



**Matti Sarmela**

# **LAWS OF DESTINY NEVER DISAPPEAR**

## ***Culture of Thailand in the postlocal world***

**Helsinki 2005**

**952-91-9353-X**



Srii Muod Klao 1998

Mae Kong Nya 1998, 1985

Ban Dong 1985



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Original book: *Matti Sarmela, Kohtalon lait eivät katoa. Elämää Pohjois-Thaimaan kylissä.*  
Published by the Finnish Literature Society and the Finnish Anthropological Society 2004.  
ISBN 951-746-603-X (SKS) ; 952-9573-25-1 (SAS); ISSN 0355-1768

Layout Hemmo Vattulainen  
*Helsinki 2005*

**ISBN 952-91-9353-X (PDF)**  
**ISBN 952-91-9354-8 (HTML)**  
**ISBN 952-91-9355-6 (CD ROM)**

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*Matti Sarmela*

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**Supernatural environment  
Buddhist religion  
Finalization**

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### **III. VILLAGE RELIGION**

#### **Faith around me**

**We used to have words for everything. \* Supernatural guardian of our family. \* I don't believe everything sorcerers say. \* What Buddha taught us.**

**Ban Sree Muod Klao 1998. Mr. Muun T.**  
**Grow your own roots**

*I am talking about Buddhism. When old people visit the temple once a week, they say that they are paid their wages once a week. It is life's wages to hear Buddha's teachings once a week. There are four important religious days in every month. In three months, that makes 12 altogether.*

***What is wan brah?***

*On that day, a monk is not permitted to leave the temple.*

***What old proverbs do people have?***

*These are examples of old proverbs:*

- You must focus on and contemplate old ideas again and again, so you can hear them with your ears, see them with your eyes and taste them with your mouth.*
- You must be able to judge matters with your heart.*
- If a teaching does not come out of the mouth, it does not reside in the heart.*
- You must know what you may eat or taste, so you do not need to try everything. You may get a sore throat.*
- Do not trust in people, but judge matters for yourself.*

- Sleep nights, not days.
- Take care of your elders. Work, so they do not live in hardship.
- Help a lot, if you have a lot. Help a little, if you have little.
- Work hard and grow your own fruit.
- Be tolerant and patient. Do not let your emotions get the upper hand and do not get angry.
- Do not cultivate a bad character, it will cause you great difficulty. Then you will make the lives of others hard.
- Do not boast about yourself or your work. Follow the example of an ant: work quietly and diligently.
- Do not tire others with your conduct.
- Do not seek attention.
- Eat in moderation and correctly.
- Grow your own roots.
- Do not kill, do not lie, do not drink alcohol and do not commit adultery. Avoid these things in your life. Then, you are like a beautiful flower in the garden and you have peace in your soul.
- Discard sin from your life and trust in the laws of destiny. They will never disappear.
- Seek and gather your livelihood a little at a time, like water slowly dripping from a roof.
- Do good deeds with dedication. Then you will become a disciple of Buddha.
- Do not dress lavishly and try to save your clothing.
- Work and cultivate the land. Do not laze around.
- If you deny yourself pleasures, you will become prosperous.
- Be generous to others. When you help others, also try to love yourself.
- Do not be too hard on yourself.
- Do not quarrel and scold others. It is akin to eating only bone and having no meat to eat.
- Do not speak ill of others, for only pain will follow.
- Listen carefully before you speak. Everything must have a foundation.
- Do not speak against your leaders, as then you are safe.
- For women: do not commit adultery.
- Do good deeds, for they make up for bad things in life.
- Those who are proud are not liked. Doors are closed against such people and nothing accepted from them. Nobody listens to them. They have intellect, but no heart.
- Do not eat another's food without giving something in return.
- Lazy people cannot even bring up their own children. They have nothing to give their children.

- If you have a bad reputation, nobody will listen to you. Nobody will love you and you will be considered a liar. Your family might break up at any time, as you are no good yourself.
  - If you have few small deeds, do not belittle them, but do not boast about great deeds either. Then your deeds will bring you no benefit. Many people do good deeds through dishonest means. They are worthless. Such people are dissatisfied and want to benefit by exploiting smaller people. They always want greater things.
  - Buddha's faith must kindle a fire in a human being.
  - When you see a poor man, do not mock him. When you see a rich man, do not envy him.
  - If you have a son, teach him to farm the fields, get him a buffalo and a good wife. If you have a daughter, let her grow vegetables.
- All this was a new year's blessing for this year.

### ***Do you have any other proverbs?***

Yes, for example:

- If you have little work, eat little.
- If you have much money and spend it quickly, sorrow will follow.
- You must not be arrogant, but seek wisdom, knowledge and diligence. Be earnest in everything you do.

All of these pieces of advice are not too difficult. They are blessings for this year. If your children or grandchildren come to visit, these words must be said to them individually this year. Another proverb says that a bad person looks for excuses, but a good person resolves his problems himself. Without blaming others. Evil destroys everything and wants to discard everything. These proverbs are intended for building character, and to reveal what the person is really like.

### ***Must phii be honoured?***

In the old days, phii were honoured a lot, but not so much today. Phii worship has come from Burma. There phii are worshipped a great deal. They must be appeased, so that they look upon you favourably. I bought this figurine from them for twelve baht. They said, go home and honour it, appease the phii. It really has worked and helped. We believe that the phii of the house [compound] must be honoured when a man and a woman marry. Then their marriage is a success. The whole family can honour the phii of the house. And then it will protect it. The phii must always be told if you leave your house to stay elsewhere. Its permission and blessing must be requested. If you don't do the right thing, the phii might get angry and ruin your life.



### ***Is this phii of the house different from the phii of the earth?***

*They do not have much in common, because the phii of the earth [an ancestor] is quite different from those that protect life at home. The earth phii must be offered food at least once a year, and then we must gather together as a family to honour the phii. We used to collect 50 satang from everybody and buy food for it.*

### ***How is this annual ceremony performed?***

*First, we collect money from relatives and friends. We say that the money is for the good, not for the phii. Those who want to, give money. If you refuse to give money, you are already in danger. The evil force might begin to destroy you. Those who give money, they have peace and joy in their lives. Some are happy to give money, as they say that 12 months have passed and nothing bad has happened. This family phii that we give food and money to once in a year, it protects us from other phii that are evil and may destroy the family. The good phii overcomes the evil phii. The phii that we worship at home must be told about everything, and given rice, garlic and bananas.*

### ***When is the family phii given food?***

*According to the old calendar, on the 12th or 13th day [of a certain lunar month]. In practice, on any other day except Wednesday. And also not on wan brah day. That is an important day in the faith of Buddha. The phii may be given chicken and pig's head. At the same time, we listen to local music played on old-fashioned instruments.*

*If somebody in the house is sick, we fetch the sorcerer and he or she says that the phii of the house [compound] must be given, for example, two pig's heads or some beef. Then we offer it one or the other, and the sickness leaves the person. If we don't follow the sorcerer's instructions, there may be great problems and we may not recover from the illness. Today, we do follow the instructions, as everyone fears the phii. We must not take these matters as a joke or lightly. Offering food to the house phii is the task of the woman of the house, as she is mostly at home and responsible for events at home. If other family members are present, everyone gives a small part of the offering. The phii is told who is present, and afterwards, they must also honour the phii.*

### ***What are mark and bluu, the things required for making an offering?***

*They are obtained from a tree and they are required when making an offering. I don't know their meaning. There might also be 4 pieces of garlic and some incense, so that everyone knows about this ceremony. After the ceremony, we can go where we like,*

*because in the ceremony, the phii and the human being have become one.*

***Is there a phii that protects the whole village?***

*No. Each house has its own. In this village, there are three families [clans], and each does as they please. Each has its own faith.*

***When is a good time to talk to the phii of the compound?***

*If a child is going somewhere to work or to sell something, it's good to tell the phii and ask for protection.*

***Must the child himself do it?***

*Anybody can tell the phii.*

***How do you feel after you have told it?***

*Safe. The phii of the compound must be told where one comes from and where one is going. If we don't tell it, it gets angry. If we go to stay overnight in another house, the phii of that house must be told, too, and asked for protection. At the same time, we must offer mark and bluu. Also, if moving house, or if you give birth elsewhere, the phii must know about the arrival of a new child in the house. The same must be done if there is a new domestic animal. Before the new member of the family moves in, we must hit the ground three times. If the new member thrives and keeps well, we know that the ceremony was done correctly. Today, however, hitting the ground is not essential, and we can speak to the phii using our own words. When we leave the house, the phii comes along. One girl was out having fun. She danced and drank alcohol, and nothing untoward happened to her. She had her guardian with her all the way home. Other people, who were at the same party, crashed their car and died. The phii must also be told about building a new house. There is no need to tell it about farming. In farming, it's only necessary to know the right day, otherwise pests start to devour your crop. One can, however, make a shrine at the side of the field and take some mark and bluu, and wish for a good harvest. After the seed is sown, the guardian of the field must be asked to come along and protect it.*

***What does 'wan pak tsat' mean, when it is said that you can't sow then?***

*It's the correct day for starting the sowing. If you don't stick to it, there will be problems. For example, once my neighbour and I*

*both grew garlic and I had a good crop, but his was ruined. I realized that he hadn't observed the laws and I told him the reason why his crop was destroyed. The 9th and 13th days are absolutely no good for sowing. The second month and the sixth are bad for farming, and the 26th day is bad. The old almanac shows the correct days for all farming. The day when to start ploughing is also written in the almanac.*

### **What is 'pit phii'?**

*If a young man and woman had been together without the parents' knowledge. It led to problems. Pit phii means that it is against the will of the phii [of the compound]. Then the village chief used to tell you to go and apologize to the phii. You also make the same offering of mark and bluu. In addition, you must give twelve baht, to buy perhaps cloth and food for the phii.*

### **Can you describe the ceremony for building a new house?**

*First all four angels must be called. The first one is yack and it signifies strength. The second is payayat, the spirit force of the waters. Payamaessuan is the third, it protects from enemies. The fourth is payakut. It can fly. It has the face of an animal and it is like the wind. So, there are four forces: earth, water, fire and wind, and they must all be called to the place when you start building a new house.*

*Some poor parents who had no inheritance to give their son, they told him to repeat the put kang saramang masami. He kept on repeating it. Once a girl fell for him and told the boy to go fishing. The boy went, but caught nothing, although he kept on repeating this phrase. Everyone told him to stop saying it. The boy would not stop. He went to the girl's house and wouldn't eat with the others. He only ate what the girl left. The angel-spirit watched the boy and decided to test whether the boy was serious. It took the form of an old woman and asked, why do you repeat an empty phrase? The boy said, it's my only inheritance. He argued for a time with the angel and said, one day the phrase will bring me good fortune. Soon the mayor of the town died and the angels made the boy the new mayor.*

### **Why must all the angels be called when you start building a new house?**

*So the house will be safe and prosperous. For each one of the four main pillars, you must bring a hand of bananas, fish and rice. A monk of Buddha who knows about sorcery must be called. He sprinkles water all around. After that, all spiritual matters are settled. During the sprinkling, he must speak to each angel. A special blessing for the house is requested from the angel of water. It determines whether there will be water in the well.*

### ***What kinds of games did children play in the old days?***

*They used to draw 12 squares on the ground and there were four signs of the tiger and the rest birds. They were moved around, and if a bird ended up between two tigers, it was eaten, and vice versa. The loser got tickled. Girls would make cookies from coconut and sell them to other children. Leaves were pretend money. Boys used to walk on stilts. Some had stilts that were two metres tall. Girls would play at houses. We also used to play hide-and-seek, but occasionally an angry phii would come and take a child. Although we played during daylight, the evil spirit would take someone every now and then. One boy hid so he wasn't found for a long time. The parents took him to the temple and the monk said that the boy can stay in the temple. During our hide-and-seek, the parents would offer rice to the phii, so the children wouldn't be lost. When we were a little older, we'd shoot birds with slingshots. Of the games, only the shooting with slingshots has remained.*

*Before, we always had to have [glutinous] rice ready. It was cooked one day and eaten the next. When cooking rice, you had to touch the water with your tongue three times. It was thought that if you failed to do so, an evil spirit would come and eat the rice in the night. Also the rice didn't taste good if you didn't touch it with your tongue before cooking. If you kept rice in the granary, it was good to put a gourd with it. Then the rice kept well and it lasted. Modern games are more dangerous. Accidents happen easily with bicycles. Aids has also killed a lot of men today. In the old days, old men died first. Nowadays, old men must cremate their sons' bodies. Young men drink spirits, go to brothels and get sick.*

*A child was given a name that was nearest to the mother's and father's name. My own name came from the difficult birth. It was said that a good phii watched over my mother and protected the birth. You see, I'm a twin. My twin was a girl. First her name was Bundii, 'good deed'. Later the name changed. Names used to be longer and they were related to religion and rules of tradition passed down from the ancestors. The day one was born was very important. I also gave my children names that are related to traditional rules. Modern people don't care at all about inherited principles when they name their children.*

### ***Was there any contraception in the old days?***

*No. Many children came and they were born at home.*

### ***How does khaa ta akong differ from Buddhism?***

*Sorcery is practised outside the temple. It has nothing to do with Buddhism. It's pure sorcery. They have their own sorcerers and healers. This khaa ta akong means an incantation. We have many spells for different situations. They are specifically sorcery incantations. We must know them. For example, if a mosquito stings you in the field, you must know the spell, so you*

*don't get sick. You also need to know spells for all other animal bites. In the old days the spells were so good that even mosquitoes didn't bite, if you knew the spells. There was also a spell against making mistakes. It was called Ya ta ya. In Thai language it means to do, but in Northern dialect it means to work. There were other incantations for clothes, the weather and other things too. Thailand used to be a colder country, and you needed to know spells before you went to the fields. Suki loo waa meant that the weather was right. Suki means peace and loo waa means, rest in peace. It's Singhalese. Once you said that spell, you could sleep peacefully and didn't get too cold at night. When you went to chop firewood, it was easy when you had first said the spell. One spell was capable of healing a child, if you placed some ready-chewed garlic on the child's face at the same time. It was said that the sickness left the child through its mouth. The spell was to ask, let all sickness come out of the child. This spell was said to the child, if it was at all pale. I have healed people this way myself, as a folk healer. I would like the tradition to continue in my children and grandchildren.*

***Are your children and grandchildren beginning to practise this healing?***

*Yes, because many of them have wanted to learn and now they have told me that it works. The Pro plo spell is done to a person with an illness that didn't get better in hospital. Then they come to me and I say that spell to them. At the same time, an offering must be made to the phii. If there is no offering to the phii, the spells don't work. People give me money and food, too, when I do rites for them. Sometimes 100, sometimes 200 baht.*

***Are spells still used a lot?***

*Yes. Although we now have municipal healthcare in the village and there are hospitals in towns, people come for healing with spells. I can even stop babies crying at night with a spell, although they say in hospital that crying is normal. I have also healed a baby with yellowish skin that they couldn't help in hospital. I have healed scorpion stings and eye problems, for instance. Nowadays children get sick easily because of the food and cars. Chinese people come to me from Lampang to ask for incantations.*

***When three of your children died, how were the funerals done?***

*We had no ceremonies. We just made a hole in the ground or cremated the body. The body was kept for a couple of days under the house. The body in the coffin was placed between two pillars. It meant peace for the house. The hands of the deceased were also put in a worshipping position. In those days, no palace was made for the deceased to put on the coffin, and there were no funeral celebrations.*



### ***When did the monk come to read prayers or incantations?***

*In the afternoon. On the last evening, he came late at night. The body was taken on a buffalo cart and it was buried with the face to the sun. A woman's body was turned on its back before cremation, and a man's face was turned towards the earth. After the cremation everyone left, only the cremator stayed to watch the burning. Saparoo was the person whose job it was to take care of the cremation and burial, and the cemetery. Logs were placed on the remains of the body, to prevent dogs from digging the bones up. After the funeral, the monk came to the house to say that the body had now departed and to wish the soul of the deceased peace and a good existence. The monk requested that the soul be reborn and that the deceased will not come back to haunt his relatives.*

*A person who had committed suicide or been murdered, his soul was particularly feared. It was believed that such a person cannot be reincarnated. People were also afraid of an avaricious deceased, because he came back after death to see his property. If a woman died in childbirth, it was said that an evil spirit caused the death. Her body was cremated immediately. The body could not be taken anywhere, because it couldn't be brought down the stairs. People were very afraid of it. If someone made himself a coffin and a palace for it while still living, they were not used at the funeral. It was said that the soul of the deceased was angry because he prepared for death too early, and then the soul stays to haunt the living. It's easy nowadays, because the coffin and the soul house can be bought ready-made. Now all families also contribute 100 baht to the funeral expenses. Before, you had to pay for everything yourself. Now people also give rice to eat at the ceremonies. Nowadays monks are invited to pray by the body while the deceased is at home. They ask that the soul may rest in peace and be reincarnated.*

### ***When the body is cremated, do you need to look up the correct day in the calendar?***

*Yes. You count from the day of the death and it is said that the ninth day is good. According to Buddha's faith, a funeral cannot be held on a Tuesday or Wednesday. Buddhists say that the fire is too hot on those days.*

### ***What was done to the body the day before the cremation?***

*First the corpse is moved to the compound and then into the coffin. The monk is present all the time. He prays and meditates there by the coffin. The monk and coffin are joined together by a cord. It's hoped that goodness will pass from the monk to the body and ease the passage of the soul. There are seven cords altogether.*

### ***Why did cremations become customary?***

*Wild animals used to dig up bodies. They also took up a lot of space. Cremation kills bacteria and viruses. Many people used to die of infectious diseases. Before the cremation, monks' robes were taken to the body. They were placed on the coffin and the monk prayed in Singhalese. He said that where we are born, there also the flame is extinguished. It reminded people of death. We never used to have rockets. You weren't allowed to look behind you when you left the corpse to burn.*

*After three days the family came to collect the ashes and bones. At the same time, Buddha's teacher performed his ceremonies. He either sprinkled water or extinguished a candle. There used to be a kattasing ceremony, where people walked three times around the corpse before cremation and talked about the futility of life. That everything is fleeting. Some keep the ashes and bones in an urn at home and other people bury them in a box. A hundred days after the burial is the festival of good deeds. It is held at the house of the deceased. It is to make offerings to monks for the soul of the departed. The monks come to sprinkle holy water and this water is used to water some tree. The prayer the monks read is in the Pali language and extremely long. The good deed is giving blessed water to trees and animals.*

### ***Would you bless me now?***

*May you have good health. May you have a long life, 120 years. May you have the strength to continue doing your work. May you have supernatural illumination and obedient children and wife. May your family possess love and joy. May you have other values than the material. When you have difficulties, be patient. The good will come later. May you have a good and peaceful life.*

*This blessing is usually given to one's children and grandchildren.*

***Ban Sree Muod Klao 1998. Mr Muun M, 79.  
One must not be greedy, hate or lose the way***

*I was born in this village.*

***How long has this village existed?***

*Originally its name was Sala Suan Taeng and 60 families lived here. They had come as refugees from China, from Ship Suangpadang. The village was also called Thai Lii. My grandfather came from China.*

***Can you tell me why they fled China?***

*A war broke out there and people fled to Burma. We were driven out of there, so we came here to Northern Thailand. The first job was building a temple. At first, this village was called Sala Suan Taeng. This present temple is not the same one. The first temple has rotted long ago. Later the name changed to Ban Rai.*

***When you left China, why did you come to this particular village?***

*We wanted a safe place. This was a fertile-looking place and there were plenty of animals. The village has grown, and now there are 600 households. There is nothing old left any more. Everything has been destroyed. Only in the temple there might be some relics from those days.*

***Which is the house you were born and grew up in?***

*That house no longer exists. My life has not been easy. When I was 7 or 8, my mother died. When I was 11, my father died too. As a child, I liked to spend my time with old people, and they told me many different stories.*

***Can you remember what illness killed your mother?***

*A boil grew on her knee, and it began to swell. Finally the boil was so big that it burst and my mother died.*

