoon would be created, but at least it would not stain the reputation of the monastery because it did not happen in the grounds.

Special arrangements should be made in case of a miscarriage or a stillbirth. A ritual specialist can be called in, who will dispose of the dead child by placing the small corpse in an earthenware vessel. This container is closed carefully and the proper spells and magical diagrams should ensure that the spirit cannot escape from the vessel. The ritual specialist in question finally disposes of the pot by placing it in the river so that it floats seawards. If a small child dies of an illness, the parents or a magical specialist can inter the body somewhere in the monastery grounds. No separate cremation service is needed in this case because the individual was not yet adult.

In the ceremonies surrounding death, several themes have appeared which centre upon two seemingly opposed ideas: a corpse should be disposed of and the spirit of the dead person dispatched, but a person who has died at a ripe age

should also become one of the phii baan¹, and therefore remain in his old surroundings.

The first idea is reflected in the manner a corpse should leave a house, so that the spirit will not return and trouble the survivors. The spirit of the dead person should not bother the living, and therefore a cotton thread is knotted around the wrists of the coffin bearers. That is also the main reason for asking forgiveness for any grievances of the past between the dead person and the survivors. The passing from the land of the living is also visible in the ritual of providing the dead person with a coin, light, fuel, rice and tools: it helps the spirit to depart from this world into an unknown region.

Seemingly opposed are the ritual acts and the beliefs which are intended to link the spirit with the house in which he once lived. After cremation, some bodily remains are placed in the house in an honourable position together with a photograph of the deceased. The older inhabitants of the house will regularly light incense and a candle near where these remains are kept, and inform the spirit of the dead person of the important events in their lives. The family should never fail to warn the phii baan if a guest stays overnight, if a marriage is concluded or if a new member of the family is born.

In the eyes of the rural people, however, these two ideas are not opposed. While the cremation rituals ensure that the spirit of the dead person is sent towards the world of the dead, his links with the world of the living

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See Ch. III, p. 76.

are not completely broken off. When dead, he will realize what happens on earth; a person who has expired can receive the beneficial karma that is sent to him when his relatives perform the kruadnaam ceremony¹. From the world of the dead he will guard his former property, waiting for the moment of rebirth. The exact time of rebirth cannot be determined. Time in the world of the dead need not be experienced in the same manner as humans experience time. One day in the world of the dead may, for example, correspond with a human year.

After an unknown period, the deceased will be reborn, maybe in circumstances comparable to those he has just left. In his new existence, however, he will lose the links with his previous existence that he could maintain whilst in the world of the dead. He cannot receive merit as soon as rebirth has occurred, and his newly formed memory will in normal circumstances not be able to comprehend what caused him to be reborn like this.

Life appears to proceed, not so much in a continuous circle as in an endless spiral, each new turn built on the previous one, never revolving on the same plane. The comparison with a spiral becomes even clearer if the eternal coil is envisaged as obscured in some sectors, representing the time from death to rebirth.

1

See Ch. V, pp. 147-148.

CHAPTER XI

CONCLUSIONS

Not all anthropologists agree on the definition of the basic premises upon which anthropology is founded. Therefore it has been felt necessary to outline in a systematic form what, in this thesis, is meant by some fundamental concepts like social activity, norm and ceremony. In line with these definitions, religious activities have been defined as:

those social activities or aspects of social activities which involve human actors in relation with culturally postulated immaterial non-human actors.¹

In order to gain insight into the norm complexes of Thai religion, much attention has been given throughout the work to the analysis of certain ceremonies. It would have been impractical to present a record of the events noted during different ceremonies witnessed, because so many variations of ritual had been noted that the evidence had to be weighed and a generalization had to be made before trying to discern the basic patterns underlying these ceremonies.

It has been argued that a distinction could be made between the essential, elementary ceremony, the common elaborations of its ritual and the deviations from this common behaviour. Of these three aspects, the first two have received most attention in this work; reference to deviations has been made only sporadically, when they were found to possess an exceptional explanatory value.

1

Ch. I, p. 32.

The ceremonies which have been analysed in the course of this work have been ordered in such a manner that they showed an ontogenetical pattern: that is, they showed the growth and development of individuals in their culture.