***Were there hospitals then?***

*No. Nor any doctors, only folk healers and sorcerers. Sorcerers drove away evil spirits by blowing.*

***What was the name of the sorcerer at the time?***

*I can't remember. Once when my father was ill, a large boil grew on his neck. Then the sorcerer did his rite and the boil*

*disappeared. A sorcerer has also healed me of a boil.*

***Have your children had similar boils?***

*No. It's not hereditary, but everyone has his own destiny. I don't know if I had done good or bad in my previous life, but I had to suffer a great deal from this boil.*

***Do you believe in the principle of cause and effect?***

*Yes. You must pay for everything in your next life. If you become ill, you have done bad deeds in your previous life. In Pali language it's called kam nagi. It means that everyone can influence their destiny. We don't know if everything will happen in this life or the next.*

***Do you know what effect the bad or good deeds in your previous life have on your life, or what destiny you are creating?***

*When I was young, I did do some bad deeds occasionally, but I have always been good to animals. I don't know when I will be rewarded for these good deeds. The proverb says that it may take a hundred lives before the good deeds take effect, but they are still worth doing. If I have done something bad and the same bad deed is done to me, that bad is cancelled out.*

***Do you believe in reincarnation that Buddhism teaches?***

*Yes. I also believe that everything is determined by destiny. Even if a person dies, his deeds and consciousness always remain in existence. A person's soul can run, walk, laugh...*

***How do people believe in reincarnation according to Buddhism?***

*It's just true. Buddha, who founded it, said that he had to be reincarnated ten times before he became Buddha. The soul resides in a person from the womb right up to death. Then it is reborn again and again until the wheel of destiny stops.*

***When do these rewards for good and bad emerge from the previous life?***

*Sometimes they skip a life. It must be true, because people say that there was a boy who wanted to tie frogs' legs together. The*

*frogs suffered a great deal. When the boy grew old and died, he was reborn as one of twins with their legs fused together. They had to have an operation and the other twin died. This way he was able to atone for his bad deed. All his life he had to limp. The frogs that died were reborn healthy. The sorcerer told the boy the reason why he had to limp. There is also a spirit called Tsau po tumah in Buddhism. It is always built its own house. The spirit follows people around and it must be given flower garlands.*

***How much of what the sorcerer says is true?***

*He does know all the lucky days from the stars, and he can see the evil deeds that have happened in previous lives.*

***Do you believe all of it?***

*Yes. Even Buddha said that he didn't want to be born again, and he wasn't. In our religion, nipphan means that you don't need to be born again. Three things are required to attain it. One must not be greedy, hate or lose one's way. Then one reaches nipphan. In this life, we strive to experience nipphan. Modern man has too much greed. When he dies, people just say, good riddance. Then he stays to wander around or haunt us. He keeps coming back to see the property he had hoarded. At night, when the soul comes to look at its property, the dog usually notices it and barks. In a near-by village, a man appeared every night to look at his property. Every night the dog barked and in the end the neighbours got the sorcerer. The sorcerer said that they should dig up the money hidden under the lower pillar. It was money that belonged to this dead man's father. The sorcerer said that the money should be donated to the temple for the dead man's father. When this was done, the soul no longer haunted that place. An old proverb says that where your wealth is, your heart lies too. A person who has led a very selfish life ends up in a state after death where he wanders restlessly from one place to another. The only chance such a soul has is if his relatives do a lot of good deeds. It can only happen after a long period of time.*

*I believe that Buddha is present in every temple. They have his image, too. If a person has been like a monk of Buddha and lived a blameless life, he will reach nipphan. A monk who has not lived blamelessly, he is called phaem. It means a devil. It is said that once when Buddha was teaching in the South near the Malaysian border, people there opposed him. One of these devils was there, and that is why it's called a spirit of the South. There is no Buddhist religion in Malaysia. There are no footprints of Buddha in places where people don't believe in Buddha. There are a lot of his footprints here in Northern Thailand.*

***How do you know that they really are Buddha's footprints?***

*They are in stones. Just like his foot had been pressed in concrete. As you know, he walked on stones. We believe his teachings. These footprints are a sign that Buddha liked this country. Every Thai person has Buddha's teachings in his heart.*



***How old was your mother when she died?***

*She was 30.*

***Do you believe in your mother's good deeds in this reincarnation?***

*I believe that they have come into me and through me to my children and grandchildren. I believe that my father has also been reborn, because I knew a person who had a sore neck all the time. A sorcerer called Po Su Tsai said that my father's soul had entered that person. A protective cord was tied on his wrist. After that his neck got better. After he had got better, this person came to tell me what had happened. Then I also tied a cord on his wrist and was happy that my father had been reborn. I blessed him and the sorcerer who had found it out. He has been healthy ever since. I was 9 years old at the time, so I tied 9 cords on his hand.*

***Has your mother also been reborn?***

*Yes. She is one of my grandchildren. I knew it when the child's knee began to swell. We started to do good deeds for her and now the pain in her knee has gone. The good deeds were gifts we took to the temple.*

***What is the maha bibat ceremony, the ceremony of charity?***

*It removes the punishment that has come from the past. For example, if you have not been obedient to your parents, you may be reborn deaf.*

***What was your mother's funeral like?***

*In those days, wooden strips were cut and my mother was tied inside them. The body was taken to the temple compound and cremated the same day. In the old days, the corpse was burned right away, if there were boils or diarrhoea. It was believed that there had been problems in her life. It was also believed that her soul may start wandering and bothering people. When the body was burned immediately, the soul didn't come to look for people. The soul of the departed knew that we don't like it. After the cremation, the Buddhist monk performed ceremonies. Collection of the bones and ashes was done quietly. When my father died, he was put inside a net. I took him to the temple myself, as I was 12 and had been a monk for some time. He was also cremated immediately because of the boil. The death was unnatural, and that is why there were no funeral ceremonies at all. After the cremation, vinegar water was poured in front of the house before we went in.*

**What was this ritual?**

*It liberated us from evil forces. At four in the afternoon we had to ask Buddha's monk once more to drive evil spirits out of the house and from the area. This ritual had to be done before nightfall. Then, the sun set around six. In the old days, it was always peaceful in the hours of darkness, but not now.*

**Where there animals here?**

*Wild animals. That is why nobody went out at night.*

**How many times did Buddha's monk have to come to cleanse the house of evil forces?**

*Three days running. After that, I only had to do good deeds once a year for my mother and father. We also contacted their souls. We built a little house for them, where we would take rice and other things to eat, so they were comfortable. After the house was built and food taken, the monk came to perform the ritual in Pali language. That way we knew that my parents were able to receive them.*

**How do you know that your parents received them?**

*I'm sure that they received them. Now that my father has been reborn in the man with the same trouble my father had, he has also got his own house. It's because I built my father the soul house after his death.*

**How long were you Buddha's monk?**

*For five years. Later, I became religious teacher in this village, Azan Wat. People come to ask me for help for various troubles. For example, for labour pains I would say, get a fig and let the woman eat it. Sugar cane is another help in giving birth. When you boil figs and black sugar cane and drink a certain quantity of the liquid, it stops the bleeding. This also cures a brain haemorrhage.*

**What ceremonies are performed when you become a monk at the temple?**

*First one must learn Pali language. Then the hair is shaved off. It can only be done by a parent.*

### **What is the significance of shaving the hair and eyebrows?**

*That way, all urges and desires are cut off. There must be nothing beautiful. He just has his robe. He must no longer do what other people do. The most severe punishment is given to a monk if he is seen betting at a cock fight. Nowadays, monks don't know Buddha's teachings like before. You were not allowed to adorn yourself in any way. Not watch television or sing. You could only look at women's feet and you had to stay at least three alnages' distance from women. Also, they had no shoes or money. Modern monks have televisions, good clothes and they can even be married. In my time, you had to remember at least 9 of Buddha's 127 teachings. Those 9 were in Pali language. For example, batuk means pain, pauloo means that it is difficult. If one has no desires, one is free of pain. If you want power, it has bad consequences. The result is poverty. If you learn something, you should pass on the knowledge. If there is quarrelling, it can easily lead to murder. These are some of those teachings.*

### **Why is 9 a lucky number?**

*There are 127 teachings altogether and every one has 3 words. And 9 times 3 is 27. That is why 9 is deemed to be a good number. Then one is thevona, which means that the person is complete.*

### **What happens after one is ordained a monk?**

*He must pray from early morning in Pali language. This is done at least for three days running. Then two candles are lit. The first is Buddha and the second is Buddha's teachings. Buddhism is taught in three ways: first is Buddha, second is the teachings and the third is acting in accordance with the teachings. That is why when incense is burned, there must be three. From the smoke of the incense, angels know that this person is serious. One more stick of incense is lighted and that means prayers that must be learned in Pali language. The incense must be lit from left to right. The picture of Buddha must be on the left. Then one must meditate ten teachings one has learned. When you stop being a monk, you only meditate five teachings. A more advanced monk lives in the temple. He is old and knows to meditate all 127 principles.*

### **Are there any other ceremonies?**

*No. The temple monk gives the newcomer 10 of Buddha's principles and he must follow them in his life. Right at the start, he is given a white robe.*

**When does he get a yellow monk's robe?**

*In the last ceremony, when the hair is already shaved, the newcomer is dressed in Buddha's monk's clothes. After that he can only eat rice twice a day. He must pray every day continuously for his parents and for his own life. The temple rules say that you must not eat supper, but meals must be taken in the morning and middle of the day. Meals must be taken in the temple. If parents give you food at home, they are committing a sin with their descendant who is a monk. Becoming a monk is not to be taken lightly. If you break the rules as a monk, it is counted as a great sin.*

**How many holy principles do you follow in your life?**

*I follow eight principles. Ordinary Buddhists only follow 4 or 5. I followed five when I was quite small, and even as a young man, I didn't mess around with young women. People who follow 4-5 principles are held to be good members of society. It's said that wherever they go, they bring peace with them. They succeed in everything they undertake in their lives.*

**How did you meet girls in your youth?**

*In those days the parents arranged everything. They watched to see who was hard-working and good-natured. The girl had to have a good reputation and be helpful and generous, kind-hearted. Her looks weren't important. They used to look at the mother. They thought the daughter would be like her. It was especially important that the girl was thrifty. She had to behave according to her means.*

**When a suitable girl was found, what was the custom then?**

*You visited the girl's house in the evening and asked her, did you eat your rice? The girl answered, yes, I had it with gourd. When asked, did you have cabbage leaves, the girl replied, no, I had bali. Cabbage leaves meant the word 'hate'. If the girl answered no, it meant that she didn't hate the boy. If the girl answered yes to the question about cabbage leaves, it meant that she didn't like the boy. When the girl said that she ate it with gourd, that meant that we could be together. This way the boy knew that the girl accepted him.*

**Are there any other idioms or songs that were used in this situation?**

*Yes. For instance, you talked about the moon and the sun. There was a poem about the moon and the sun, how they know each other and everyone knows them. It meant that it's good that people are going together and everybody knows it.*

***How long were you courting before you got together?***

*Two or three years. The old people would say that you could wait if you loved the other enough.*

***What was the wedding ceremony like?***

*It was held in the evening. The boy and girl agreed between themselves when they will get together. Three days from that day, they told their parents. First the girl's parents went to tell the boy's parents that now your son is with our daughter. After that the boy took full responsibility for the girl. Then a ceremony was held on the girl's side to protect from evil spirits. After that the boy's parents performed the same ceremony. In it, a cord was wound around the house. If the girl and boy had moved together before their families had met, the more reason to perform this ceremony. It was feared that the souls of the ancestors would kill them both. Even holding hands was forbidden before the parents were told. A fine of 12 baht had to be paid for it. In those days, morality was much higher. People were afraid of evil spirits.*

***Did the souls (of the ancestors) come to pay revenge?***

*Yes. One person had become sick and started behaving in an abnormal manner.*

***What happened in that religious ritual at home?***

*The boy said at his home to the phii living in the spirit house, I'm leaving this house now because I have a wife. The girl did the same at her house. When everything was clear, the girl's parents were told first. After that, the girl's parents went to the boy's house to tell them. It was done within 7-10 days. All the girl's relatives went to the boy's house. They took with them dried fish and noodles. The boy's parents accepted this basket of food and put money in its place. It was returned to the girl's relatives. There were two kinds of fish. Giving money meant prosperity. It was called the ceremony of visiting the boy's parents.*

*When a person is good, many people visit him and a good person takes goodness along with him, it was said. We hope that if you go and visit someone's house, be very good there, then they will welcome you again. We believe that a good phii travels along with a good person. We want a bad person to leave quickly.*

***What illnesses did people have in the old days?***

*I remember them. One illness came from evil spirits. When the sun came up, a severe pain came in the head. It stopped when*



darkness fell. In the mornings, I had to knock three times towards the sun and blow at the same time. Then the pain went. That spell worked well. Nowadays people believe in science. Sorcery helped for example in deciding when was a good time to build a temple.

**So, four things were needed in the marriage ceremony. Two kinds of fish, tea leaves for chewing and a dish like macaroni. What was their meaning?**

The first fish brings good luck, round dried fish brings good fortune to monks, long noodles meant a good connection between the families. The dried fish was tied up with string. That meant connection, too.

**Which house did the young couple go to live in?**

At first, the boy moves to the girl's house. The boy had to help the girl's parents in farm work. People wanted a skilled and hard-working boy for a son-in-law. And one who was also good at woodwork. The couple spent the first 4-5 years at the girl's home. Then they could start building their own house. If the parents didn't give their permission, they stayed at the girl's home and later inherited the house. If the boy was lazy, the parents gave permission to build their own house.

**Did people love all their children equally?**

Yes. But the one who was the most hard-working inherited everything. Those who do little, get little. Those who take care of their parents are given the most.

**Why is a certain day always chosen for getting married?**

The fourth month is the best. The fourth day is good too, because it's an even number. The sixth and seventh days are good, but on the eighth the heads knock together. The ninth is bad and the tenth a good day and so on. These lists were made ages ago and they hold true.

**Why just on those certain days?**

It's hard to explain. If people marry on bad days, the marriage will fail. All these are due to movements of the sun. When the month and the time of day are right, then you can marry. Observing the right time brings good fortune. We do it because Buddha did so.

### **What ceremonies belong to building a house?**

*First, the right time is found, just like when getting married. A ceremony is performed with four banana flowers, dark and white rice, and you must also have 15 baht in cash. A bag of rice is put in water and the offering made and prayers said. Water is sprinkled where the first pillar is going. It will be a good supporting pillar. Then the monk comes to pray and Mother Earth (phii of the earth) is given an offering of glutinous rice. At the same time the phii is told that a house is being built here, and it is asked to protect the house. After that, you tap the ground three times. From now on, this phii of the place is told everything. Once, someone brought a small child to me and asked me to blow and help, because the child cried all night. I asked if the man had told the phii of the earth about his arrival. He had not. Because he was an outsider in the house, I told him to take water and rice and to tell the phii of the earth that he had come to the house. Once he had done it, the child no longer cried. The phii of the earth is good and healing. Buddha made up these rules in his time. He had angels with him. The phii of the earth protected him. People here respect the phii of the earth.*

### **Where did these four protective phii come from?**

*Buddha was born in a special way. His arms and legs pointed in different directions, and he could say that my mother will die in seven days. So it happened. His father, who was a high-ranking person, remarried. Everyone told him to make his son a monk, because he was so different. His father didn't permit it, because he was a king. The chief angel called four more angels to help. The first was a giant, the second was maesuang, the third was payanat and the fourth payakyt. The chief angel asked these four deities to help, so the boy would become a monk. The task of the first was to look after Buddha. The second was the spirit of water, and it protected the boy from drowning. The third helped Buddha fight against enemies. The fourth had wings, and it knew the danger Buddha was in. This chief spirit always gave orders to these four. The angels helped Buddha become a monk. That is why human life depends on these four spiritual beings. They must be appeased from time to time, so everything in life runs smoothly.*

### **When the house building ceremonies were done, what were the ceremonies of blessing the new house?**

*First, the right day had to be found. Then the chief monk is called. He blesses the house. If people have money, they have a party and feed people. Friday is usually a good day for a housewarming party. It is the day of Buddha's birth. Wednesday is always a bad day.*

***Why are rockets let off at funerals?***

*It's just to let people know that there's a funeral. The correct faith forbids them. A person who plays with fireworks may have misfortune in his life.*

***Is knowing the right day important in rice farming, too?***

*Yes. Monday is always a good day. Now people also ask me what is a good day to sow peanut.*

***What is it?***

*Thursday or Friday.*

***Are there any ceremonies for it?***

*The phii of the field must be told about it. 9 or 10 words could also be said to the pahl phii. Harvesting is usually begun on a Friday. Then you tap three times on the ground and say that the harvest is starting. In the old days, ploughing was also done precisely according to the faith of Buddha and folk beliefs.*

***Do some people still do it?***

*Yes, and they do well.*

***Who would heal the sick?***

*The sorcerer.*

***What did people do when they got sick?***

*They made medicines from roots. The liquid made from roots was drunk. Or leaves of the chanon tree were mixed in rice and fed to sick children.*

### ***How were pregnant women treated in the past?***

*At the beginning they could do light work, but after about 6 months they were allowed to do nothing. They were told not to eat spicy food, or to walk fast. Banana was completely forbidden. So was the farang fruit (papaya). A pregnant woman had to be kind to animals and she wasn't allowed to greet the sellers on the market. It was thought that if a trader said hello, he'd sell nothing. The pregnant mother couldn't cut bananas, because it was said that the child knows everything. The mother wasn't allowed to go near any dangers. She couldn't bathe after sunset or comb her hair on Buddha's days. The woman was told to eat juicy kinds of fruit. It was said that the birth would be easier. The woman would wash in water where a snake skin had been soaked. That was also said to make the birth easier. In those days, people were very superstitious.*

### ***What was the ritual when the child's first hair was cut?***

*The right moment was obtained from Buddha's monks.*

### ***How soon after birth did it take place?***

*It would depend on how well the hair grew. It was thought that this way the child would have a good head of hair. It could never be done on a Wednesday.*

### ***What is the religious ceremony called khau khau?***

*People go to the temple to seek peace for their souls. It lasts 7 days. One can only eat rice twice a day, morning and evening. It is an effort to extinguish everything. In the old days, we would go to the forest to meditate. To extinguish urges and desires from the body, the flame of life. At the same time, you are trying to find out what happened to you in your previous life. It's impossible to extinguish the desires at the temple, because you see beautiful objects there. Nowadays there are false gods for sale at the temple.*

### ***If you were to bless me now, how would you bless?***

*Everything you do, do it from the heart. Wherever you go, may peace go with you. I wish your wife and children well and that they will be obedient. May you have success and peace forever.*

**Ban Srii Muod Klao 1985. Mr Tip, 78.**  
**Those nine seedlings hold the vitality of the field**

*I was with my wife when she died, teaching her thamma. It's one of the main doctrines of Buddhism. My wife didn't have any special wishes on her deathbed. She was given some natural medicines. When the soul leaves the body, it sometimes leaves through the fingers and toes. My wife's soul left through her mouth. Where it went, I don't know. When the soul departed, only the body was left to take away. I told the neighbours and relatives about my wife's death. There was no chemical to spray on the body then to prevent it from rotting, and that is why the departed was only kept at home for a couple of nights. It didn't smell yet in that time. The body was washed with warm water, not hot. The children washed her. Then the corpse was covered with a cloth and left on the mat to wait for a coffin. We used to make the coffin ourselves. It was slow, but there were often several men to make it. Today, both the coffin and the soul house are bought and they cost more than 2,000 baht in all.*

**What is the significance of the soul house?**

*Old people say that when the soul enters the world of the dead, it has a house there and it can show off to others. If there's just a coffin, it's shameful and shows that you have no property. But when you have a soul house, you have shelter from rain and sunshine. Azan Wat [temple teacher] first hands over the soul house to a monk, who then gives it to the deceased, the soul.*

**Do you have a wake by the body?**

*Not everybody has a wake, but gamblers and card players stay and they must be given spirits so they can stay awake. During the wake, the deceased the soul is served food three times a day, but if you're lazy, you can just serve supper. The food is placed beside the coffin and others don't eat it. When it goes off, it's thrown away. After the cremation, the soul is only taken food on holy days. The food is taken to the monks at the temple. The cremation ceremony is usually held at home, but if there's no room, it's held at the temple. My first wife died at 7 in the morning, and in the evening the monk came to read the suat.*

**If the body is cremated tomorrow, what preparations must be made today?**

*The food must be prepared the day before. If 12 monks are invited, for example, 13 portions must be made, because Azan Wat is included, and of course there must also be food for the funeral guests. You need at least two pigs. On the day before, the coffin is taken out of the house and the soul house put in place, the relatives do that. The monk delivers the soul house to the soul. A ceremony is performed in the chapel at the cremation site, where the deceased is told again, "you have died". Nowadays, this ceremony is often performed at home, because the monks are too lazy to go to the cremation site. Before*



*leaving for the cremation site, the monks are served their meal before midday. Then, after one o'clock, there is a ceremony where all the goods donated by villagers are arranged in displays and the same amount of money placed on top of each from 30 baht right up to 100 baht. At the cremation of a rich person, even 500 baht on each. The monks deliver the goods to the soul. They can keep the money for themselves. The journey to the cremation site is in procession, the musicians behind the coffin. When the ceremony in the cremation chapel is finished, the monks can be sent away by car. Then the coffin is placed on the pyre and the cremator anoints the face of the deceased with coconut milk. The cremator starts lighting the fire. Before that, the relatives walk three times around the coffin, with flowers made of wood shavings in their hands. It means asking the deceased for forgiveness.*

***What is the significance of rockets when they are fired at the cremation ceremony?***

*We didn't used to have them, today it's like a sign that it's a cremation. On the third day after the cremation, the family goes to extinguish the ashes. Then somploi water is sprinkled on the ashes. The bones are not collected. When 100 days have passed from the death, the wealthy have a special ceremony where they offer or send the soul some food. The poor don't do this.*

***Does the deceased appear to the living?***

*No. I would like to see it, but I don't believe they appear. Some people are afraid of souls. Where the soul goes, I don't know, maybe some meeting or conference.*

***Do you believe in reincarnation?***

*Yes. When a newborn baby cries and you go to the sorcerer to ask why, the reply is that some relative is reborn in this child, and a cord is tied on the child's wrist. Usually it stops crying, but not always. I'm not quite sure about reincarnation. I believe and I don't, because the crying doesn't always stop. The sorcerer has said that in every one of my grandchildren, some relative is reborn. That reincarnation is always a relation, of the same kin, an outsider is not born into another family. If we poor people prayed that we'd be reborn rich in our next life, it wouldn't work.*

***Why must a reincarnated person go to school, for example, if he has already been to school in his previous life? Isn't it a waste of time to go again?***

*He has forgotten everything from the previous life, he must start again.*

***Did you tell the phii about the births of your children?***

No.

***What do you do when you get sick?***

*I have never been sick myself, but when the children and grandchildren have been ill, I have contacted sorcerers and done as they have instructed. Promised spirits, phii, food, if the sick get better. I have never been ill myself. I have never had to go to the hospital, but when the children or grandchildren have been ill, I have helped them. The sorcerer asks the soul who has caused the illness. And this way he gets the answer, what must be done to get better. Sometimes the illness is because the person's khvan soul has perhaps been lost, and when certain ceremonies are performed, the khvan soul returns and then the person gets better.*

***Do you tell the phii when you go on trips?***

*I tell the good phii and ask for protection.*

***What happens when there is an accident?***

*If someone dies in a road accident, for example, a monk is called to the accident spot and he puts up a pole with a pennant made of red fabric fixed to the top. The monk tells the soul to go and be reborn somewhere else.*

*At the start of the farming season, I make an announcement to the phii of the field, Mother Thoranii, and I usually take good care of my fields. In a corner of a field, in an area of about a square metre, we plant nine rice seedlings, and when they have ripened, we cut them and take the sheaf to the wall of the grain store. That little area and those nine rice plants hold the life and vitality of the whole rice paddy, its khvan. The rice plant has the highest merit (bun). The phii of the field, Mother Thoranii, lives in that little special area where those nine seedlings are planted. At rice harvest time, those nine plants are cut last, and then Mother Thoranii is told to move to the granary, as she can't live there any more, the buffalo might trample her.*

*The phii is not consulted about actual building of a house, but when the main pillars are erected, there is the ceremony of raising the four pillars. Or actually, there are five pillars, because there is an extra one on the east side. It's like the earth phii's pillar. Azan Wat or a monk is called to perform the ceremony of raising the pillars. You need flowers, offering sticks and leaves from trees for it.*

*The phii of the family, the ancestor, is usually celebrated once a year. Then it is given good meat dishes and cookies. Relatives give money for the food. The phii of our family lives in the village of Kat Meek. This phii protects about 20 family groups in all. When my mother was still alive, we split the phii up to live in several places; we invited the phii to different places. Later on, when several families of our kin settled in the village of Kat Meek, they started to worship this phii of our kin in one place. My young relations come to visit me at Songkran, to ask for a blessing and forgiveness. They bring gifts of clothes and cash. Some may give a baht, another five or ten baht.*

***Do you go to the temple?***

*During Lent, I go pretty regularly, once a week. Sometimes I send my wife. The rest of the year, I only go occasionally. At any other times, you don't gain much merit for the hereafter for going to the temple.*

***What did you do yesterday?***

*Stayed at home and wove baskets.*

***And today?***

*I'll do some more basket weaving. I have to take rest breaks, when I get backache. I'll carry on with my basket weaving tomorrow, too. We elders also look after the grandchildren. The proverb says that we have two rounds of childminding: first our own and then the grandchildren.*

***Ban Sree Muod Klao 1985. Mr Laan, 80.  
I burned the tree of the evil spirit***

***How long do you intend to live?***

*I don't think I'll live to be 100, 80-90 years is sufficient.*

## **Would you like to live to be 120?**

*Yes. It would show that I have good deeds, if I lived so long. I have never been to school. As a child I minded buffalo. We had no irrigation system in those days. Everything was transported on a zebu cart. Life used to be very hard. There were no cars then. I used to earn my living selling salt that I used to transport on a cart across the mountains. The railway used to only come as far as Den Chai (in Phrae province, beyond the mountain range to the east). I would fetch salt from there and sell it in the villages. We had no schools. People used to go to school at temples. I have seven children in all. One is dead. He drowned at the age of 7. All six are already married.*

*I come from another village, my wife is from here. I came here at the age of 21. The same year, I had to go to the army for two years. When I became a soldier, my wife was already expecting a baby. As a soldier, I had the chance of learning to read the Thai language, and I can read and write. Ever since I was a child, I wanted to learn to read, and as a child I used to visit people who could read, and they taught me a little and wrote words on bits of paper. They were northern dialect, not Thai language. Then when I was watching buffalo, I practised reading from the pieces of paper. Later, when adult education was organized, I took part for a while, but not right up to the examination. I learned all kinds of things then. I also learned prayers in the Pali language. I like them and I still remember them.*

*I want to tell you that long ago there was a very large tree on the edge of my rice paddy, and the villagers said that a very dangerous and evil spirit lived in the tree. The villagers gave the spirit food, but I wasn't afraid of it. Because the tree was shading my field badly, I climbed up and lopped off large branches and left them under the tree to dry. The following year, I gathered a lot of dried rice straw around the tree and burned the whole tree. The spirit didn't harm me, but it went to live in a village woman and spoke through her mouth: "You have destroyed my home." Later, the woman did get better. My children and grandchildren have farmed that same field continuously, and have met with no accident. The villagers were very angry with me.*

## **What do you do at the start of the rice transplanting season?**

*I have performed the ceremonies for the phii of the field. I know a Pali incantation. A monk taught it me, and you can add to it in Thai language. For instance like this: "Saathu, saathu, may the rice crop well and may the insects not come to destroy it. Saathu, saathu, may the ears be full. Saathu, saathu, may every grain be good. Saathu, saaathu, if other fields won't crop well, let my field yield a good harvest. Saathu, saathu, let these nine seedlings alone make half a load of rice. Saathu, saathu, that I will reap more than others. Saathu, saathu, that I may become rich." Today, this is not the custom, because people don't know incantations. [The word 'saathu' means approximately the same as 'amen', let it be as I ask, or may it happen as I say now.]*

***Do people in the village worship phii and spirits?***

*Yes, although I have told the young people not to, but they don't listen. The phii of the village eats chicken two consecutive years and every third year it must be given pork. Money is collected from the villagers for it. Sometimes I feel like burning that place of worship of the phii, the contraption. We had no spirit house in our compound, and the villagers told me to build one. And in the end I agreed. I got some timber for it and the villagers built it. Soon afterwards however, my child was drowned and died right nearby. The relatives asked the sorcerer the reason for the child's death, his drowning, and were told that the good phii of my house had sold the boy to an evil spirit and it took the boy to the water and drowned him. I was very angry. I had just had a house built for that phii, and yet it went and sold my son to an evil spirit. I wanted to burn the whole spirit house, but my relatives wouldn't let me. Since then, I haven't honoured phii or spirits. Long, long ago I was a sorcerer myself, a seer, but today I think that nobody should worship or believe in phii and spirits.*

***Do people here honour old people?***

*Yes. I'm always given several loincloths at Songkran.*

***Do you go to the temple?***

*Every week during Lent. Not so often at other times. Only very seldom in the cold season.*

***You seem to be a good Buddhist?***

*You can ask the villagers about that. If there are religious festivals in the village, they always come and ask me to come along. I know monks' language, I know Pali prayers same as the monks. We used to have several monks here in the village temple, but now we only have one. We have just invited a new monk from Phrae. None of the men of our own village are monks. The monk from Phrae has left his family there, his wife and children, and become ordained as a monk. They say the wife is now dead. He has freed himself from bodily urges and desires, and come here as a monk.*

***What did you do yesterday?***

*I made some material for sweeping brooms from palm leaves, and I'll do the same today and tomorrow too.*

**Ban Sree Muod Klao 1985. Mr Uan, 56.**  
**The correct soul must be found out**

**Does the soul of a deceased person appear to the living?**

*Some say that it does, but I don't believe it.*

**Do you believe in reincarnation?**

*Yes, I believe in that. If a newborn baby cries, then one can ask the souls, who is reborn in that child. You need two women, a stick and a ball of khaunio [glutinous rice]. A ball is squeezed from cooked khaunio rice, tied on a string to hang from the middle of a stick, and then the women each take an end of the stick, one at each end. Then the women say the name of some dead relative. If the rice ball and stick remain steady in place, it means that that person is not reincarnated in the child. So, they keep suggesting names of dead relatives. If the name is correct, the rice ball starts to swing on the end of the string, same with the stick and the women's hands. This way, we can find out who is reborn.*

**Have any of your relatives come back in your children?**

*Yes. My mother has been reborn.*

**Can the same soul be reborn in several people?**

*Yes. Even 32 people. Because people have 32 khwan souls. Of course, you can also be reborn as a phii or an animal.*

**Did you inform the phii about the births of your children?**

*No. If someone is ill, we might ask the sorcerer the reason for the illness, and he advises which spirit or phii we must honour. If you do as he says, sometimes people get better, sometimes not, sometimes they die.*

**Do you have any farmland?**

*Two or three rai.*

***Do you inform the phii of the field about your farm work?***

*No.*

***How is the phii of the village honoured?***

*Once a year it is offered food. The women see to it, 30-40 houses together offer the phii food, but not pork, just chicken and all kinds of little titbits, cookies and sweet desserts.*

***Do people tell the phii of the earth about building a house?***

*No, but the ceremony of raising the four pillars must be performed. It protects the house from every direction.*

***Do people honour the old in this village?***

*Yes. Sambitijoo, it is Pali language and means asking for a blessing. For a few years already, my children and grandchildren have visited me (at Songkran). I'm getting old.*

***Do you go to the temple?***

*Only during Lent and at Songkran. At other times, I offer the monks food at 7 every morning.*

***Don't the monks receive too much food, with so many people donating it?***

*Maybe sometimes, but then they can sell some.*

***What did you do yesterday?***

*I was pulling garlic.*

***And today?***

*It's just 100 days since a neighbour's death, and today was the tam bun festival, for earning merits for the hereafter. There were*

*about 80 people there.*

***Did you see any friends there?***

*I was there right next to the monks. I don't usually drink alcohol or spend time with friends that way.*

***What do you intend to do tomorrow?***

*I'm going to the field to pull garlic. And then I'm going to plant some seedlings, of a plant we use to make brooms - bristles for the brooms.*

***Ban Sree Muod Klao 1985. Mr Tan, 75.  
Child of human or phii?***

*My wife died at the same time of day as we are talking now. She was sick, so the house was full of people, and I didn't need to go anywhere to tell anybody. When we saw that she was not going to get better, there were always about ten people around her. When she died, the whole compound was full of people. After that relatives and villagers kept a vigil at nights, there were always more people at night and fewer in the small hours. The body was washed with somploi water and put in the coffin. As soon as death comes, the relatives wash the body with somploi water and then again before placing it in the coffin, a monk and the villagers do it. The second cleansing is done to ask the deceased for forgiveness. The coffin was bought, as was the soul house.*

***Do the dead appear?***

*Maybe they do, if they are worried about their property. Maybe they also appear in such a way that nobody sees them and knows nothing about their appearance. And if good deeds are not done on behalf of the deceased, he comes to look for merits. Before, if a woman died in childbirth or immediately after, a hole was made in the floor of the house and the body taken out that way. The soul of such a person appears very often. The clothes and belongings of the deceased were taken to the temple, and the deceased went there to look for them. Today, if someone has been murdered or killed, the cremation may be arranged at*



home, and such person's soul doesn't appear either, because today more food is offered to the deceased than before. Personally, I have never seen a soul appear.

### **Do you believe in reincarnation?**

Sorcerers and seers say that there is reincarnation. I don't believe it. I believe that the soul doesn't die and that it wanders around, and if it finds a new home, it doesn't appear to the living. If it has done a lot of good deeds, it will find its own place. If the person has been sinful, the soul will have no place. It must come back and be reborn, perhaps as an animal. The most important teaching of the monks is: if you do good your fate will be good, if you do bad deeds, your fate will be bad. As this is what they teach, so it must be, of course. Some people believe that there is no soul at all, that there is nothing after death. Why do good deeds then, spend money on it? It would be wiser to save the money. If there were no souls, who eats the food people offer to the souls of the dead? I don't think the soul dies. If you live a good life and do good, you are reborn as a human, but if you do evil, you are a bad person and will come back as an animal. Goodness results from goodness. Badness, sin, is rewarded by badness.

### **When you die, what do you think you'll be reborn as?**

I have done good, but I'm not sure about the future. I have not stolen, not lied, not gone with other women, I have not deceived others or fleeced anybody. I expect I'll be all right.

### **Do people here honour old people?**

Yes. At new year (Songkran) my children and grandchildren come and other young people from the village. At Songran, there's a special good day, vanphjavan, when young people visit the old all day long. They bring gifts and ask for blessings. Many young people visit me, too. After the new year celebrations, the old people take trips to important, esteemed temples and revered, famous monks to ask for blessing and forgiveness for themselves. Young people might then go with them on those journeys.

### **Is the birth of a child announced to the phii?**

Yes. At least it used to be. As soon as the child is born and the cord cut and tied, a cloth was placed on a large woven bamboo riddle or tray, and the baby was put on the cloth. The baby is placed outside the house door on the tray. The person doing this stamps hard on the floor so the baby is frightened, and says: "Who does this child belong to, a human or a phii? If it is the child of

*a phii, come and get your own right now. If it is a human child, do not come to bother us." If it is a human child, let it develop and grow normally and keep healthy. Nowadays, people don't tell the spirits and phii. Babies are born in hospitals. I did announce every child.*

### ***How do you act in cases of illness?***

*I don't contact phii or spirits, because they are evil spirits and according to Buddhist religion they should not be worshipped, so I don't honour them. If you honour, believe in them, then they must also be worshipped and offerings made, you must give them food and just the right food that the spirits and phii want.*

### ***What do you do at the start of the rice transplanting season?***

*In the old days, we used to do this: A ceremony was performed for Mother Thoranii who takes care of the earth and fields. It is not an evil spirit, but the phii of the field. We had to find out the right day for the ceremony beforehand, and for that day, we used to make (square) punnets from banana leaves, and put in them rice, offering sticks and candles. Four of them were required. Next, small lattices were made from bamboo sticks, a span or two in length, on which the punnets of offerings were placed on the field. Four punnets were put in one corner of some irrigated field. An area of about a square metre was separated from it, the punnets placed in the corners and then nine rice seedlings were planted in the square metre. After this, the actual transplanting of rice could begin. All this is to ask for blessing, to get a plentiful harvest and that insects won't destroy the rice seedlings.*

*At harvest time, all the rest of the rice is reaped and threshed first and taken to the grain store. Only those nine rice plants remain on the field, to be cut on a special ceremony day. A basket was taken along, and in it we collected all the ears of rice that had fallen to the ground across the field, an ear here, another one there, and finally arrived at the spot where the nine seedlings were planted. That is like the home of the soul of the rice, and the ears from those nine stalks are cut and also put in the basket, and they are politely asked to move to the granary, each and every grain. The phii or soul of the field is told that if you stay here, the buffalo and zebu may trample you. After that, the basket and the ears are taken to the granary.*

### ***When you were married, did you tell the phii?***

*No, I didn't, but others wondered about it. Our kin used to have a phii, but then a ceremony was organized and performed by a monk, and after that our family has not contacted phii or spirits. My wife's family has a phii, and it's worshipped more than before. In the eleventh month, a feast is organized and an orchestra hired. Money for it is collected from the relatives.*

***Do you go to the temple?***

*Yes, during Lent I go every week and then I also sleep there. At other times, I don't go so often. Some people sleep at the temple at other times, too, apart from Lent, but I have work to do. I don't have the time. This time of the year, the monks go round in the mornings collecting food, so it's not at all necessary to take it for them to the temple. I always give them some every morning, when they pass the house here.*

***What did you do yesterday?***

*Stayed at home.*

***And today?***

*I mean to stay here at home.*

***What about tomorrow?***

*There's a funeral tomorrow. I think I'll go on my bike.*

***Ban Mae Kong Nya 1998. Mrs Siilaa, 46.  
The spirit of Mother Earth has entered me***

***What is this house of yours?***

*This is the home of a sorcerer spirit. Villagers come to ask me various things and then the sorcerer spirit enters me.*

***Where has the spirit come from?***

*It has come of its own accord.*

**Whose spirit has entered you?**

*The spirit of Mother Earth.*

**How did the spirit enter you?**

*It came unexpectedly at four in the morning. They said that I had acted like I was drunk, although I was asleep. The spirit tried to enter me once before, a couple of years ago, but I wouldn't receive it. It said that it will come back, and when I wanted to know the lottery numbers, I said to the spirit that if you tell me the right numbers, you can come and live in my body. The spirit told me the numbers and I won the jackpot. The next night, the spirit came into me.*

**What kinds of symptoms do you have when the spirit enters you?**

*I go completely unconscious. I can't control myself then.*

**Is the spirit still in you?**

*Yes.*

**If someone comes to ask for predictions, what do you have to do?**

*First the person must give me 20 baht and then I call the spirit. If someone comes to ask me how a soul is doing, I charge 50 baht and then I call the spirit. I never know myself how I change. Others have told me that I behave and talk like the deceased.*

**What happens when the spirit leaves?**

*It just goes. If nine different souls came into me, then they would stay in me altogether. Four different spirits have been in me.*

**Do the spirits tell you to avoid something?**

*I'm not to go to funerals and sometimes I can't eat meat for two months. The spirit has told me to avoid meat altogether, but I can't manage to go without it.*