It appeared that from earliest childhood onward a distinction could be made between the religious knowledge of boys and that of girls. Young boys receive better charms and amulets, they are allowed to approach monks, and they are encouraged to become degwat. As adolescents they have access to a multitude of magically charged objects and they can receive the religious tattoos. When they are twenty, they are expected to become bhikkhus for at least one rainy season, and thus they have the opportunity to learn the sacred chanting and to obtain a thorough knowledge of rituals of all kinds. Being a member of the Samgha does not mean being a recluse. The withdrawal from the world consists of an abstention from worldly behaviour, whilst the involvement with the community as a whole usually remains intense.

An adult man has opportunities to participate in many private and public ceremonies in 'his own' monastery as well as in others. Whenever a decision of importance is to be made with regard to the monastery where he was once a monk, his opinion will be asked in a public meeting. The organization of the annual fund-raising ceremony requires his assistance with both manpower and finance.

Old men can be ritual specialists; they may specialize in healing, leading the community in dealings with the monks, or become undertakers. The position of these specialists is high in their society; their words are listened to with respect. During phansaa, many older

men are among those laymen who follow the eight precepts for a specified period of time.

There are many incentives for older men to rejoin the Samgha and enjoy a secure existence in their community for the rest of their days. They will never have to worry about obtaining food or shelter, and their medical treatment in state hospitals is free. If they decide to become monks again, they are also assured of a chance of a rebirth more favourable than their present circumstances.

Girls, on the other hand, are not allowed to come near bhikkhus; they cannot become degwat. When they are teenagers they cannot obtain the powerful magically charged amulets that boys wear, and no tattooer gives them permanent religious markings on their skins. At the age when young men join the order, girls have only indirect access to religious knowledge. They can attend ceremonies, but always in a passive role, only as recipients of merit and not as generators of beneficial karma.

One of the main reasons for their exclusion from religious knowledge lies in the fact that menstrual blood is regarded as opposed to protective power. Women are thus periodically a source of pollution and therefore are kept away from amulets and beneficially charged tattoos. In addition, women are looked on as antithetic to the monks, for by their shape and appearance they incite the bhikkhus, especially the younger ones, to be less inclined towards the monastic discipline, to leave the order and to marry.

It is thus only when women are past childbearing age, and less attractive sexually, that they are able to obtain detailed religious knowledge. Especially during the

periods of adhering to the eight precepts, many older women learn to recite Pāli texts fluently, meditate and discuss religious topics.

In the discussion of children, adolescents and religion, it has appeared that the Thais believe in sacred power, inherent for example in the bood, in sacred books and in amulets. One of the more usual manners in which an object or a person is believed to obtain some of this power is by proximity to a bhikkhu who performs an activity which reputedly carries good karma. Monks are thus believed to emit sacred power from time to time.

During the discussion of tattooing it has been shown that, apart from the beneficial sacred power, another aggressive and potentially harmful energy is commonly believed in. Between the extremes of aggressive and protective power a region of ambiguous nature can be discerned. In Table 7 the main findings with regard to the types of magical power are summarized. At the extreme ends of the scale, on the one hand the protectively charged objects and substances are ordered, at the other the aggressive, potentially dangerous materials.

A close examination of the scale of magical powers reveals that similar principles underlie these three types. By contact or by association with a substance which is magically charged, be it protective, ambiguous or aggressive, another object or substance is believed to become similarly loaded. This is of importance for the understanding of the evaluation of the cardinal directions, the east being associated with the new day, light and life, the west with death and darkness. Persons and objects are ordered on a horizontal plane in accordance with the auspiciousness or inauspiciousness of the cardinal directions.

Table 7. The scale of different kinds of magical powers

Aggressive	Ambiguous	Protective
<p>1. Polluted substances, such as corpses, excreta, menstrual flow. Some evil spirits.</p>	<p>1. Anthropomorphic powers, mythological figures, such as <u>theewadaa</u>, the ancestors, guardian spirits.</p>	<p>1. Beneficially charged substances, amulets, medallions. Monks whilst performing monastic skills.</p>
<p>2. Material frequently in contact with polluted substances, such as earth, the feet of men and women, the legs of young women.</p>	<p>2. Material frequently in contact with ambiguous power, such as the <u>saan Phra Phuum</u>, the ancestor shelf.</p>	<p>2. Material frequently in contact with beneficially charged substances, such as the <u>bood</u>, a begging bowl, the monk's robes.</p>
<p>3. Images or objects associated with aggressiveness, such as images of aggressive animals, or a tiger's tooth.</p>	<p>3. Images or objects associated with ambiguous powers, such as images of many characters of the <u>Rāmāyana</u>.</p>	<p>3. Images or objects associated with protection, such as books on astrology, incense and candles.</p>

Similar ideas underlie the ordering and evaluation of things on a vertical line: lesser ones are ordered close to the earth and the more highly valued ones placed above it. After all, the earth is frequently seen as polluted. This system of thought is visible in the evaluation of the human body itself. The feet are regarded as negatively charged through their association with earth and pollution, the torso is ambiguous, while the head and shoulders of a person are most valued. Most important objects in the environment of the farmers can thus be ordered according to their magical charge, or their association with magical power. Therefore plants with auspicious names, or with names which evoke auspicious thoughts, are used in ceremonies where protective power is important. Those plants which have the power to heal, but which may also increase the discomfort of a patient, are ambiguously charged. The plants which break easily, which do not resist decay or which carry an inauspicious name can be placed on the aggressive end of the scale of magical powers.

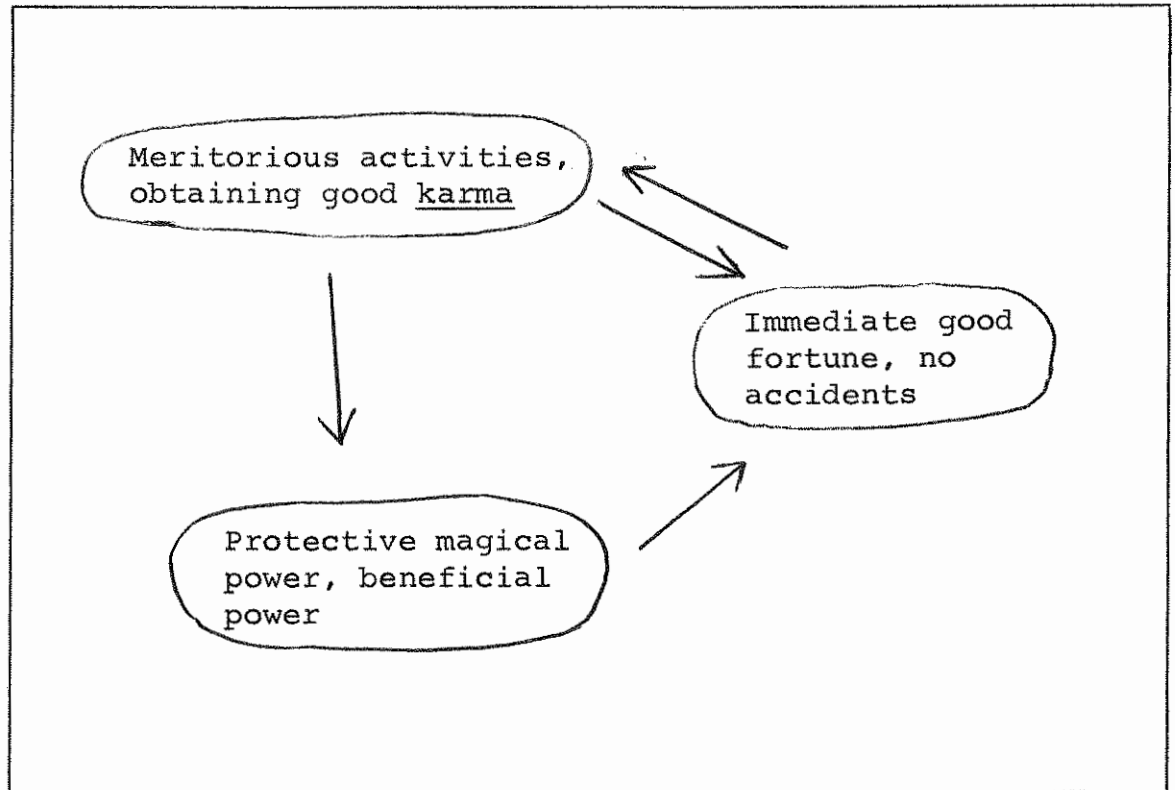
There are objects which have no place in the scale of magical powers, but these usually consist of things which are of no interest to the Thai farmer, such as plants which cannot be used for medicine, consumption or construction, spirits beyond the world view of the farmers and animals which play no part in the local folklore and cannot be used in the household.