***What symptoms did you have in the beginning?***

*At first I shook, when the spirit of the earth entered me. If I don't obey the spirits, I get such bad stomach pains that I feel I'm dying. Sometimes I also get a bad headache. I have to ask the spirit leave for everything. If I do wrong, I have to appease it. Once, I ate some food brought from a funeral by mistake, and I had terrible stomach pains. A man's voice asked me, do you not obey? Then I realized that I had acted against the will of the spirit. My mother lit some incense and then the spirit calmed down. Once I killed some insects accidentally, and I was taken ill again. I'm not permitted to kill any animal.*

***Do you visit the temple often?***

*Yes.*

***Does the soul of a deceased person come to haunt people?***

*Yes.*

***How do you contact a certain soul?***

*First I get in touch with the head soul and through him I can contact other souls.*

***Do you believe in reincarnation?***

*Yes.*

***Who has decided the prices for when you contact the souls?***

*The head soul.*

***Do people need to make an appointment when they come to see you?***

*No.*

***Are you able to say where some disappeared person is?***

*The head spirit tells me. The spirit also tells women about their husbands' concubines.*

***Ban Srie Muod Klao 1998. Monk Buutikanarong, 29.  
Good people go to heaven***

***Are you from this village?***

*Yes, and I live (as a monk) in this temple. I am 29 years old.*

***What kinds of changes have taken place here in the last ten years?***

*Farming used to be done with buffalo. Rice used to look good and crop well. Buffalo dung made good, organic fertilizer. Today there is more technology in farming, and I think it's strange that people like it so much. Perhaps it's because tractors are faster and easier. Today, work is done in a race with the clock. There used to be no such competition as today. Farmers take out bank loans and buy expensive fertilizers and poisons. And if they fail to make a profit, they can't repay their debt to the bank. Then some people are forced to sell their farmland, and only a small area is left for them to farm. They have so little land left that they can only grow enough for their own needs.*

***Will the number of buffalo increase?***

*I don't think so, as there are only a few left now. It could be that the next generation only sees buffalo in pictures. People used to also travel by buffalo cart, but today, if the police see a buffalo cart on a highway, they tell them to get off. The roads are good and only for cars. A lot of human labour has been replaced by technology. All the tools of rice farming have disappeared, too.*

***If someone wants to become a monk, what are the ceremonies for it?***

*There are two kinds. Those who want to become monks and boys who are taken into temples as servant boys. I'll tell you about the latter first. At first, the boy visits the temple for a month, just to watch. During that time, he studies the Pali language and also some religious chapters. Then he is tested to see if he has learned. After that he is taught to meditate. He must also learn to perform certain liturgies. If after a month it is seen that the boy has persevered and learned all that's required, a ceremony is held for him. However, the parents' permission must be obtained first. Being a temple boy has the advantage that the boy sees what happens at the temple, and he learns good things.*

*If you want to become a monk, you must have completed six years of elementary school. That is also the legally required minimum school leaving age. The parents of a boy wanting to become a monk must first get permission from the municipal chief. Then they must notify the village chief. The last permission must be obtained from the head of the temple. He must also have a doctor's certificate of good health. The boy must be completely healthy. After all this, he can become a monk. First, his parents shave off all his hair. Then the boy is dressed in a white robe. By then, the boy must inwardly be prepared for the ordination ceremony. The relatives come to witness the head shaving and robing. A Buddhist monk comes to perform this ceremony at 1 p.m. It is to remember how good the parents have been and to assure how grateful the son is. Then the father collects more monks to pray. There might be up to 21 monks. The boy is still wearing his white robes. The family eats a meal with the monks. Then one monk blesses the family that has given up its son. Everyone leaves the boy's home in a procession towards the temple. They sing joyful songs all the way. At the temple, the white robe is exchanged for an orange monk's robe. Seven days later there is another ceremony.*

***Why did you use the word 'glass boy' in the ceremony where the boy thanks his parents? What does it mean?***

*It means that the boy is so grateful and that he has become a good person. The parents describe him as a glass son or a crystal boy. It describes how dear the boy is to his parents. He is a crystal boy as long as he wears the white robe.*

***At what stage is the ceremony called nat, and is there a story behind it?***

*The name nat (naakh) has come from a spirit of water. It was in the form of a fish and it also wanted to become a monk. But Buddha said to it, you can't become a monk, but you must perform the task you have now. So, nat means that you need not become a monk yet. The nat stage is when the robe is still white. A person wanting to become a monk must be over 20, but not over 60.*

### **What is the juuk hang ceremony?**

*It means the seven days he must spend in the temple quite alone. During that time, he must learn 10 doctrines by heart. After that, it is seen whether he coped with being alone and if he learned all the teachings. They are: Do not kill animals. Do not steal. Do not lie. Do not eat in the evening, and so on.*

### **Can the boy still go home after this?**

*Yes, but he cannot stay there to live. He can just visit home, but he is now the property of the temple. If one of his parents is sick, he can always visit home.*

### **Can he eat at home?**

*Yes, but only before 12. Otherwise he would breach the fourth commandment. The ceremonies of a monk and a temple boy are very similar. Only the monk must have done his national service and be over 20 years old. But not over 60. A temple boy must only observe 10 teachings, but a person wanting to be a monk must keep 127 commandments.*

### **What is your opinion of spirit worship?**

*There is no spirit worship in Buddhism at all. Buddha doesn't say anything about them. Man has sought help from the spirits in order to ensure a good living and a safe life. There are only these teachings in Buddhism. They should be more important than any spirit forces.*

### **So, Buddhism has nothing to do with spirit worship?**

*It is a hindrance to Buddhism. Everyone is entitled to live according to his faith. Now the Ministry of Culture has started teaching monks that worship of phii and spirits is a different matter from Buddha's religion. But it's difficult to erase beliefs from people. They have all been taught them from an early age. Spirit worship has now spread to the degree that people visit sorcerers more than the temple. Buddha's teachings and belief in phii cannot go hand in hand, but they are mutual enemies. The palace that is placed on coffins is pricey, up to 6,000-7,000 baht, and it has nothing to do with reincarnation. It's just a fashion today. People believe in sorcerers and spirits more than in Buddha's teachings. According to Buddha's teaching, if you have done good, a good fate awaits you after death. No offerings or palaces on top of the coffin can help you then.*



***Many rites are attached to the start of a new building project. What do you think of them?***

*They are beliefs passed down from the elders. It is to wish that living in the house will be good and peaceful. There is literature about them, too.*

***Do you think that it's good for people to know when is a favourable day and when is not?***

*That is also knowledge passed down. People have calendars that they follow. I don't think they should watch them too much. It's nonsense, too, but people can't be denied it, as it's so deep-rooted in them. In our religion, everyone is free to choose his faith.*

***Why must there be so many rites before building a house?***

*First, a favourable day must be found. It cannot be a Wednesday. That is a bad day. You take a chanon fruit, which signifies money. Then some chan leaves, which means that there will be no quarrels. Then some inmajong, which means that people will be happy to visit the house. Then nine baht is put in each pillar hole. The village religious leader or a monk comes to perform the rite, one who is good at reading these chapters. A cloth is tied around the most important pillar, the central pillar, to distinguish it better. The phii lives mainly in that pillar.*

***Are parents still respected?***

*It has decreased a lot. The reason may be that both parents go to work, the children are put in daycare, and they see each other very little in the evenings. Parents don't have time to spend with children any more. Children no longer know their parents and their teachings. Children used to be taken along everywhere. Today, a young person trusts in himself more than his parents and takes his pleasure trips and spends more time with his friends than his parents. Old people are not cared for and they are put in old people's homes.*

***What activities do you have here for old people? Is there an organization to take care of the old?***

*Yes, here at the temple we gather all the old people together once a week, and they have a meal and listen to Buddha's teachings.*

***Do you know anyone who has sent old people to a home?***

*No, I don't.*

***What is a funeral like according to Buddhism?***

*There are two kinds of funerals. Some people die naturally and some accidentally. The latter is a bad death. I'll tell you first about a natural death. The deceased is taken home. A sorcerer or someone from the temple comes. He ties the hands and feet of the departed and dresses the corpse. The body is put in the coffin. Every night while the deceased is at home, a monk of Buddha comes to read prayers. On the last morning, there is a funeral ceremony, where offerings are made to the monks as good deeds for the deceased. A sermon is given at the same time. It always starts at nine o'clock in the morning. There must be an even number of monks. Then a last meal is eaten together in memory of the departed. Then everyone leaves in procession to the chapel at the cremation site. The cremation starts at 1 o'clock, the coffin is placed ready. The monk of Buddha wears the yellow robe obtained from the house of the deceased. The monks read their prayers in Pali. Someone reads an obituary of the deceased. Then the coffin is lifted onto the pyre and after the cremation the funeral is over.*

***What is the meaning of the akitamso prayer that is said just before the cremation?***

*It's intended for the funeral guests. It is teaching about the fleeting nature of life. It warns people that while we are still alive, we must do good deeds.*

***Why are rockets let off at funerals?***

*It does not belong to Buddhism. That custom has come from ancestors. Perhaps it is to drive away evil forces.*

***When the body has been cremated, the soul of the deceased visits his relatives on the same evening. What do you think of this?***

*I don't think it's possible. According to the faith, the soul does no such thing. If someone has heard noises, it's because they are so upset and missing the departed. The imagination brings about the noises.*

### ***What is the hundredth day ceremony?***

*After a hundred days, the cycle of the soul's destiny is over. The ceremony is to remember the departed and to do good deeds on his behalf. That doesn't come from Buddhism either, but from ancestors. Good deeds should be done during life.*

### ***What does Buddha teach about reincarnation?***

*If a person keeps the teachings and does good deeds, he can be reborn as a human being. If a person has led a bad life, he is destined for purgatory. After death, a person who has led a bad life becomes a soul that wanders around restlessly and cannot be reborn. He can have no peace, but he stays to haunt. Those who have observed all eight doctrines go to heaven. It is very difficult. If you keep 4 or 5 commandments, you can be reborn. One who cannot even keep five commandments may be reborn as an animal. This is the basic doctrine of reincarnation.*

### ***Is it Buddhism that if you own something, you can get it back through reincarnation?***

*Yes. It is the doctrine of destiny. Whatever you do in this life, it will meet you in the next life. There are people who keep some objects with them all their lives and hope that they can take them along to the next life. Sin also follows a person.*

### ***If the temple cannot give people financial help, what do you do then?***

*They can come to hear Buddha's teachings and obtain knowledge and understanding from it. Peace of mind can make them feel better. The teachings reduce this greed of people, which causes a great deal of sorrow. I encourage them to buy only what is necessary.*

### ***Why did you elect monkhood?***

*I wanted to learn the basics of Buddha's doctrine. I wanted to do good deeds. At first, I did them for my mother, but when I had been a monk for a while, I no longer wanted to give it up. In addition, I have studied social issues here. I came here young, immediately after my basic education. I have finished my social studies too.*

### ***What would you wish for most now in your life?***

*That we would be happy and helpful towards each other. That we would not be greedy, jealous or quarrelsome. This is my*

greatest wish.

**Ban Dong 1984. Monk Rangsan, 38.**  
**All religions teach goodness**

*I have two surnames. My Thai surname was not acceptable when I was ordained a monk. You had to use a Pali name, so it fitted in the verses we had to say. I come from Muang Ngao. I have been here in Ban Dong for a year. I have been a novice and monk for about 18 years altogether. A monk is dependent on the villagers. If the monk is faithful, discharges his duties well, the villagers respect him and bring him food.*

**What is it like in a remote village? Is it self-sacrifice?**

*When asked, we must go anywhere, to help people understand religion, to teach them.*

**You have only been here for a short time. Why are you leaving? Don't you feel sorry for the villagers with nobody to teach them?**

*I'm sure they will get a new monk. One reason why I'm leaving is that the villagers cannot provide all that is necessary. They don't always even bring food or invite to housewarmings and similar occasions. In town, they bring food regularly. Here, there is no food, clothing, housing or medicines. They bring just enough food for me to survive, but the villagers don't ask for the monk's blessing when they come. If villagers don't respect their religion, they don't bring food to the monks. Here, the villagers don't understand yet that there are many rules that should be observed. There are 8,400 clauses altogether. I have tried to teach them, but I can't guarantee the results. If the villagers took religion seriously, they would also have community spirit and the village would improve and develop. When I first came here, I immediately felt that there was no real life here. I have tried to liven them up. If someone in this village tries and does something for the temple, for example, nobody thanks the donor. When I go, novices and temple boys will still be here. There have been monks here before, who have done nothing for the temple or the villagers. The villagers have praised me because I have tried to make progress.*

**Are there people in this village who don't care about religion at all?**

*Yes, a proportion of the villagers are not interested in religion. Then there is a small group who are interested in the Christian*

*Bible. The Christians blame the Buddhists for the lack of development in the village, but a Buddhist village could develop, if only there was a community spirit. All religions teach goodness. I have heard that Christians encourage other people to become Christians. If you believe in the Christians' god, they say that he heals. I don't believe it, because I think that everyone must be sick sometimes and die when their time comes. I don't think they should try to convert others to Christianity. If you really follow Buddhist teachings, you are sure to be a good person, but most only observe it superficially. Christianity is good, too, I think, but here neither Buddhists or Christians take religion seriously.*

**Can you tell me about becoming a monk? Are there different ways?**

*There is really just one way. First, you must study so you understand Buddha's teachings. There are certain clauses that must be studied first. Then Chaua Wat (head monk of the temple) sets a test and teaches behaviour, how to accept gifts, how to walk and also teaches Pali language. This is because the future monk must learn verses in Pali that are used in various ceremonies.*

**Do villagers have any part in becoming ordained as a monk?**

*Yes. Chaua Wat organizes a meeting and asks the villagers whether the person is suitable for becoming a monk. If the villagers are in favour, grant their approval, then it is decided how much each donates to the ordainee in cash or goods.*

**Why must villagers donate cash or goods?**

*So the would-be monk can organize a celebration, for the ordination. It also depends on the ordainee's parents how much cash is required. If the celebration must cost little, it is organized at the temple, but if it is held at home, then it costs a lot, because you have to provide liquor. At home, you also have to slaughter an animal for food. You don't need to provide food at the temple. You can just have a quiet ordination. If the ordination feast is at home, you can hire a band of musicians, but that's expensive.*

**How long is the ordination ceremony?**

*On the first day, the ordainee is called naakh. Then his head is shaved and he is dressed in a white robe. The second day is a day of preparation. Then the villagers bring the goods and cash donations they have pledged, and the third day is the actual ordination day. The word naakh is Pali and it means some kind of a dragon and a water spirit. It goes back to the time when Buddha was still alive. In those days, if someone wanted to become a monk, he naturally first had to prepare, and ordination only took place in one place. Everyone had to travel there. And once a dragon in the shape of a human came to the ordination with other men. When the ordainees awoke the next morning, one of them was a naakh or a dragon. Then the others went to tell*

*Buddha that there was an unclean animal asleep in the temple. Buddha thought about what to do. Yesterday someone came as a man and now he is an animal. Because the dragon was an animal, Buddha didn't allow it to be ordained a monk. In those days there were three types of ordainees. Women could be ordained as nangchi, I suppose we could say a nun. Secondly, men could first be ordained as young monks, neen, who were under 20, or finally as proper monks. When the naakh was not accepted in any of those groups, it said: "If I cannot be ordained, let my name be given to all who want to become ordained." And everyone must be naakh before ordination. Ever since then, this has been the custom. Whether this story is true or not, I don't know. Maybe Buddha used an allegory. Ever since then, the ordination ceremony has taken three days.*

*On the first day, the ordainees are naakh and on the second day preparations are made. Naakh receives gifts, such as appropriate clothing, robes, sashes and other necessary items. On the second day, there is the celebratory meal in honour of the ordination. On the third day, the actual ordination ceremony is performed in the temple compound. In a temple that has not yet been consecrated for its purpose you can only ordain novices, but not perform the actual ordination of monks. Chau Khana Amphoe (chief monk of the municipality) performs the ordination of monks; he himself must first have passed an examination to give him the right to ordain monks. Chau Wat makes all the preparations for ordination of monks. On the first preparation day ordinary clothes are changed for a white robe. That can be done by anybody. But when the white clothes are exchanged for the yellow robe, the dresser must be able to read Pali verses. Chau Khana Amphoe decides who is to dress the ordainees in the yellow robe. When he has been robed in yellow, all the rules of conduct of the brotherhood are read to the monk.*

*Ordination of monks cannot yet be performed in this temple in our village, because this temple has not been inaugurated. When a temple is to be inaugurated, the King's permission must first be obtained through the Ministry of Religion. When the permission is obtained, you need 13 round stones, hin sii maa. The stones are buried under the temple floor so that one is in the middle and one in each corner, and the rest along the walls, under the floor. We usually look for the stones in the forest. They are quite hard to find. Sometimes people ask for more from other temples or even from the Ministry of Religion, to get the required number. The stones can be ground to get them good enough.*

*Boys who have completed the six-year elementary school can be ordained novices, neen. One can only be ordained a monk at the age of 20. If the ordainees as monks have not been novices beforehand, they must first learn all the instructions intended for novices. When Buddha was still alive, becoming a monk was easier, because Buddha himself gave permission. When a monk is ordained, 11 or 9 other monks must be present on the occasion. During the ceremony the monks sit with their hands in the prayer position. In that position, they also receive the blessing of the Chau Khana Amphoe who performs the ceremony. Chau Khana Amphoe is paid a special fee for performing the ceremony, but the other monks are not. They are just present. Then the ordainees are read all the commandments a monk must observe. The most important are 10 initially, and later another 227 clauses are added. They are in Pali or Sanskrit. A novice is only given the first 10 commandments to observe.*

*If he violates one of the commandments, he must perform a ceremony of atonement in front of an image of Buddha in a temple. A violation is for example when a monk accidentally breaks a green leaf off a living bush while raking the compound. That is a violation that must be atoned. Studying all those commandments takes at least 45 days. They must be learned in Sanskrit, because they cannot be written in Thai language. I have noticed that Northern monks are not very interested in studying them. Usually monks don't even know all the clauses. Monks are lazy, of 200 monks, only one knows all the commandments. They are not taught at the temple every day either, but every now and then a session is organized when they are all gone through. Then one person reads them and the others listen. If one is clever, they can be read through in about 37 minutes. The record for reading all 227 clauses is 29 minutes, second best is 37 minutes, and third 45 minutes. Monks in Central Thailand are more interested in the clauses.*

*Relatives of an ordainee often organize a big celebration, with a band of folk musicians and possibly movies. All that can cost up to 45,000 baht. I think it would be better if that money was donated to the temple, for building work.*

*People of this village worship spirits and phii, because they don't know much about Buddhism yet. Phii worship does not belong to Buddhism. I have tried to teach them. Buddha taught that when you do good, your fate is good. If you do bad deeds, your fate is bad. This phii worship is an ancient custom that originates from Brahminism. I don't believe that spirits and phii can do us any harm. If there is some accident, bad luck, it is not caused by spirits and phii, but it is the reward of sin, of a violation done by that person. If you get stomach ache, it's not caused by any phii or spirit, but by unsuitable food you have eaten. Buddha himself has taught so, and I have taught the same here.*

*A monk or monks are usually invited to wakes and cremations, and there they read Pali text that is the same throughout the country, for all monks. People who do not understand Pali think that the monk is talking to the deceased or teaching (suat) the dead soul. But in reality, the monk is reading seven clauses that are meant as lessons for the living, and often after the Pali teaching, the monks say the same thing in Thai, so people can understand it. And those seven clauses are taught on other occasions too. There is no special sermon for the deceased or verses for cremations. The lesson is: Do good, and your fate will be good, if you do bad deeds, your fate is bad. But if people have already learned something, got it into their heads, it's very hard to change it. It's as difficult as if we drop a needle in the river. It's impossible to get it out again. It's very difficult to get new lessons to sink in. It doesn't produce results. But yet, we must try to change old ideas, beliefs of both mountain people and Thai people. Nowadays, there is a lot of special teaching so people understand Buddhism correctly. Finding the correct day for a cremation is not part of Buddhism either. That comes from Brahminism too. According to Buddhism, it makes no difference what day a body is cremated. During a wake, monks perform the same suat ceremony in Pali every night, it's the same text, the message and meaning of which they may still teach in Thai. I have done so elsewhere, too, but nobody has died yet while I've been in this village.*

*People also believe a lot in omens. For instance, if the chickens wake up at night, it's an omen of some particular event. But such omens don't exist in reality. We cause them ourselves, all that happens around us. For example, house fires happen because we are not sufficiently careful with fire. It is very difficult to separate Buddhism from Brahminism, so they must be allowed to continue intertwined. Old monks in country temples are real mixers of religions, and in addition, they also invent new clauses themselves. And people seem to like to accept always something new, new customs and new ceremonies. For example, it's not Buddhism that if a person is frightened by something, his good luck (khvan soul) is lost, dropped. For instance, if a minor traffic accident happens, the accident victim or his relatives are supposed to go to the accident spot afterwards to bring food and offerings, to bring back the good luck that was lost in the accident. It does not belong to Buddhism.*

*Buddhism is that one tries to be good, to seek goodness and wisdom. If one is wise, then one must also be good. One can obtain wisdom and understanding for example by going to the temple and listening to the teaching there. Those who possess no wisdom or understanding to be good, are bad. Here, people's religion and various ceremonies contain more Brahminism than Buddhism. Monks are blamed for not teaching, and it's true, because many monks and novices don't take teaching seriously. They don't teach Buddha's original truths, but buy other monks' sermons on the market and then teach from them. If they really taught Buddha's original doctrines, perhaps people would understand and also follow them.*

### ***What is the meaning of giving food to the dead?***

*It's just to please the family, make them feel good. According to Buddhism, if the deceased has done good in his life, good deeds, that is his nourishment after death. There is no heaven, no purgatory, both are within ourselves. If for example you think today that you are in heaven, then you are in heaven. All sorcery and casting spells is Brahminism, but modern Buddhist monks do perform them. All exorcisms are Brahmin incantations.*

### ***What is your opinion of people visiting psychics and seers, sorcerers, when they are sick?***

*These sorcerers, psychics, contact the spirits and people make offerings to them, and they do have power even to heal. I don't think people should have any contact with spirits and phii. If we offer to them, it shows that we are afraid of them, and the phii take advantage. They do evil things and then get offerings from people again. If you get sick, you don't necessarily die from it. You get better in time.*

*By the way, people distil liquor in this village and somebody has informed the police, but when the police come, they bribe him and so he doesn't deal with the case as he ought. They don't fine the distillers.*



### **Where does the human soul go after death?**

*There is a place where those who have done good deeds go after death, while those who have done bad things, or not done good deeds, go to a bad place, purgatory, where there is great suffering. Purgatory is like prison here in our time. However, it's all imaginary, since nobody has yet come back to tell what it's like after death and where he went. Buddhism teaches that once a person dies, he disappears, becomes nothing.*

### **Who can disappear like that?**

*One who has perfectly followed Buddhist doctrine in his lifetime. He reaches a state or a place with nothing but emptiness. Those who have been unable to follow the teachings go to just the anteroom of that place. Today, nobody reaches that destination, emptiness. Even the best and most famous monks only get to the anteroom.*

### **Are amulets part of Buddhism?**

*I can't say. Buddha hasn't taught so, in any case. They have only been used for about 200 years.*

### **What is your opinion of reincarnation?**

*Perhaps it is for those who have led bad lives. For example, a man who has lived badly might be reborn as a woman. But I'm not sure. There's no way of knowing. And nobody seems to remember what they were in their former lives.*

### **Do people of this village go to the temple?**

*Yes, some. They also come in the evenings to chat.*

### **What are your plans?**

*We should get this temple finished. We should make progress in this village, so we could finish the temple. And another reform would be to make the people better. It's very slow, however. One should be able to improve oneself first, and then one could improve the villagers. People should be able to love one another and also to show compassion. People should agree with each other. They should be able to rejoice with the rejoicing, to engender joy and goodness around them. They should not envy other people's success. I haven't got very far yet, and I'm not very clever or bright, but I have answered your questions to the best of my ability.*

## IV. VILLAGE RELIGION

**Photos 306-311. Supernatural guardians.** There is a spirit house in every compound (306-308). The altar of the village *phii* (309). Offering punnets for the four winds in a building rite (310) and funeral (311).



306 Lampang 1973.





307 Mae Kong Nya 1998.

308 Mae Kong Nya 1998.











310 Mae Kong Nya 1985.





311 Mae Kong Nya 1998.

**Photos 312-320. Souls of deceased and ancestor rites.** Death on the Ban Dong road 1998 (312). A red banner has been erected at the accident spot and a hundred little sand stupas made on the ground, decorated with white flags. Altars for accident victims at the highest point of the road to Chiang Rai (313) and the Doi Khun Tan mountain range at the side of the Chiang Mai highway (314-315). Memorial festivals of the ancestors (316-318), women dancing. Memorial day of the ancestors at the Chinese cemetery (319-320).



312 Road to Ban Dong 1998.









314 Lampang - Lamphun 1998.



315 Lampang - Lamphun 1998.





316 Mae Ang 1973.









318 Amphoe Lampang 1985.





319 Lampang 1985.



320 Lampang 1985.



**Photos 321-329. Members of the Sangha.** Work of a Buddhist priest (321-325). Monks are always present at public and family festivities (321), funerals (322, 324), ordination ceremonies (325), instructing at the temple (323). Good deeds may be done at all festivals by donating to Buddha's monks (326-327). Consecration of water 1973 (328), A monk's quarters 1973 (329).



321 Lampang 1998.









323 Lampang 1973.



324 Lampang 1985.





325 Lampang 1998.



326 Lampang 1998.



327 Lampang 1998.





328 Lampang 1973.

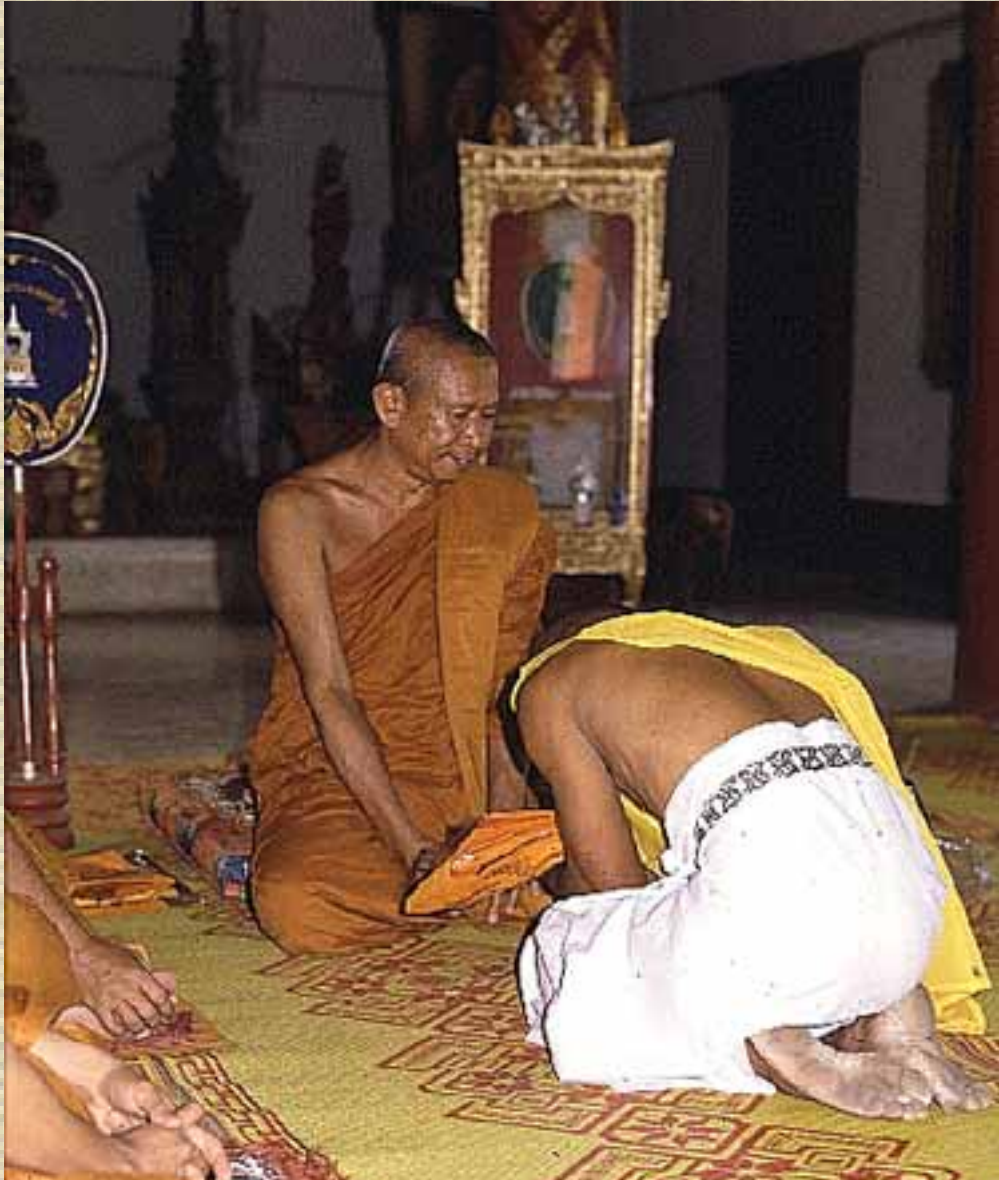




329 Lampung 1973.



**Photos 330-339. Ordination of monks.** An ordinant dresses an ordinee in an undergarment in Ban Srie Muod Klao (330), and the new temporary monk has been dressed (331). Two novices in monk's robes and with their begging bowls stay at the door, from where they are led back into the temple (332). After their monk's pledge, the novices are blessed as monks and admitted to the monastery brotherhood (333). Students of the police academy ordained as monks at the Kim Temple in 1999 (334). At the end, family members place gifts of flowers in the begging bowls of the new monks (335). Pictures from ordination ceremonies of the police cadets (336-337), and little priests (338-339). Tying of the white thread (336).



330 Srie Muod Klao 1985.



331 Srii Muod Klao  
1985.





332 Lampang 1998.



333 Lampang 1998.









335 Lampang 1998.



336 Lampang 1999.



337 Lampang 1998.





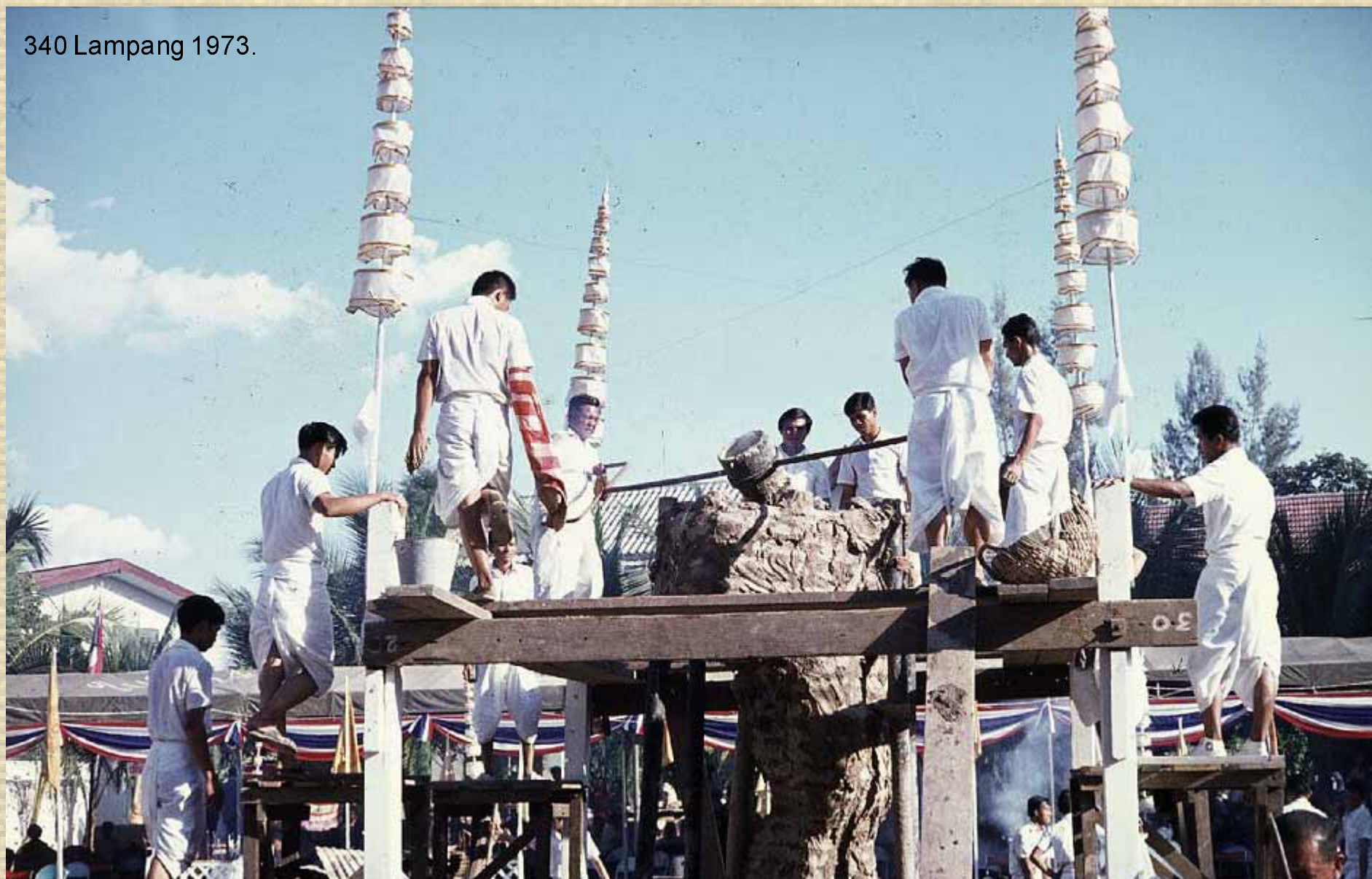


339 Lampang 1998.



**Photos 340-360. Inauguration of the monastery.** To dedicate a new temple, special professional casters have cast new statues of Buddha (340-341). Inauguration in Ban Srie Muod Klao 14.-15.3.1998 (342-360). Final preparations (342). New monastery in the background (343-344), modern living quarters for the monks (345). Gilding of the new statue of Buddha (346). Inauguration is a *Kirmes*, a fair and folk festival with good food and performances (347-353). Processions from neighbouring villages bring cash gifts and money trees (358) and donate them to the temple (354-359). The two-day festival is over (360).

340 Lampang 1973.







341 Lampang 1973.



342 Sree Muod Klao 1998.









344 Srii Muod Klao 1998.



345 Srii Muod Klao 1998.









347 Srii Muod Klao 1998.



348 Srii Muod Klao 1998.





349 Srie Muod Klao 1998.



350 Srie Muod Klao 1998.









352 Srij Muod Klao 1998.



353 Srij Muod Klao 1998.









355 Srii Muod Klao 1998.





356 Srii Muod Klao 1998.





357 Srii Muod Klao 1998.



358 Srii Muod Klao 1998.





359 Sri Muod Klao 1998.



360 Sri Muod Klao 1998.



# SUPERNATURAL ENVIRONMENT

## The invisible world

**Supernatural guardians of the environment.** The compound or yard of every house in Thailand contains a spirit house, a small altar in the shape of a house or temple (chao thi). There are spirit houses in the yards of city business and office buildings, in front of the Town Hall and the Governor's office, banks, post office, schools, car showrooms and service stations all have spirit houses. Many are well looked after and ornate. They have offerings of food, fruit, candles, incense, flower garlands (lei), ornaments, sometimes little furniture, even models of cars. Thirty years ago spirit houses were home-made and resembled a house. Today they are factory-made, moulded from concrete or plastic, colourful palaces or Buddhist temples.(52

What is the 'spirit' for whom the altar is erected? The informants do not dwell on the question, but in common with Finnish tradition, a spirit is (1) the supernatural resident of the place, its owner and guardian, the 'god' of the place, or (2) a person buried in the compound, who has become the guardian spirit of the place or the family living in the house. In precise terms, a deceased-spirit is the soul (khwan) of the deceased person living in the place. In ancient Finnish tradition, every place in nature had its supernatural resident or owner, and animals also had their guardians who governed and protected their own species. Northern European hunter peoples including Finno-Ugrians have believed that the hunter's bag or catch was given by the supernatural guardian of the hunting place or quarry animal, and people had to reciprocate by giving it an offering, such as a share of the catch. In the era of agrarian culture, in Finland and elsewhere in Europe, supernatural guardians were deemed to reside also in the environment built by humans, such as houses, mills, even churches and graveyards. In religious science, a supernatural guardian is defined as a lone, solitary being; it lived alone, even though it was often deemed to represent all the inhabitants of the other side of the location. As well as supernatural guardians, e.g. Finnish and Scandinavian tradition contains narratives of underground folk, 'earth people', who lived collectively in family units or village communities under the surface of the earth in an invisible inverse world; behind it are apparently the deceased who lived underground in village burial grounds. The spirit tradition combines on the one hand ideas that all places have their supernatural owners, and that in the invisible world there is no 'empty space', and on the other hand the belief that the deceased remain to reside in places where they have lived and where they are buried.

When building a new house or clearing farmland, people had to ask permission of the supernatural inhabitants of the place. In Finland, this tradition has been preserved, particularly in the old swidden culture areas of Eastern Finland and Karelia. For example, if a settler built his byre so that it disturbed the life of the local supernatural guardian, his cattle did not thrive until he had moved the cowshed to another place. An angry guardian took good fortune and happiness away from the inhabitants of the house, caused them illnesses, even death; conversely, if the spirit was contented, it looked after the house and protected its family from accidents, such as fires. During agrarian culture, the supernatural guardian of the house has acquired characteristics of a 'good master'. The guardian saw to it that people worked hard and led decent lives, it did not approve of drunkenness, quarrelling or immorality. The guardian also had a part in maintaining the moral values of an agrarian village community. When residents of the house behaved well, respected the supernatural guardian of their habitat and gave both the guardian and the souls of the deceased their share of the year's harvest, they could build and farm in peace on their own side of the shared living environment.(53

The Thai phii is also a supernatural resident and guardian of the compound, protecting the house and its inhabitants, even on their travels. The spirit house has been the place where residents of the compound could offer the phii its rightful share of their own living, to meet the other-worldly owner of the environment, and to contemplate how the phii of the compound might regard the residents of the house. They must know how to live alongside the phii; it must be told when a new family member arrives in the house, a newborn baby, a son-in-law or a guest staying for a while, or if some important work is begun that may disturb the phii. The phii of the place must be asked permission for building a new house, and the rite of the central pillar is still performed in the villages of this book. An offering of money is usually placed under the main pillar or all pillars of a building; this way, the plot for the house is kind of bought from its supernatural owner. The purpose of the building rites is to ensure that happiness, good luck and prosperity will prevail in the house. It means that a young couple's marriage will be happy and that they will have many healthy children, and that work done in the house will be productive. If the supernatural inhabitants of the place disapproved of the new house, the family would meet with all kinds of misfortune, or the people living there would be destroyed altogether.

A village, or the location where the village is built, may also have its own phii. Of these villages, the phii of Ban Srii Muod Klao lives in a large tree, as has generally been the belief in Thai tradition, and there is a similar little spirit house by the tree as is seen in yards and compounds of houses. The guardian spirit of the village is given offerings annually, and also when some project concerning the whole village is embarked upon. Not all families or kinship groups 'worship' the village phii, and there is no generally recognized phii tree in other villages at all. However, in Ban Mae Kong Nya there is a large tree outside the temple fence, under which people try to repel misfortune, the bad death, brought by traffic accidents or Aids. The phii trees of Lampang villages may be likened with pre-Christian Finnish sacred trees and village burial groves, where souls of the deceased lived. The habitats of the souls were sacred places, and it was not permitted to fell a tree, break a twig or stalk of grass there.