While young men usually deal with the whole range of magical powers, and seek energy of all types, protective, ambiguous and aggressive, so that they may be invulnerable, attractive and strong, it has been shown that in the later

stages of life, apart from the few ritual specialists who obtain an income from handling aggressive power, such as the tattooer, men usually focus their attention on protective, beneficial energy.

Especially during the later stages of life, the concept of beneficial power is linked with several other important ideas in Thai religion. Figure 6 illustrates the connections between three important notions. The relations between protective magical power and activities which carry good karma have been shown during our discussions of monastic behaviour. It is precisely when the monks perform activities which increase their own good

Fig. 6. The synchronic relations between protective power, good fortune and merit



karma that they are believed to emit a beneficial protective force. Thus they are able to charge a bowl of water by chanting Pāli texts over it, by meditating in the vicinity of the vessel, or by holding an important ceremony close by.

As a direct result of protective power, a man may ward off evil, avoid accidents and become invulnerable; moreover this protective power is often reputed to cause his popularity to increase. The links between protective magical power and the good fortune of the person who possesses it are only one aspect of the picture. In the world view of the Thai farmers, good luck may follow a meritorious deed almost immediately. A farmer may obtain a splendid harvest as a direct result of performing an important ceremony, and rice sales may be more profitable than usual immediately after a chapter of monks has recited texts in the farmer's home. A man is believed to stand a better chance of winning the lottery immediately after donating generously at a meritorious ritual.

Thus increased prosperity is believed to be partly the result of previously having performed a meritorious deed; the extra wealth in turn gives the opportunity to engage in further meritorious activities in greater variety.

This synchronic view of the relations between merit, protective magical power and good fortune is, however, an artificial construct, needed only to illustrate the religious motivation of adult men. In reality the dimension of time is added, because the doctrine of karma is viewed in a perspective of many lives. Good fortune may be the result of merit obtained one hour ago, but it may also partly be influenced by karma obtained in a previous life. Similarly, good fortune may not immediately

follow the performance of a meritorious act, but some time in the future it will germinate.

It is especially during the later stages of his life that a man takes the diachronic aspects into account. The closer he approaches death, the greater the chance that meritorious activities are motivated by a wish to obtain a fortunate rebirth.

The analysis of certain Thai rituals and beliefs has thus led to the recognition of a complex of interrelated ideas. As an individual grows older, he tends to place his main attention upon different aspects of his own religion. As a broad generalization, it could be argued that young people in rural central Thailand seem mainly preoccupied with the acquisition and manipulation of different kinds of magical power. It is only with maturity that the interest focuses upon the protective, beneficial end of the scale of magical powers, and that interrelated ideas such as pursuit of beneficial karma and the quest for prosperity gain in importance. When an individual nears the end of his life the emphasis shifts again, and a future rebirth may become a person's main religious concern.

According to our definition, religious activities are social activities or aspects of social activities. Religion has not been approached as a compartmentalized institution, and therefore the discussion of the religious aspects of Thai rural life has sometimes led to the discussion of certain non-religious behaviour. In Thai society religion appears so important that it pervades almost all norm complexes.

Our approach to Thai religion seems essentially different from that of other scholars. A perusal of the

works of other students dealing with Thai rural religion as a whole has shown that this religion is usually regarded as being made up of three distinct strata. It has been argued that the historical evidence of the region which we have studied does not bear out the assumption that three religions form the background of Thai religion. In addition, synchronic evidence for this trilateral division proved inconclusive and has been shown to be open to a different interpretation. It has become clear in the course of this dissertation that religion in rural central Thailand can be analysed as a whole. It proved at least heuristically valid to approach Thai religion as an integrated complex of norms. There has appeared no evidence for the existence of different incompatible world views.

Often a detail of a ceremony could be traced to parallels in other religions. Sometimes a similarity has been drawn with Chinese customs or with Cambodian practices. The great majority of links which could be established indicate a strong influence of the Indian culture. The frequent use of Sanskrit words, sometimes in preference to the Pāli forms, indicates that once the Sanskrit tradition was strong. This need not necessarily be interpreted as an indication of a Brahmanic religion or of a Mahāyāna Buddhist phase in the religio-historical background of the region. Sanskrit has been the literary medium of several Theravāda schools of thought.