The phii of the field is also one of the supernatural guardians of villagers' environment. The phii of cultivated land is female, Mother Thoranii, who is often identified as the same being as the phii of rice; rice symbolizes all farming, nourishment, survival. Rice seedlings were always transplanted by women, and their status as rice planters is reinforced by many symbols. Rice itself is female, as is the phii of the paddy field, and rice planted by women grows white like a woman's skin (breast); in general, women represent fecundity and they are in charge of the family's daily food. The phii of rice lives in a corner of the field, as recounted by the interviewees, and once the rice is cut, it is asked to remove to the rice store.<sup>(54)</sup> European tradition has contained a similar procedure. The last sheaf of corn cut at harvest was the 'spirit's sheaf', which was kept safe until the next year. In Finland, the spirit's sheaf was taken to the granary for the winter, or a loaf was baked from its grain, thereafter to be kept in the grain hold, and placed in among the seed grain at sowing time in spring. The spirit of the field or cereal crops represented the power of growth, and it helped transfer fertility, germination of the seed and ripening of the corn to the next year, the new cereal harvest. With the advent of modern agriculture, offering to Mother Thoranii has tended to be forgotten, along with other farming rites of agrarian culture, which sustained fertility of the land, good fortune with crops and cattle. The fastest to be displaced by scientific-technological development are rites attached to making a living, or, as some of the villagers noted, farmers have more faith in artificial fertilizers and biocides than phii.

**Phii and souls of the kinship group.** A phii may also be the soul of a deceased person, who has been interred in the compound of his own house. Such a phii is usually the first resident of the house, the founding father of the kinship group that has settled in the place. For example in Finnish tradition, the first departed person buried on the site, whether a child or an adult, has become the guardian spirit. The usual reference to a guardian of a house has been that the one who 'made the first fire' has become the spirit after his death. Particularly in swidden cultures, the first fire maker has referred to the person who had cleared the site for the house, settled and started farming the place, and mostly the spirit was thus the ancestor of the inhabitants of the house. In Northern Thailand, too, The phii of the compound may be the soul of a deceased person who was buried where he had lived; even after cremations became common, the ashes of the departed have been buried in the compound of his home. The deceased of a kinship group are conceptualized collectively; they consist of all the past generations who in the cycle of life are reborn into their kinship group. Ancestors help their kin, watch over the morals of the living, their life together, and consequently ancestor-phii also had to be informed of family events, such as marriages and births of children. In the same way, ancestors have been notified of births of children in Finland.

Cultivated land has belonged to whoever cleared it even after his death. Particularly in the era of swidden culture, when hereditary land ownership rights were unknown, the land belonged to ancestors, and their graves or cult places afforded the subsequent generations the right to cultivate the land of the kinship group. The deceased have been entitled to a share of everything their living environment provided for their descendants, and in general the living had a duty to take care of their

ancestors. In Finland, the souls of ancestors have been offered the first share of the harvest, the first catch of the fishing season, the first milk after calving etc. The ancestors had to be given their share particularly at the turn of the year, which in farming cultures has usually fallen at the end of the harvest. The ancestors have always been present at new year celebrations.

In Lampang villages, an annual memorial day is organized for the phii of the kinship group, in which all its members take part. The memorial rite is held in the house from which 'the phii comes'. The phii is a soul of a matrilocal compound, an ancestor who lives in the original house, and it is worshipped by families who have come from this compound. Those belonging to the same cult group are determined following the female (matrilineal) line; in anthropological terminology, the cult group may also be called matrifocal, with the women as its focal point. Even relatives who live at a distance still gather for the memorial day and make offerings on alternate years of a chicken or a pig, a pig's head, which has more generally been a food for offerings and rites. The modern memorial day consists really of just a shared meal. There are no particular rituals in slaughtering of the sacrificial animal, but the food tray is first offered to the phii. If the original house has been left in another village or the kinship group grown too large, the phii must be 'shared' between several compounds or moved closer to the related families who are in touch with each other.

A couple of decades ago, there were still large memorial festivals for ancestors (phii meng), which could be likened to e.g. ancient Karelian festivals of the departed. They were held in memory of the founding father (kao phii) or of some well-known member of the kinship group. In this kind of festival of the souls, the women of the kinship group would dance in order to reach a trance and to be able to communicate with the dead.<sup>(55)</sup> A canopy is erected in the compound for the memorial festival, with a table for offering to the souls of the deceased; it is filled with food, bedding and other items the souls are thought to need in their life on the other side. A shared meal is a part of the memorial festival, and a band of musicians is hired; women drink alcohol, decorate their hair with flowers and scarves, and dance together until they feel the presence of the souls. The men take no part in dancing, unless someone is specially called to join, but there are always old men present who assist the women and make sure that nobody disturbs their dancing. At the memorial festivals I have attended (1973 and 1985), the sword was a particular rite object. The women performed sword dances holding a sword in each hand; the dance was said to be an old tradition of the Lanna state, old 'culture of death'.

The important elements of a kinship group festival of souls is the shared meal, shared gifts and the presence of the soul. In Karelia, the soul was collected allegorically from the village burial ground, and a place was laid for him at the feasting table. In Lampang, the dancers make contact with the souls by holding on to ropes of scarves that have been fastened to the pillars of the festival canopy. Those who take part in the meal and shared rites still belong to the same kinship group. Women 'own' the souls, the old matriarch of the kinship group is usually the person, a medium of half shaman, who is in contact with the ancestor



and mediates wishes of the kinship group members to him. The dominant position of women in kinship cultures has been common particularly in cases of family members' rites of passage from birth to death. In these villages, the dance of the souls has reinforced matrifocality, women's kinship unity and the matrilocal compound, which in the social culture of the villages has been found to be good and safe.

**Supernatural forces in nature.** There are also places outside the villages with supernatural guardians with whom people needed to be on good terms, in order to maintain their protection and good fortune. In Lampang, particularly dangerous are places where highways cross the highest point of the mountains, where the road starts to descend. In the days when roads and cars were in poor condition, the mountains demanded numerous human sacrifices. At these places, the phii of the mountain must be saluted, and many people make an offering to it, asking for its protection. There are large fields of spirit houses and temples for offerings in the fringe mountains of Lampang province along the highways leading to both Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai, with probably hundreds of altars erected in each place over the years. Spirit houses erected for accident victims are like memorials where family members regularly bring offerings for their departed. Many people who have survived accidents have also taken an altar to these places and make offerings to thank the phii for safeguarding them. As they drive past the highest point of the Chiang Mai highway, motorists salute the phii of Doi Khun Tan, at the same time sounding their horns briefly.

The villagers' belief systems also contain frightening and malevolent spirits (breet), who harass people as if to carry them away to their own side. Many evil spirits are basically haunting ancestors, souls of the deceased, who have not been admitted to the realm of the dead or had the chance of being reborn. In Finnish tradition, haunting souls have been called 'restless souls' or 'home-wanderers'. Haunting souls have died a 'bad death', they have been murdered and buried without death rites and the care of their families. The most common folklore both in Finland and the whole Western world is probably narratives of haunting souls who have been denied a Christian burial.<sup>(56)</sup> Such souls 'wander' or are 'lost' somewhere in an intermediate space between the living and the dead, seeking readmittance to the cycle of life and death. In the narrative traditions of both Thailand and Finland, evil spirits have grown into scary monsters, rising to the height of the tallest tree. Also souls of the deceased who have not attained peace after death may have become ghosts. Souls coming home is also a large genre of death tradition, and the interviewees of this book also talk about souls that have returned to seek atonement, or who have such strong ties to the worldly that they have been unable to pass over to the world on the other side. Souls that have been left in limbo have been believed to strive for rebirth, and the fear of reincarnation is more generally behind so-called taboo prohibitions pertaining to women of childbearing age or pregnant. Pregnant women must avoid places where evil spirits reside, burial grounds and even funerals, so that a strange soul cannot enter their womb and become reborn in their child.

Buddhism has been a tolerant religion compared with the Christian church. Only recently has Buddhism begun to weed out folk beliefs and to create a uniform doctrine, with no place for phii and ancestor cults. In place of phii, supernatural beings, spirit forces or angels (thewada), which also appear in religious literature, have been introduced to village Buddhism. The monks ask angels for protection, for example when blessing the building of a new house. In village tradition, angels are associated with the four winds or four elements: the forces of fire, water, earth and air. These four natural elements are widely known in Eurasian folk belief and also in Finnish tradition. In the villages, 'offering punnets' (satuan) are made specially for spiritual forces, they are square boxes made from palm leaves and tied using the same technique as in the Finnish punnet (tuokkonen) made from birch bark. This offering container can be divided into nine sections, with different offerings placed in each: rice, fruit, flowers, sticks of incense and other offering paraphernalia, whatever is at hand at the time and what is thought to please the spirit forces on the occasion. (57 Offering punnets are also for sale in the same way as yellow gift packs intended for monks. They have been particularly popular in Ban Mae Kong Nya, where individual punnets or offering structures erected for all four elements are used in Buddhist ceremonies related to the home or family, funerals, weddings, rites of the central pillar of a new house, and other celebrations, such as the occasion of blessing a chief who had been awarded the King's prize.

## Between two worlds

**Village sorcerers.** According to the interviews, villagers visit sorcerers nowadays (1) when they want to ascertain a favourable day and time for organizing some important occasion or starting a job; (2) at times of illness; (3) when they want to make contact with deceased family members and (4) if a newborn infant has problems that seem to be supernatural in origin. The sorcerers may also be consulted for (5) personal problems or (6) when people want to know how to influence an uncertain future.

Villagers consider it essential to find out a favourable or correct date for organizing some ceremony or starting important work. In these interviews, practically nobody questions the importance of a favourable starting date. The correct day and time of day must be determined for cremation of a body, as for holding a wedding, farming operations, building or other projects. Everything that is significant for the future must be begun at the right time, otherwise people's activities would not succeed; the deceased would not pass over to the other side, a marriage would drift onto rocks, rice crops would fail and the new house would be permeated by bad luck rather than good fortune. The temple teacher, Azan Wat, is usually consulted in matters of favourable days; he is the counsellor particularly in family matters. Azan Wat is a revered layman, usually a former monk, who has served at the temple for extended periods; he embodies Buddhist and earthly wisdom combined. It is Azan Wat who often doubles as sorcerer, he may take care of magic rites which the monks are not keen to perform. Favourable days are still discussed with Azan Wat, even when there are few alternatives: funerals as well as weddings are today held in accordance with the Western calendar at weekends, when people have time off work. There are very few astrologers in villages of



Thailand, as found e.g. in Burmese temples. Determination of the correct date is based on traditional knowledge and guide books. Almanacs are published in Thailand, with precise listings of both favourable and unfavourable days and times of day.(58

At times of illness, villagers first go to the hospital or village health centre, and then to the sorcerer or a folk healer, particularly if the medicines prescribed by the doctor do not work sufficiently quickly. The idea that illness is caused by 'spirits' who have become angry for some reason is common in Lampang villages. The spirit has specifically meant the phii of the compound. In the 1970s and commonly still in the 1980s it was thought that the phii had taken umbrage for something, such as inappropriate behaviour of the residents, and demanded an offering as atonement. Illness was cured by making an offering to the phii of the compound, taking offerings of food and drink, incense, flowers and other gifts to the spirit house. This way, the wrath of the phii could be removed. Today, people go to the sorcerer who tells them which phii is angry and what they should offer it. It would appear that consulting sorcerers has increased, and the number of people in the villages who practice as sorcerers for fees has increased. Healers have even reformed spiritual explanations and created new spirit categories.

There are still sorcerers in the villages who are able to heal or exorcise evil by incantations and blowing. Sorcerers and healers have a special consultation place in their yards, a small open shelter; they are still seen in the villages. At the start of the healing rite, a banana seedling is placed at the four corners of the consultation shelter. The sorcerer consults with the patient in the shelter and determines the treatment he needs. Evil spirits, particularly those that cause psychological problems, have been exorcised by the sorcerer either by blowing or whipping. While repeating incantations for exorcism, the sorcerer blows on the sore part of the body, or lightly beats the patient with a stick on various parts of his anatomy. The stick is made of a thin bamboo or tree seedling, and it is rendered effective by spells or incantations, or magic symbols carved on it. Blowing and measuring with a stick are known also in Finland, but the Finnish sorcerer has most commonly taken the patient to the sauna and healed him by lightly whipping with a bunch (vihta) of various twigs or plants.

Herbalists who heal with medicinal plants are not mentioned in villagers' reminiscences, and the modern generation has retained little knowledge of substances or plants with magic properties.(59 However, almost everybody remembers foods that were forbidden from pregnant women or those who had recently given birth. They have the same idea as such rules among different peoples. A pregnant woman had to avoid doing anything that could be interpreted to hinder giving birth, as well as foods that were thought to fatten the foetus so it became too big. The mother had to avoid behaviour that according to the logic of sorcery might cause 'tightness', 'squeezing' or prolonging; conversely, good for the mother about to give birth was anything that allegorically 'enlarged' or 'loosened', facilitated the entry of the child into the world. After giving birth, women were 'in the fire', they lay by a fire for about a month and ate special foods that were considered to be good for both mother and infant. Lying in the fire has been common practice in Lampang villages, and the interviews contain several descriptions of it.

**Mediums of the deceased.** In matters concerning the departed, people turn to special sorcerers that I will here call mediums. The deceased, or actually the soul of the deceased, passes into the medium and speaks with his or her mouth. As a receiver of information from the other side, the medium kind of transforms into the deceased as he was when living; he speaks with the voice of the deceased and his bodily gestures, facial expressions and whole demeanour resemble the deceased. Thus, family members feel that the deceased is really speaking to them and providing answers to questions troubling them. Cases are also known of in the villages, where a spirit enters a person and makes him behave strangely, the person is subjected to the power of the spirit. In cultural anthropology, this is termed spirit possession. (60 Sorcerers possessed by a spirit can see into the future and answer questions on how the person consulting him will succeed in his efforts or what will be the winning lottery number. Buying lottery tickets is very common in the villages, like all over Thailand, as a lottery win is one of the biggest chances in life, and no other stroke of luck is likely to befall an ordinary person.

People turn to mediums or sorcerers when they suspect that a newborn baby has been given the wrong name. If the neonate is fractious, sickly and constantly cries at night, it may have been given the name of a relative other than the one who is reborn in him. In that case, the child has the wrong soul and personality, and he cannot live the life that has been allocated to him in reincarnation. The interviews contain many accounts of how a child became better when a sorcerer or medium gave him a new name and tied a white cord around his wrists. It is a white, loosely twisted or woven cotton cord. Giving a name was an important matter in the past, and these accounts contain information on how the correct name was ascertained by drawing lots. Memory knowledge on drawing lots for names has also been collected in Finland.

The newborn infant had also to be announced to the phii of the compound, and as some informants mention, it might also be asked to whom the child belonged, a human or some supernatural being. This custom is connected to so-called changeling beliefs, also known throughout Eurasia. If the neonate was deformed, for example with an abnormally large head (hydrocephalus), it was thought that some malevolent being had changed the child; in the Christian world the changer has been the devil. In Finnish lore, the child was a changeling. Such a child remained mentally subnormal, like a non-human, or faded away. Thus, the parents had to ensure that the newborn child was not exchanged by an evil being and that it was given the correct name, the right soul and identity. Nowadays, the name is given by new authorities: a doctor at the hospital or the chief of the local authority, or the name is chosen according to the day the child is born or what the parents think is nice and modern. (61

In Lampang, a white cotton cord is tied around the wrist also in rites of passage, such as weddings and ordination as monk, or when a sick person is beginning to recover. For example, in ceremonies where students of the police academy are ordained as monks, family members tie white cords around the wrists of ordainees and bless them. The monks tied a white cord on the wrist of the chief of Ban Mae Kong Nya, when they blessed him during a celebration held when he was awarded a prize by the King.



The white cord serves to attach some new good thing to the person, a new soul, permanent recovery, enduring happiness, a future status and success it will bring. The tying symbolizes permanence, enduring future. In religious ceremonies, a white cord is led from the statue of Buddha through monks' hands to the target where Buddha's power and blessing is desired to go. A similar white, loosely twisted cord has also been known in Finland. Most commonly, it has been used to heal a twisted or dislocated limb; having set the joint and read a healing incantation, the sorcerer wove a 'twisting cord' and tied it around the injured limb. (62

## Strata of local belief

**Heritage of shamans.** Village tradition still retains features of shamanism characteristic of hunter-gatherer cultures. Shamans of hunting cultures, such as Northern European Finno-Ugric peoples, dealt with souls. They were capable of passing over to the state of existence of souls, to send their own souls in different guises on a journey to the environment of souls, to the invisible inverse world, the other side of our existence on this side. The technique of shamans has usually been entering a trance or a special state of consciousness, but the crux of the matter was that the shaman was able to 'manipulate souls' and to seek answers from the world of the souls. The idea of the soul reinforced shamanistic religion and world view. The human, as well as animal, soul was an engine of life forever reincarnating, it was born again and again onto the earth in the cycle of life and death, as summer followed winter or rainy season followed dry season. In shamanistic oral tradition and songs, the essence was description of the journey of the soul; they are narratives of shaman-heroes whose souls adventured in the guise of various animals in the world underground or in the sky among the stars. In the interpretations of Finno-Ugric peoples the realm of souls has also been in the starry skies, the various strata of the heavens. Astral mythology is also fundamentally shamanistic oral tradition, with the starry sky as the 'screen' and the configurations of stars still showing the traces of the shaman's journey as a soul.

According to shamanistic explanation of illness, a human being became sick when the soul was forced outside the body. In the tradition of Thai peoples, the reincarnating soul is called khwan, it is the life force that maintains life in the human body, as in other living creatures. The accounts of this book mention that when a person becomes sick the khwan soul leaves and must be restored to the body, or the patient will die. The soul might have become separated from the body when the person received a fright, or some evil person, such as a malevolent shaman, has enticed it away, stolen his soul, his life force, his entire fortune in life. Or the person's soul may have gone on a journey during sleep and become lost, and been unable to return before he awoke. Finnish ancient folk poetry includes a song apparently about a shaman who remained forever in a trance, whose soul failed to return from its journey to the world on the other side.(63 On the death of a human being or animal, the soul finally left the body, passed over to the realm of souls and on to a new reincarnation.

The task of the shaman was to restore the soul of the patient, to guide the soul of a deceased person on the perilous journey to the world of souls, to entice the souls of animals to human hunting grounds. As a religion, shamanism belonged to the world of hunter-gatherers and provided answers to the most important questions of their lives.<sup>(64)</sup> The shaman ruled an environment where life had to flow eternally, to renew, die and come back to life again. Rebirth was the future of hunters. According to the fundamental law of Buddhism, *anikka*, everything in the universe flows, changes its form, is born, dies, disintegrates and again reunites in a new form of existence (*samsara*). *Anatta* or the law of change is a consequence of the above, thus everything is changeable, only the soul is permanent. However, there is a conflict between folk belief and Buddhism. In kinship cultures, the deceased are reborn in a member of their own kin, while according to Buddhism, a person is reincarnated, but his next form of existence and life is dependent on the ethical laws that regulate the fate of all living things. High religions have not succeeded in destroying the cult of ancestors; paying homage to deceased relatives may only cease to exist in the postlocal global era. In Thailand, too, the cult of ancestors gave the kinship group the right to belong to a certain place, to a cultural environment, and for individuals the opportunity of reinforcing his own roots, his identity.

Mediums and women who govern the souls of the deceased still contain something shamanistic, as is the case in general with religious occupants of roles acting as mediators between the living and the dead. In the northern mountains of Thailand, shamanistic hunter-gatherer culture is not very distant in the past. In modern funeral ceremonies, Buddhist monks have inherited the functions of the shamans. From the wake right up to the hundredth day memorial, monks read *suats*, which according to villagers' interpretation assure the deceased that he is dead and his soul is asked to leave this world. The soul was no longer allowed to remain on earth to bother the living, the deceased had to go and receive the fate meted out to him after death.