In this respect it is rather remarkable that the beliefs of the Thais show no traces of Mahāyāna ideology. The details of ceremonies where Mahāyāna ideas might have been expected correspond fully with the orthodox Theravāda

approach. For example, the ritual at the moment of death, in which in Mahāyāna countries Amitābha plays such an important role, in Watsaancaaw fully corresponds with Theravāda ideals.

APPENDIX I

A NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

Throughout this dissertation, Thai words are generally transliterated into romanized spelling with the use of the phonetic system devised by Mary R. Haas, and which is used in her Thai-English Students' Dictionary. For typographical reasons the four tonal marks of her system have been omitted throughout. In some instances further deviations from the phonetic system occur, namely when words are widely known in a different orthography. For example, the word baht has been chosen in preference to baad, and Maeklong instead of Mæeklɔŋ.

The phonetic system proved very useful during the fieldwork periods, and has been widely used in the notes and the transliteration of oral statements of informants. In the later stages of the research however, it became clear that, apart from taking their pronunciation into account, it is of great interest to take note of the manner in which the Thais spell their words.

The Thais possess many more written consonants than distinct corresponding phonemes. Table 8 shows how individual Thai letters are romanized in the Haas system, and at the same time reveals their relation with Pāli or Sanskrit consonants. For the Indian orthography, the transliteration decided upon and generally accepted after the report of the Transliteration Committee of the Geneva Oriental Congress in 1894 has been used.

In words of Indian origin, the Thais often use a spelling which corresponds closely to the Indian spelling,

but this does not always appear clearly in the phonetic rendering. For example, the Thai word for temple is bood (following the Haas system)¹, the Thai spelling is โบสถ์. This spelling corresponds with an Indian rendering of posatha. The evident link with an Indian word is not obvious in the Haas rendering.

Table 8. The relation between Thai consonants and Sanskrit or Pāli consonants in Thai words of Indian origin

Thai	Haas' trans- literation	Sanskrit or Pāli	Thai	Haas' trans- literation	Sanskrit or Pāli
ก	k	k	ท	th	dh
ข	kh	kh	น	n	n
ค	kh	g	บ	b	p
ช	kh	gh	ป	p	p
จ	ṅ	ñ	ผ	ph	ph
ฉ	c	c	พ	ph	b
ฉ	ch	ch	ภ	ph	bh
ช	ch	j	ม	m	m
ฉ	ch	jh	ย	j	y
ญ	j	ñ	ร	r	r
ฎ	t	ṭ	ร	ry	r̥
ฐ	th	ṭh	ล	l	l
ฑ	th	ḍ	ว	w	v
ฒ	th	ḍh	ศ	s	ś
ณ	n	ṇ	ษ	s	ṣ
ต	t	t	ส	s	s
ด	th	th	ห	h	h
น	th	d	ฬ	l	ḷ

¹ TSD, p. 297b.

For a researcher with historical interest, it is therefore revealing to note, apart from the pronunciation of a word, the Thai spelling as well. For this reason, every time a Thai word is introduced for the first time, the common Thai spelling of the word is given in a footnote, and, where appropriate, a parallel with Sanskrit or Pāli is indicated at the same time.

Whenever Pāli formulae are given in the thesis, the common Pāli spelling is maintained, although it ought to be kept in mind that this does not correspond fully with the pronunciation of these words by the Thai farmers.

APPENDIX II

GLOSSARY OF THAI WORDS. The words are ordered as in Thai dictionaries: k, kh, ṅ, c, ch, d, t, th, n, b, p, ph, m, j, r, l, w, s, ḡ. The page number refers to the place where the term is first mentioned.

กฐิน	kathin	168
กรรม	kam	57
กรวดน้ำ	kruadnaam	147
กระดง	kradonṅ	63
กรุงพาลี	Krunphaalii	212
กุฎี	kuti	5
แกวฟ้า	keewfaa	3
ขวัญ	khwan	66
ขวางตะวัน	khwaanṅtawan	225
ของพราหมณ์	khooṅphraam	51
ขอม	khoom	79
ขอศีล	khoo sin haa	229
ขุนช้าง	khun chaanṅ	57
ขุนแผน	khun pheean	57
เขาพระราชา	Khawphansaa	279
คนดิบ	khon dib	127
คนธรรพ์	Khonthab	216
ครุฑ	khрут	112
ครู	khruu	105
คาถา	khaathaa	103
ฆา	khaa	203
งานศพ	ṅaansob	329
จังหวัด	caṅwat	10
เจดีย์	ceedii	5
เจ็ดตำนาน	cettammaan	132
เจ้าผี	caawphii	76

ชัยมงคล	Chajjamonkhon	216
ชัยศพน	Chajjasob	216
คาวคิงส์	daawady	215
เด็กวัด	degwat	79
ตะกรุด	takrut	77
ตะวันตก	tawantog	226
คาวัน	taawan	226
ถวายเป็นสังฆทาน	thawaajsangkathaan	252
ถัง	thang	8
ทำขวัญ	tham khwan	66
ทำบัตรพลี	tham badphlii	201
ทาแปง	thaa pæng	174
ทาสธารา	Thaathaaraa	216
ทิด	thid	127
เทพน	Theepheen	216
เทวดา	theewadaa	190
ธรณี	Thoranii	175
ธรณีสาร	thoraniisaan	222
ธรรม	tham	82
ธรรมยุต	Thammayut	163
ธรรมโหรา	Thammahoraa	216
ธรรมิกราชา	Thammikaraadcha	216
นครราช	Nakhonraadcha	216
นวกอวาท	Nawakowaad	155
นักธรรม	Naktham	155
นำมนตร์	nammon	65
นำมนัง	nammanjaa	116

น้ำมันพราย	nammanphraaj	119
นาค	naag	223
นางชวัก	naaṅkhwak	117
นางไม้	Naaṅmaaj	203
บวช เรียน	buad	129
บาท	baht	8
แมงกุด	beeṅkuson	172
โบล	bood	5
ใบเงิน	bajṅon	170
ใบจาก	bajcaag	195
ใบทอง	bajthooṅ	170
ใบรัก	bajrak	186
ปฏิฐาน	patijaan	241
ประเคน	prakheen	85
ปลุกเสก	plugseek	98
ปะแปง	pa pceṅ	174
ปากน้ำ	paaknaam	3
เปรต	pret	74
เปรียญ	Parien	155
ผาขาวมา	phaakhawmaa	206
ผานุง	phaanunṅ	97
ผีกระสือ	phiikrasyy	75
ผีตายโหง	phiitaajhoonṅ	75
ผีบ้าน	phiibaan	76
ผีเรือน	phiiryan	76
พญานาค	Phajaanaag	207
พรรษา	phansaa	127

พระ	phra	54
พระเครื่อง	phra khryan	97
พระพิมพ์	phra phim	95
พระภูมิเจ้าที่	phra Phuumcaawthii	207
พุทธรักษา	phutthaphiseek	98
ภิกษุ	phigsu	121
มหานิกาย	Mahaanikaaj	164
มะขาม	makhaam	78
มะเฟือง	mafyan	110
มาฆบูชา	Maakhabuuchaa	279
แมกลอง	Maeklong	1
แมนากขนองรัก	meenaagkhanongrak	74
ไม้กระบอง	maajkrabok	202
ไม้เจริญสุข	maajcarøensug	203
ไม้ซาก	maajsaak	202
ไม้ตะเคียน	maajtakhien	202
ไม้เต็ง	maajteŋ	202
ไม้มะคาโมง	maajmakhaamoon	203
ไม้มะยม	maajmajom	170
ไม้รวก	maajruag	61
ไม้รัง	maajran	202
ยกครู	jok khruu	109
ยักษ	jak	308
ยันต์	jan	65
โยม	joom	133
เวียงหมอน	rieŋ moon	188
ไร่	rai	3