**Power of sorcerers.** In agrarian cultures, shamans were replaced by sorcerers who governed the forces influencing the farming man's environment, energy of growth, fertility, fortune in farming and cattle. The sorcerer is an expert of rites, able to determine the origin of bad luck, illness or some other phenomenon, who knows the correct incantations and the substances with magic qualities that could cure an illness, for example. With his rites and incantations, the sorcerer protected the living environment of the farming man, repelled external threats, wild animals and thieves, people's envy. As the informants of this book say, there used to be an incantation for everything, even against mosquito stings, and it was good for everyone to know some in order to cope with their everyday lives. In Europe, the Finns were especially renowned for their sorcery skills, and the archives of Finnish heritage contain about 150,000 variants of incantations. <sup>(65)</sup>

Substances with magic qualities have varied in different cultural environments, but the logic of sorcery shares four main elements: earth, wind, fire and water. The power of water countered damage done by fire, and what had come from the earth



had to be returned to the earth. With incantations and rites, the sorcerer stopped the evil, diseases sent by malevolent sorcerers or evil people, arrows of death or accidents, and turned them back on their sender. Iron has been a special source of supernatural power. In Thailand, effective iron implements have been the machete and the sword, and they have been used to repel evil forces. In Finnish and more extensively European tradition, a widely used iron implement alongside the hunting knife (in Finland puukko) and the sword has been the iron axe, which in the Iron Age swidden cultures was also technologically the supreme tool. In the Christian world, sorcerers also utilized the power of the dead and used bones of the dead, collected from the burial ground, or 'corpse-earth', the earth that remained from the deceased, in their rites.

In 1973, I attended a Chinese funeral, where the cardboard miniature house prepared for the deceased, complete with servants and every convenience, was burned on the night before the funeral. It was the dry season, the yard of the funeral house was small, and the family was afraid that the wooden buildings surrounding the site might catch fire. Then the Chinese priest drew a large circle in the sand around the cardboard house, walked round the spot three times, sprinkling alcohol on the ground, and the fire was stopped from spreading. The Finnish sorcerer has followed the same procedure when repelling a fire. The sorcerer erected a magic fence between good and evil, between the human life environment and the other environment. Good and evil had some exterior reason or origin, or the threat came from somewhere outside the community, from a hostile world.

The sorcerer was able on one hand to heal, on the other to cause illness, to practice so-called white or black magic. In agrarian communities, as in the villages of this book, sorcerers have generally had a positive role; the sorcerer had to be a decent and good person, as otherwise he would not have been able to protect himself from evil forces. The sorcerer himself had to possess spiritual strength, a strong soul as the villagers say, or a strong guardian spirit, as Finns express it. Spiritually strong sorcerers were able to restore the equilibrium of good and evil forces, social order, and to provide guidance to villagers in their personal issues, to give them faith in the future, and faith in human success.

Originally, shamans and sorcerers belonged in entirely different cultural systems; religious knowledge has also become adapted to the living environment and future expectations of man of the time. Central to images of the future in shamanistic cultures was eternal rebirth, the belief that nature continued its cycle and quarry animals returned year after year. After death, man returned to the cosmic system of nature. In agrarian cultures, a secure future was conditional on preservation of the kinship group and community, the year's harvest, continuation of good fortune in farming and cattle raising. In fixed villages, the deceased also moved closer to people's habitat, to village burial grounds; the ancestors of the kinship group reinforced kinship and security of community living.

**From tradition to belief in development.** Today, villagers increasingly put their faith in experts who are in possession of the

scientific-technological knowledge and skill functional in our cultural environment. In modern state cultures, the future is guided by faith in development, with its own myths, rites and cult objects. Scientific-technological development is an absolute cultural state with no possible alternatives. Meritocrats, today's sorcerers, declare that they also rule the villagers' environment: crop growth, sickness and health, birth and death, the whole invisible world and its effective interrelations. If Buddhism is excluded, the villagers' world views and explanations of existence have at least three strata:

Table 12.

## Strata of world views

### **Shamanism**

*- control of the soul - immortal soul - reincarnation - loss of the soul - restoration of the soul - world of the soul, strata above and below the world - journey of the soul - supernatural guardians of hunting and fishing grounds - reciprocal offerings to supernatural guardians.*

### **Sorcery**

*- control of forces of the other side, energy of growth, fertility fortune of crops and cattle - magic rites. - incantations of birth, exorcism, healing - substances effective in rites, power of earth, water, fire, wind, iron - healing natural substances - repelling of external threat - farming, repelling and exorcising rites - ancestral cult - village burial grounds - care of the deceased, offerings to the deceased (share of first harvest) - reincarnation of the deceased within their kin - memorial and ancestral festivals.*

### **Belief in development**

*- control of scientific-technological environment, nature, culture and man - delocal and postlocal technosystems - developmental meritocracy - developmental mythology - developmental miracles - compulsion for novelty - finalization - centralized development rituals - worship of development heroes and political development gods*

Religions of agrarian cultures are high religions, no longer sorcery, although sorcerers still have their own functions in village communities. High religions have tried to destroy sorcery and have declared it witchcraft, worshipping of the antigod. In these Lampang villages, experts of folk beliefs have been sorcerers, not so-called witches; witchcraft as defined by Christianity, worship of antichrist or antigod, cannot really occur within Buddhism. In local cultures, attitudes to religion and explanations of existence are not as severe or one-dimensional as in centralized organization cultures. Village sorcerers and mediums



operate alongside Buddhist monks in the areas of human life that touch on birth, death and the deceased, relations of families and kinship groups with their ancestors, their own familiar life environment. Availing themselves of modern healthcare services is self-evident for the villagers, but sorcerers and healers also still provide answers on the reasons of sickness and interpret life's troubles. In this book, too, village sorcerers express the most profound views on man, religion and community.

Local people have wanted to experience a connection with their deceased, their own ancestors or supernatural guardians of their environment, with whom they have invisible ties. Offering to the deceased affords them peace of mind. Then families have done their best to ensure that the departed has a good existence in the hereafter, and the prospect of a good reincarnation. Observing religious customs also provides consolation and the families may hope that the deceased, perhaps having met with great suffering in life, now has everything he lacked on earth. In making offerings to phii of the compound, residents of the house could show that they wanted to live honourably both with the other-worldly residents of their environment and with their neighbours. An offering is a gift, reciprocal giving, reciprocal assistance, which is a fundamental part of the culture of village communities. When making an offering, a person experiences the presence of safe forces and feels that he receives a blessing in return, a promise of healing or happiness, a better and more secure future.

The villages have always also contained people who have not believed in supernatural guardians and spirits, and who have dared to fell a spirit's tree. Villagers know that offering to phii and spiritual forces is 'superstition', but their world explanations have room for both traditional and scientific-technological knowledge. Furthermore, the faith of modern Western man in the power of therapies or natural remedies does not actually differ from belief in sorcerer rites. Man has always wanted to try the supernatural, irrational, and to hold on to freedom of his own beliefs.

The villagers have lived in their own religious environment, with their own village temples and monks, the souls within their own compounds, supernatural guardians of the fields, and the other-worldly inhabitants of the nature surrounding the village. Today, the authorities of religion, too, are somewhere outside the village. Compared to local thinking, belief in development strives for completeness, universal solutions; scientific-technological development is as if supernaturally unavoidable. Belief in development dominates culture all over the world and all areas of life in the environment of modern man. In Thailand, too, influencers of technosystems mysticize new knowledge and technology, producing ever newer and newer development miracles. Belief in development has created a new language and rhetoric which defines a good scientific-technological future, and in Lampang, too, public speech of local leaders, officials and politicians echoes with endless development liturgy.

In the world of belief in development, local man is engaged in a war of attrition. In the opinion of a Thai social critic it would make more sense for rice farmers to believe in phii and sorcerers than technological mythology, at least it would be much cheaper.<sup>(66)</sup> Many of the informants say that there is already enough development in their villages, but they are well aware that all world views of modern meritocracy and ideas of real international development will also be implemented in their living environment.

# BUDDHIST RELIGION

## Buddhism of the village community

**From local religion to national faith.** In Lampang villages, Buddhism is still a village religion. Each village has built its own temple and monastery and takes care of its own monks. All village temples have a separate meeting place, salaa, where religious festivals are held and also funerals. In both plains villages, the temple area is the heart of the community. In Ban Sri Muod Klao the temple is located on the edge of the same playing field as the school; there is room in its vicinity to organize festivals and markets. The newest building in the temple area is the monastery inaugurated in 1998; it was the largest project undertaken collectively by the village. In Ban Mae Kong Nya, the temple area has already become too small; in the 1980s, a monastery and kitchen block were added, and in this village funerals are often held in the temple salaa. The temple of Ban Dong has been under construction for a long time, as long as I can remember, but it was completed at the end of the 1990s. Village monks have been dissatisfied with the villagers' level of activity, and only when the school, nursery and temple formed a unified area did the villagers start to gather on the temple hill and become interested in community affairs.

Temples are open places for villagers to go to meditate and obtain immortal merits (tam bun); visitors are offered a bed for the night. On holy days or 'monks' days' monks do not leave the temple, but teach villagers and receive their gifts. In these villages, too, temples have also been social institutions. Poor parents could send their under-age sons to the temple as temple boys to be taught by monks; many of the older informants have learned to read at the temple.

Monks are present at all official occasions of Lampang province, and also at events of private organizations and businesses. In the villages, monks are invited to wakes, funerals, hundredth day memorial rites, they are involved in the raising of the main pillar of a new building and in housewarming parties. Village weddings are the only special occasions where monks are not customarily invited, although it is likely that in the future they will also be entrusted with blessing the bridal couple. Monks bring holiness to the house, and to occasions where they are invited. On all such occasions, people have the opportunity of giving gifts to the monks and showing that they respect Buddha's doctrine (Dhamma). Village monks are close by, villagers could go to them to make offerings on behalf of family members, to obtain immortal merits for themselves, or to seek help and solace for their own problems.

Village monks, especially the chief monk, Chaua Wat, have had a strong influence on spiritual life of villages. Many monks

have become esteemed teachers and counsellors to whom villagers turn. The villages also have a temple council consisting of lay people, with members who are religious leaders of the village, including Azan Wat. The temple council takes care of the financial affairs of the temple, and of the relations of the Buddhist church with the village and society. Religious leaders are present at temple festivals and funerals, they lead the ceremonies, act as announcers, serve the monks, and distribute the gifts presented to them. Informants of this book include religious lay leaders who enjoy general esteem in their village, and are present at almost all funerals and temple festivals. Religious service is their life's mission. A few decades ago village temples were spiritually independent and many monks had their personal interpretations of Buddha's teachings. Religion was passed down from older generations of monks, and many local monasteries created their own religious traditions around them. (67

Nowadays, Buddhism is the national religion of Thailand, and the national order of monks, Sangha, has organized as a national church, with its own administration based on official positions; religious issues are regulated through acts and decrees. The head of the hierarchy of both the Buddhist church and the state is the King; in practice, supreme power is represented by the national council of elders led by the chief monk of the Sangha, and each area of national governance: the province, amphoe (municipality) and tambon (village district) have their own chief monks and administrative organs. In spite of centrally led administration, the independence of local monasteries is respected, as in the villages monks are still obliged to accept people's expectations. In recent years, doctrinal differences and separatist movements that have arisen around certain famous temples have raised demands that the Buddhist church should unify its doctrine, eliminate folk beliefs and also find ways of maintaining discipline in monasteries. A new Act on religion has also been under way. (68

Village monasteries that have operated as natural economies have moved over to cash economy, and the relations of monks and villagers have changed since the era of agrarian villages. In the past, monks were given offerings of rice and other foodstuffs, in kathin ceremonies they were given robes by the villagers, and their daily morning begging trip (pindapata) brought them their daily fare. Multi-layered food containers were everywhere and at ceremonies, the temples were always given rice. Today, monks are paid cash fees for their religious services, and other gifts are more a formality. At funerals and other occasions, monks are donated gift buckets wrapped in transparent yellow plastic (sangkhathan), that are purchased ready-made. They contain small everyday items, tea, spices and foodstuffs that keep well. Monkhood is increasingly becoming a modern profession, and popular charismatic monk fathers may have extremely high incomes. During the last couple of decades, the country's Sangha has become visibly wealthier. Local parishes compete in building glorious temples, monastery buildings and stupas.

**Temple monks.** Permanent monks (bikkhu) are nowadays priests who have spent at least two years in the monastery and



received a religious education; they have joined the national Sangha and been authorized to perform Buddhist ceremonies. A permanent monk's rise in his career requires continuous study, and many of the younger generation of monks have studied in colleges or Buddhist universities. Those intending to become career monks are expected first to enter a monastery as temple boys (dek wat), and after reaching the age of 16 they can be ordained novices (neen/nehn), and as monks on reaching the age of majority. There are more than 300,000 Buddhist priests or actual monks in Thailand; in Lampang province they number about 2,100, with a further 2,800 novices.<sup>(69)</sup> One can also become a monk at a later age and remain in the monastery for the rest of one's life. This often happens for some personal reason. Someone has experienced a deep disappointment or loss with no other way out. Monasteries are open to all who want to withdraw and find peace, but in common with all churches, Buddhist priesthood is also a profession providing the potential of rising on the professional ladder of the Sangha.

One can also enter the monastery for a fixed period for personal reasons. Temporary monks have been e.g. young men who spent a few months in their village monastery before marriage. In the era of village culture, young men usually became monks for the period of Buddhist Lent or three months, but today only few people stay so long. Special regulations pertain to such monks (from 1984), and ordinations are registered. They must be adults and have completed their basic education, and they must have no debts or serious infectious disease. A special application is required to become ordained as a monk, and the ordination ceremony is performed by a monk who by virtue of his position is authorized to do so, usually the chief monk of the amphoe. Originally, being ordained as monk was a rite of passage reinforcing adulthood of men. In monasteries, young men received ethical education and civilization of the heart, making them more mature in the eyes of girls, and more reliable spouses than those who had not entered the monastery. At the time, the village temple was also a meeting place of young people, where girls could watch how boys conducted themselves as monks.<sup>(70)</sup> Being a monk also increased the worthiness of young men in the eyes of villagers, as they joined the ranks of adult villagers. Today, becoming a temporary monk is rare, and when seeking a partner in marriage, good education and job are more important than religious knowledge. If boys become monks, it is on behalf of the parents, in order to procure merits for their souls; the boys want to do something worthwhile in their family circle and to honour their mother in particular.

In Lampang, it is customary that students of the city police academy enter the Wat Koo or Wat Kaowarukaram monastery as monks for about a week at the end of their course. Their ordination takes place on the King's day (5 December), and at the same time, province officials may also become ordained as temporary monks. At this time, there is a festival at the temple lasting several days, where up to two hundred monks may be ordained at once, and parents of the police cadets arrive from all around the country. By becoming monks for a period, civil servants and new police officers show that they respect the ethics of Buddhism in their own lives and work, and give an assurance to do their best in serving the King and their country.

Monasteries also still take in temple boys who are ordained neen at the age of 16, and they are expected to continue as monks

when they have reached adulthood. In the past, temple boys had the opportunity of learning to read and write at the monastery, but today they go to school from the temple and may graduate like other young people. There were four temple boys in Ban Mae Kong Nya at the end of the 1990s, whose education was financed by the villagers. The Buddhist church has improved its youth education, and in cities parents can bring their sons to the temple to become 'little priests', or to receive religious education. At Wat Koo they are 'ordained' in the same way as other temporary monks, and they wear a yellow robe. The course takes 20 days, during which they live in the temple under the monks' supervision; becoming a 'little priest' might be comparable to Lutheran confirmation classes.

In all village funerals young boys are ordained servants of the deceased and dressed in monks' robes (buat nah fai). There are usually four boys, but a minimum of two, and they are relatives of the deceased, normally his grandchildren. Funeral monks spend some time at the temple to serve the soul of the deceased on its passage to the other side, and to deliver offerings made for him. It is believed that this way, the deceased does not end up in hell. Monkhood is symbolic, and it is said that boys are ordained monks if the deceased was a man, but novices, if the deceased was a woman. A couple of decades ago, the monks of the deceased spent even two weeks at the temple, but today only a few days, since the boys must go to school.

The problem of all the villages described in this book is that it is no longer easy to find monks to serve in rural areas. There have been times in Ban Srii Muod Klao when there was no permanent monk at the village temple, although the village is large and near the city. The temple was lacking decent living quarters, and the hope is now that the new monastery building will tempt new monks into the village. In recent years, all the villages have only had one permanent monk, and even their positions are undermined by the establishment hierarchy that reaches everywhere, and the villagers want to invite high-ranking and famous monks from the province's large monasteries to their funerals.

**Ordination of monks.** In the past, ordination of a young man as a monk took three days in the villages of this work. On the first day, the young man was dressed in a white robe and he was called a 'dragon', naakh. On the second day, he collected gifts from villagers and was the centre of a celebration, with all who had given him assistance and gifts invited. Equipping a monk was a particularly great merit for the hereafter, and it is said that sometimes villagers arrive in hordes with their gifts at the young man's house or around his person. On the third day the ordination ceremony was performed. The ordainee's head was shaved clean, and dressed in white, he was carried in festive procession to the temple. It used to be common for the ordainee to ride on an elephant or a horse; he was a prince like Buddha had been before he became a monk. With music playing and women dancing ahead of the procession, the crowd came down the village lane and circled the temple three times. The ordination was a village celebration, with relatives and neighbours taking part. Nowadays the ceremony has become privatized and become a celebration of family and relations, and the ordainee with his attendants arrives at the temple by car.(71

Local ordination ceremonies vary somewhat, but in principle it consists of two stages. In the first stage, the parents give up their son to the temple and he is ordained novice. When the naakh, dressed in white, arrives inside the temple with his attendants, he kneels in front of the ordaining monk among the other monks, of which at least four must be present, one at each wind. Once the parents have given up their son for ordination, he bows to the ground three times, first to his parents and then to his ordainer. At the end of the ceremony, the ordainer dresses the ordainee in a monk's undergarment and hands him the other insignia of monkhood, a robe and a begging bowl. Then the ordainee is dressed in a monk's robe, he has become a novice or neen.

In the second stage, the novice is taken to the door outside the temple, from where he is led back into the temple. At the door two assisting monks read to the novice the rules or commandments monks must observe. An ordainee as temporary monk is read seven of Buddha's commandments, which the novice repeats. He promises to observe the following commandments: Refraining from killing living beings. Refraining from taking what is not given. Refraining from unchaste conduct. Refraining from false speech. Refraining from distilled and fermented intoxicants which cause carelessness. Refraining from eating at the forbidden time. Refraining from dancing, singing, and music and going to see entertainments. In addition, an ordainee as permanent monk must promise that he will refrain from using jewellery and cosmetics, that he will not sleep on a high bed but on the floor, at Buddha's feet, and will refrain from receiving gold and silver. After his monk's pledge, the novice is again led to face the ordainer, blessed as a monk and admitted to the monastery brotherhood, Sangha. Finally, the new monk repeats the ritual bows in front of the ordainer.

The ordination is followed by a temple service, attended by the relatives, and containing a prayer said together. Finally the monks receive the gifts brought by the relatives. If there are several people being ordained, they are ordained three at a time, and finally the new monks walk through a guard of honour formed by their families out of the temple, while family members place gifts of flowers in their begging bowls. In the villages, the newly ordained monk and his attendants stay in the temple, where a special celebration may be held. Relatives surround the new monk, call him 'father' or 'great brother', offer to him and receive his blessings, the blessing of their own monk. In the village temple, the young man is the kinship group's monk, who will deliver good deeds to its souls and bring the living, above all his own parents, merits for the hereafter.