ลอยกระทง	Loojkrathon	102
ล่างบาป	laanbaab	146
ลิเก	likee	73
ลิงลม	linlom	112
วันพระ	wanphra	72
วัยทัต	Wajjathat	216
วิญญาณ	winjaan	57
วิวาหะ	wiwaaha	183
วิชาขบฐา	Wisaakhabuuchaa	279
ศาลเจ้า	saancaaw	3
ศาลพระภูมิ	saan Phra Phuum	182
ศาลเพียงตา	saan phientaa	205
ศาลา	saalaa	5
ศุกร	suk	226
สงกรานต์	Sonkraan	279
สงฆ	son	12
สลากภัต	Salaakaphat	279
สลึง	salyng	8
สายสิญจน์	saajsin	64
เสาเอก	saweeeg	213
แสดงอาบัติ	sadeeeg aabat	145
หงส์	hon	112
หญ้าแพรก	jaaphreeeg	170
หนังตะลุง	nantalung	73
หมอ	moo	202
หมอคู	mooduu	202
หมอคำแย	mootamjæ	202

หมอยา	มอจยา	202
หมุบาน	muubaan	7
หลวงพิ	luanphii	133
หวยกอขอ	huajkokkoo	3
ไหวครู	waajkhruu	108
อปมงคล	apamonkhon	225
อยู่ไฟ	juufaj	62
ออกพรรษา	oogphansaa	279
ออง	oong	68
ออม	oom	1
อาจารย์สัก	aacaan sag	105
อาวาหะ	aawaaha	183
อาสาฬหบูชา	Aasaalhabuuchaa	279
อุบาสก	ubaasok	249
อุบาสิกา	ubaasikaa	249
อุค	uud	68
เอิบ	oob	68
เอียค	ied	68

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Not every examined work is included in this bibliography. Sources dealing primarily with subjects not directly related to the main argument of the thesis are not mentioned. They are fully referred to in the appropriate footnotes. For typographical reasons the bibliography is divided into two parts. In the first part Thai literature is arranged in the order customarily used for the Thai alphabet. Books in other languages can be found in Part II.

Part I

ความเป็นมาของพุทธศาสนาในเมืองไทย โดยประพันธ์ศรีณรงค์

พิมพ์ที่โรงพิมพ์อักษรสัมพันธ์ พระนคร ๒๕๐๐

คัมภีร์คาถา ๑๐๘ โดยพระราชครูวามเทพมุนี

พิมพ์ที่โรงพิมพ์พลุกส.ธรรมภักดี พระนคร ๒๕๐๘

คัมภีร์ยัมต์ ๑๐๘ โดยพระราชครูวามเทพมุนี

พิมพ์ที่โรงพิมพ์พลุกส.ธรรมภักดี ๒๕๐๘

นาโถวาท โดยสมเด็จพระมหาลสมณเจ้ากรมพระยวชิรญาณวโรรส

พิมพ์ครั้งที่ ๒๕ ที่โรงพิมพ์มหามกุฏราชวิทยาลัย พระนคร ๒๕๑๑

ปฐมสมโพธิ ธรรมสมบัติ หมวดที่ ๑ โดยสมเด็จพระสังฆราช(ปุสฺสเทว)

พิมพ์ครั้งที่ ๑๕ ที่โรงพิมพ์มหามกุฏราชวิทยาลัย พระนคร ๒๕๑๐

ประเพณีการทำบุญ

พิมพ์ที่บริษัทสหสยามพัฒนาจำกัด พระนคร ๒๕๑๑ พิมพ์เป็นอนุสรณ์ในงาน

ฉาปนกิจศพ นายถวิล เกียรติเกิดสุข ณ เมรุวัดมกุฏกษัตริยาราม

วันที่ ๑๕ เมษายน ๒๕๑๑

ประเพณีเก่าของไทย

พิมพ์ที่โรงพิมพ์ศิลปอักษร พระนคร ๒๕๐๐

ประเพณีทั่วโลก รวบรวมโดยบุญรอดโฆราเรื่อง

พิมพ์ครั้งที่ ๒ ที่โอเคียนการพิมพ์ พระนคร ๒๕๑๑

ประเพณีไทย ฉบับพระมหาราชครูฯ รวบรวมโดยอรุณศรีวิริยะบุรณะ

พิมพ์ที่ประจักษ์วิทยา พระนคร ๒๕๑๐

พจนานุกรมไทย รวบรวมโดยมานิตมานิตเจริญ

พิมพ์ครั้งที่ ๓ ที่บริษัท "เพรพิตยา" จังบุรีพา

พุทธประวัติ เล่ม ๑ โดยสมเด็จพระมหาสมณเจ้ากรมพระยาวชิรญาณวโรรส

พิมพ์ครั้งที่ ๔๑ ที่โรงพิมพ์มหามกุฏราชวิทยาลัย พระนคร ๒๕๑๒

พุทธประวัติ เล่ม ๒ โดยสมเด็จพระมหาสมณเจ้ากรมพระยาวชิรญาณวโรรส

พิมพ์ครั้งที่ ๕ ที่โรงพิมพ์มหามกุฏราชวิทยาลัย พระนคร ๒๕๑๒

พุทธประวัติ เล่ม ๓ โดยสมเด็จพระสังฆราช (สา)

พิมพ์ครั้งที่ ๗ ที่โรงพิมพ์มหามกุฏราชวิทยาลัย พระนคร ๒๕๑๒

พุทธศาสนสุภาษิต เล่ม ๑ โดยสมเด็จพระมหาสมณเจ้ากรมพระยาวชิรญาณวโรรส

พิมพ์ครั้งที่ ๒๔ ที่โรงพิมพ์มหามกุฏราชวิทยาลัย พระนคร ๒๕๑๒

พุทธาภิเษกพิธี โดยเทพยสาริกบุตร

พิมพ์ที่ประจักษ์วิทยา พระนคร

ภิกษุปาฏิโมกข์แปล

พิมพ์ครั้งที่ ๗ ที่โรงพิมพ์มหามกุฏราชวิทยาลัย พระนคร ๒๕๑๑

ระเบียบการลาสิกขาบท โดยพระธรรมเสนานี

พิมพ์ที่โรงพิมพ์วิระศักดิ์ ราชบุรี ๒๕๕๖

รายงานการศาสนาประจำปี ๒๕๐๘ ของกรมการศาสนากระทรวงศึกษาธิการ

พิมพ์ที่โรงพิมพ์การศาสนากรมการศาสนา พระนคร

รายงานการศาสนาประจำปี๒๕๐๘ ของกรมการศาสนากระทรวงศึกษาธิการ
พิมพ์ที่โรงพิมพ์การศาสนากรมการศาสนา พระนคร

รายงานการศาสนาประจำปี๒๕๑๐ ของกรมการศาสนากระทรวงศึกษาธิการ
พิมพ์ที่หน่วยพิมพ์และจำหน่ายศาสนภัณฑ์ (โรงพิมพ์การศาสนา) พระนคร

รายงานวิเคราะห์ผลจากการสำรวจสภาพประชาชนและการเศรษฐกิจ
พ.ศ. ๒๕๔๗ เล่มที่๑

พิมพ์ที่สำนักงานสถิติกลาง สำนักงานสภาพัฒนาการเศรษฐกิจแห่งชาติ พระนคร
วิธีแกตคนไม่ให้เป็นคนรกโลก

พิมพ์ที่โรงพิมพ์กัศิประศิษย์ พระนคร ๒๕๐๔

สมุดสถิติรายปีประเทศไทย บรรพ๒๗ ๒๕๐๘

พิมพ์ที่สำนักงานสถิติแห่งชาติ สำนักนายกรัฐมนตรี

สวคมนตรีเจ็ดตำนาน

พิมพ์ที่โรงพิมพ์ธรรมบรรณาการ พระนคร ๒๕๑๐

สวคมนตรีสิบสองตำนาน

พิมพ์ที่โรงพิมพ์วัฒนาพานิช พระนคร ๒๕๑๓

หนังสือคู่มือวิธีรักษาอุโบสถและทำวัตรเช้า, เย็น, กับสมบัติของอุบาสกอุบาสิกา

พิมพ์ที่โรงพิมพ์เลียงเชียงจงเจริญ พระนคร ๒๕๑๐

หนังสือสวคมนตรีแปล โดยไพเชษฐหัทธิมทอง

พิมพ์ที่โรงพิมพ์ส. พยุ่งพงศ์จำกัด พระนคร ๒๕๑๐

อนุสรณ์กตัญญู

พิมพ์ที่แผนกการพิมพ์วิทยาลัยครูสวนสุนันทา พระนคร ๒๕๑๑

พิมพ์เมืองในการณาปมกิจ นายเบี้ยว เจริญจันทร์ ณ ฌาปนสถาน

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