Within Buddhist religion, every well-behaved young man may go to the monastery and participate in monks' tasks. Entering the monastery is an option that may be taken up in difficult life situations, and abandoning monkhood has not been considered dishonourable among villagers. A period spent in the monastery is valued even after the person has returned to the company of laymen. As laymen, they are respected more, the longer they have served as monks; in general, revered and influential villagers have spent many years in the monastery. Such a person has proved a desire to lead a good, simple and honest life; he can be trusted. On ordination as a monk, a young man is the centre of public attention, and through giving their gifts, the



villagers may show whether he is worthy of monkhood. The institution of monks compels young men to take into account their community's expectations in their conduct. Begging his food in the mornings, a young man who has entered a monastery becomes dependent on his community, and is sure to learn the villagers' religious feeling and generosity. Village monks are not strangers, but include people's own relatives, and the doors of monasteries are open; the villagers know what monks' daily life is like.

Ordination of a monk is a so-called rite of passage, like a wedding or funeral. Through the rite, the ordainees are passed into a new group and social status. Ordination follows the three-stage format defined in cultural anthropology. In the first, separation stage, the ordainee is separated from his previous status and the group in which he has belonged; on becoming a monk, the young man is separated from his family, his kinship group, young people of the village, and his own earlier youth. Before joining the new group, the ordainee, or in anthropological terminology, the initiate, is in a liminal stage, when he is *naakh*, a 'non-human', as if outside his community and culture. The initiate is then deemed to be without the security provided by his community, and he may be harmed by evil forces. That is why an ordainee had to be particularly protected. Accompanying or carrying of *naakh* in a crowd to the temple and placing him in the midst of monks are examples of such protection rites. In the third or aggregation stage, the initiate is admitted as member of a new group, and receives the insignia of his new status. Usually, the initiated is given a new name and he is dressed in clothing commensurate with his new status, or he is given insignia that only fully-fledged members of his new group are entitled to carry.

Rites of passage, such as ordination of monks and village weddings, are important both for the object of the rite and the community taking part. Ordination emphasizes spiritual change and the new norms of behaviour the new member is expected to comply with in the future. Shared village rites reinforce its own cultural order and create comradeship between participants of the rites, as well as a sense of good mutual communality, which may be termed *communitas*.(72

## Power of the community

**Human being in a village community.** There are three basic elements of the social life of village communities: respect of elders, reciprocal assistance and observing of good manners. Age affords a special status for parents, grandparents, the elder brother and sister; in interpersonal relationships, seniority still means privileges and duties, and age differences cannot be 'democratized'. In the era of agrarian culture, coping together was based on reciprocal assistance among kinship groups and neighbours, reciprocal working parties, whereby every family and individual person was able to help others and receive help in return. Helping is 'being human', and even now villagers of this book talk about helping when they want to define what is important in village life. Neighbours as well as relatives were sensitive to guess when there were difficulties in some villager's life, when he needed help. Trust was important in the villages' social atmosphere; nobody was left alone, if he was honourable himself and wanted to fit in to the life of the community.

Honourability means observing good manners, taking others into consideration. In agrarian communities, man has moved to live together with his neighbours, and villagers have appeared alongside relatives, with both of which every village resident has shared his life from the cradle to the grave. Communal life with neighbours has shaped the rules of behaviour that are included in the dogmas of high religions and ideas of a higher ethical and moral life. In local village communities good interpersonal relations are still important. Villagers value harmony between neighbours and respect people who do good, act correctly and behave in a friendly, polite and considerate manner towards others. (73

In Lampang villages everyone had to know how to behave. Young boys and girls still do not speak to older people without showing them respect; in the past it was considered impertinent if a young person addressed an old person without his permission. At public events, women do not raise their heads above those of revered persons, but pass them with their heads bowed. Many external manners are still culture that people want to preserve. Even tourists know that on greeting, one must bow and raise the hands to the face with the palms together; this is still good manners in Thailand and shows respect to the other person. At monks' ordination ceremonies and weddings, it is still customary to bow in three stages right down to the ground. In Thailand, many old manners and language of the etiquette originate from the court culture of the upper classes, as is the case in Western countries, and they have stayed alive in rites or ceremonies.

In densely populated villages people must learn from an early age to behave in such a way as not to bring shame on themselves or their families, or to cause conflicts between neighbours. A young person who has no manners is stupid, he is lacking the upbringing and understanding that is part of being human. Young people's conduct is also guided by a conscious responsibility and fear of shame, as used to be the case in Western village communities. Good manners are still proof of

maturity of mind and a desire to live as has been customary in one's own community.

In tourist adverts, Thailand is the land of a friendly smile. Friendliness is heritage from agrarian communities, having become polished in densely populated villages, where insulting one's fellow human beings was unacceptable. It is also said that a local person can never forgive anyone who has publicly shamed him so that he 'loses face'. Villagers value calmness, harmony and patience. A calm person relies on his own spiritual strength and endurance, whatever difficulties he meets in life. A well-mannered person is always friendly and never loses his self-control. For a Thai person, nothing is more shameful than losing one's self-control; in this country nobody respects an adult who gives in to his anger and starts making a scene. Everyone must be mentally prepared to cope without losing face both in his public conduct and his own inner emotional life.

Villagers stress that everyone should calmly accept their destiny and their own position, without being jealous of others. The wealthy have been fortunate in the cycle of their lives, and have many merits for the hereafter; this makes them good people who should be highly regarded. Many expectations are also placed on those who have been financially successful. In order to be worthy of their status, the wealthy must know how to give to others, and they must help society in the same way as relatives help each other. On the other hand, those with money also have the right to enjoy their wealth. Villagers shut many issues out of their own lives, and do not hanker after or envy things that they have no chance of achieving. The life of a local person is valuable in his own community.

Asian societies have in some studies been considered collective, and Western societies individualistic. In their view, Western man operates as a rational individual, is committed to his own organization and strives to fulfil its goals. In Asia, man still belongs to a community, to some group, and complies with his group's expectations. Collectivity, committing to a group, would be the reason for the corruption and nepotism common in Asian countries, or favouring of one's own relatives.<sup>(74)</sup> The concept of Western individualism is typical Western self-centredness. It belongs to the class of definitions expressing that Western man is something more than others, or that researchers still want to use to draw a distinction between the 'rational West' and the 'mystical East'. Corruption does not belong to village communities, but to Western-style official organizations which provide modern national cultures with an opportunity of wielding centralized power.

The village community is not intolerant, and in their own lives the informants of this book are equally individual as e.g. Europeans. Every one of them has his own concepts of religion and the fundamental questions of life. It is rather European culture that is based on religious and ideological uniformity, creation of dogmas and subordination of the individual; the scientific-technological supervision of citizens' lives from the cradle to the grave. Western culture has created centralized organizations and ideological mass cultures; Western culture is armies marching in step, shared political goals, shared fashions, trends and idols. The dichotomy of local and centralized cultures is precisely that independent-minded villagers do



not want to adapt to organizations, technosystems, that can only operate successfully by limiting man's self-determination, individuality and freedom.

Thirty years ago, the future of local people continued within their own village and the immediate environment that was part of the rice farmers' life experience. Up till then, man's most important elements of success were the ability and skill to grow one's own rice, to manage in a self-sufficient economy, and to sustain local interpersonal relations. Young men had the opportunity of entering the monastery for a few months to learn Buddhist ethics and to prove that they wanted to become honourable members of the community. Through night visits, boys got to know local girls and were able to test whether they would be accepted in the house as husband and future father and head of a family. In the 1970s the occupation of rice farmer was still a respected and secure career. In cultural hierarchy, the village came first and only then the city and the jobs that were perhaps available there. Life was centred in the villages.

At the interviews, many people said that old people were still cared for at home, and nobody from the villages had been taken to an old people's home. In their village, children still love and respect their parents, and through their offerings, take care of them even after they have died. In Thai villages old people still look after their grandchildren, keep an eye on the house, and work to the best of their ability. Old people are used to farming, and they are still seen on the fields. At home they clean and sort vegetables or make floral decorations for weddings and funerals. And they have experience of life, even if education society no longer requires it. Many old people spend a lot of time at the temple and obtain good deeds for both deceased and living family members. The occasions when family members' mutual love can be displayed in public are Songkran or the new year festival and funerals. It is still customary for the young to visit the elderly of their kinship groups at Songkran to see them and to ask for their blessing.

In the Thai village, existence has been locality. A man had lived a good and secure life, when in his old age he had good neighbours and a large family of children and grandchildren around him. Villagers still think it important that in fullness of time their lives can end at home, where they have lived with their relatives and neighbours, grown their own rice and been self-sufficient. There their children and grandchildren will bury them, escort them from this world to the place where the humanity of each is finally weighed up.

**Life of a good person.** According to Buddhist religion, everyone must personally strive and earn their destiny in the hereafter by following Buddha's teachings and doing good deeds; there is no Redeemer in Buddhism who would have mercy and forgive the sins of the faithful. One of the greatest good deeds has been building a temple, but only the wealthy are able to manage it. However, villagers can take part in maintaining the temple, and obtain immortal merits by offering regularly to the monks and at

the same time to Buddhism, to all that religion means to them. Through the monks, they also help the poor and suffering. The informants do not talk about offering but giving. By giving of his own, a person shows that he respects the supreme and eternal truth. Gifts and good deeds are an opportunity given to man to show his striving to goodness and to make public his belief in ethical struggle. Good deeds can counteract bad ones (baab), bring forgiveness for errors and reroute the course from the wrong path. Through his own life and his good deeds, everyone could alter his future, or expressed in religious terms, influence his destiny, his karma, and perhaps finally attain peace, nippana. Good deeds also mean purification from selfishness, showing of empathy to those who have experienced difficulties. For very many informants, the teachings of religion were crystallized in the expression: Live well, and you will do well, and your soul will be at peace. The laws of destiny never disappear.

During the interviews, many people contemplated what people ought to be like and what constitutes a good life. In these village communities a good person is defined using Buddha's teachings or commandments, and proverbs that crystallize the wisdom of past generations. An ordinary villager should observe at least five commandments, briefly: Do not kill, do not steal, do not commit adultery, do not lie or use intoxicating substances; they are the same as in other high religions. To repeat the thinking of Buddhism once more, according to the law of dakkha everything is imperfect, unsatisfactory. Human life is suffering, and the prime reason is people's urges and desires, of which each can only free himself by self-development, by following the road signposted by Buddha, with the eight stages. It sets out the foundations of a good life: self-discipline, right understanding, right thinking, right speech, right action and living, and right alertness and right meditation.

A good person must have an honest occupation, such as a rice farmer has, and he must endeavour to improve himself, to control his own mind and take others into consideration. Such people bring peace with them wherever they go, and succeed in everything they undertake in their lives. The community of rice farmers, like agrarian cultures everywhere, has valued a disciplined and honourable person who is financially and spiritually independent, autonomous. A true Buddhist is meek, modest and generous, he keeps his mind calm and withdraws from evil things, sacrifices his time and energy for the benefit of others, and shares what he has with others.

The informants of the book believe and want to continue believing that in the flow of life, goodness has its just reward, and evil leads to destruction, to hell, and that punishment will come to a bad person sooner or later either on earth, in the hereafter, or in another life. Suffering, misfortune, sickness are part of the destiny, the burden of the past, the karma, which everyone has to bear. Religions, including Buddhism, talk about inner peace and happiness. The villagers do not wish that their children would only be successful, but that they would also be happy and live an ethically good life. When speaking to the young, monks teach them to avoid treacherous temptations that surround them in modern culture, and stress that success must not be based on exploitation of other people or to excessive utilization of natural resources. Man must also feel gratitude towards animals and

nature, and protect himself from avarice, the lust for money and success. Morality is still a virtue. Rightful thinking is consideration and wisdom of the mind to distinguish good from bad, an effort to get away from the slavery of consumption and imitation of wrong idols. A good future equals good deeds, done from the heart.

Villagers do not talk about the holy scriptures of Buddhism, but about morality. Piety consists of what is right in front of people. It is important to the informants that their community contains no injustice, which embitters people's lives. The task of religion is to maintain fairness and moral order; it must compel people to trust in the power of goodness and that evil will not gain the upper hand in the end. Sin follows people to their reincarnation, even after death. Whenever breaches of society's morality take place, the villagers are the ones whose rights are first trampled upon. In Buddhist culture, monks are models of a good person. They have taken up the begging bowl, promised to live as modestly as self-sufficient rice farmers, to be content with what villagers give them. Monks declare through their own example that people should endeavour to free themselves from their own desires, striving for wealth and power, and to respect life, everything that is living. Such a life is in balance with nature and the eternal laws of humanity.

The world view and ethics of Buddhist village religion has also been overrun by development. People are forced to believe in development, not in Buddha. All over the world, religions must adapt to the lifestyle of urban, modern man. Monks have also become urbanized. Being respected by villagers belonged to the era of self-sufficient village communities, today, social thinking and morality is created by wage earners, educated people and players in the business world, who live in their own technosystems. Up to now, rural people have valued social order, religious life, peace, and helping one another. In minds of rural people, gratitude, care and helpfulness, obedience towards parents and reciprocal assistance are parts of being human. Urban people value the security of their own families, success in life, good social lives and education; characteristics of their ideal human being are independence, responsibility and determination in reaching their own goals. (75)

Many of the interviewees say that what has changed most is people's innermost being. A different morality of integration, different ideals and measures of happiness in a human life prevail in the postlocal environment. Local people of Thailand, as everywhere else, have found it hard to understand that a self-sufficient lifestyle and helping one another no longer has cultural significance, rather the contrary. Community people who are content with little are disappearing from the villages and being replaced by career and standard of living people, for whom their own financial success, consumption and social showing off are more important than community life with their neighbours. In society, the people who succeed and are esteemed are those who can exploit others for their own gain, who are able to beat their fellow human beings, their brothers.

Thailand has become a modern information society, where people compete incessantly over education, jobs and financial success. Young people must be prepared to leave their home villages to wherever work is available. In the urban environment,



entertainment, even narcissistic seeking of experiences, has become the opposite of regimented everyday life, escape from reality, and under commercial freedom, the behaviour of an individual can no longer be morally condemned. Religion must learn to speak the language of urbanites and to modify its doctrine to correspond with urban man's ideas of individual rights and individual morality. All religions face ever more difficulty in defining what is goodness or badness, what is sin, what is right family morality and honourable conduct.

In the history of kingdoms and nations, peasants have been the unnamed and forgotten actors who have built the countries and monuments of their time. Villagers presently farming land occupy the lowest echelons of society; a new economic elite has risen above them, as well as an ever-growing army of officials, of whose corrupted ways newspapers write almost daily.<sup>(76)</sup> Dissenters in Thailand and many renowned monks argue that as a nation state, the country has failed to maintain Buddhist wisdom and social morality. A crisis of humanity permeates the country. The national elite wants to join in international development and works for its own economic advantage, with no consideration for ordinary people or nature. Differences in individual wealth have grown, and the social values of village communities, citizens' mutual co-operation and even national solidarity are in danger of disintegration. Biological ethics, which seem to be part of globalization, award rightness and significance only to ecological victors. New international capitalism leads to increasing inequality, depression and violence, and ultimately to ideological self-destruction of nation states.

**Facing postlocalism.** The present day of culture is brief, the environment is changing and the structural change continues from one generation to the next, from the future to a new future. Will the laws of destiny endure? If Lampang city continues to grow, Ban Srii Muod Klao will become part of the local metropolis, and the remaining fields will disappear under massed buildings. The history of the village farming culture will end, the work of ancestors will be forgotten, and the villagers will become urban entrepreneurs and wage earners. On the plains of Ban Mae Kong Nya, farming will probably continue, but ownership of the fields will become centralized to large enterprises, international agrobusiness. Farming will be mechanized and ultimately automated. What about the future of Ban Dong?

Centralization of society has begun in Lampang province, too. Many village schools are threatened with closure, followed by disappearance of village shops and small shops in towns. How long can the people of Lampang sustain their interest in marching in new year processions and participating in organizing temple festivals? Will the villages abandon communal funerals? Is Thailand also becoming a mass culture, with various technosystems producing the human life, science, art, shared entertainment?

Informants of this book return time and again to the basic questions of their own life environment: How can a village remain a

community, if it becomes a mere place to live, like a suburb, where people who work in the city settle to build their houses and to defend their own privacy? And what is their children's future? In the youth of the informants, moral order prevailed in the villages, respect of the elders, neighbourliness and brotherhood; problems with drugs and sex were unknown, as was youth crime, the global disharmony that penetrates everywhere in people's living environments. Today, the division no longer exists between ethnic minorities and dominant cultures, developing and industrialized countries. Parents have the same worries in the East and West, regardless of social class. How many stories are there in the villages of Thailand, all over the world, of young people died of drugs and Aids, who were once their parents' hope for the future? In rural Lampang, the contraculture of the secure village is the city, the postlocal space, where an individual person has less and less cultural significance of his own. The villagers spoke of large cities as places from which the threat to future is spreading: criminality, drugs, immorality. In cities, selfishness, looking after number one, prevails; people there are left alone.

Today, organized, professional national culture and local, self-determined village culture exist side by side in Lampang. The time is not yet distant when village community life was daily living together, its elements being sharing the everyday life of the rice farmer, a shared occupation and religion. Rice farmers' voluntary working parties have gone, but in their place are now weddings, funerals and temple festivals. They still provide an opportunity for doing something together, unhurriedly chatting and joking. I tried everywhere to photograph women cooking together, the scene with rice and meat sauces bubbling in large pans. On these occasions, women have combined work and enjoyment, implementing women's great role as enactors of family rites. There they prepare a shared meal, cook the rice, wash the vegetables, grind the spices. Quickly and efficiently, they share out the food, wash the dishes. Old women tie floral decorations; their hands hold the tradition of tying flowers. Men also play their part in organizing celebrations. The men erect the marquee, carry tables and chairs, install electrical cables and position amplifiers. Every villager can experience belonging to something, feel that the connection with other residents of his village is maintained, even if the shared everyday life no longer exists. The interviewees felt the most horrifying feature of city life to be that one can no longer visit neighbours without an invitation, or do anything together with others.

The public culture of Thailand is creating a good national community, a nation state. On festival days, colourful processions fill the streets of Lampang, hundreds of monks assemble to receive gifts from families, and various groups, villages, offices, schools, the armed forces display their membership of the shared state. Schools of Thailand emphasize social morality, sociability and good manners. Schoolchildren wear uniforms, and in school occasions, processions, shared events, each class has its own costumes and performs its numbers. This, too, is belonging to something, our class, one's own group, with a common path to the future. Today, villages and towns have many more shared events than in the era of agrarian culture thirty years ago. Lampang celebrations, their processions, dances and ceremonies contain something unrelenting, with local people defining for themselves the constituent parts of their culture. They are different from events such as Lampang cold season markets or festivals of Western societies, rock concerts with audiences of tens of thousands, or local tourist events with

professional artistes providing the entertainment, the shared experiences. In the new culture, the local person is transplanted into consuming masses, and he has scarcely any part in what is happening at any given time in the environment of his own life.

The village celebrations of Lampang are an effort to ritualize good community spirit and to create villagers' own secure domicile within the ever more disharmonious environment of the future. The villagers' own community is their social armour, behind which they can together repel the danger from outside. Today villagers are united by the fight against drug dealers and youth gangs. The villagers believe that they need not give in to the crumbling of society and morality, but they can still unite in defending their children's lives and future, and their own autonomous humanity. In local people's views of the future, they want their own village to remain a good community, like a refuge where they can always return, or as an idealized Thai village that glimmers in the nostalgic reminiscences of older generations and in school books.

**Finalization.** After the great structural change, there has been much debate in Western countries on what is modern man's own culture. Will local, ethnic communities disappear, and will nationality also become an artificial, commercial construct required by the sports and tourist industries?(77 Will the culture industry gradually produce all people's life experiences? According to individualistic views, in 'post-communities' of the future, culture will become an increasingly more personal effort to create one's own body, image or ego. Global man will develop into a selective, cultivated actor, who takes a responsible view of natural resources and seeks more immaterial than material values; mass consumption would be replaced by an individualistic lifestyle. Culture would become social construction and public display of actors' own existence, self-interpretations, self-reflection, individual style. (78 Conversely, many researchers believe that community spirit, belonging, is primordial in man, one of the deep-rooted structures of evolution.(79 New technology produces ever more devices of interaction, contact technology, and their salespeople talk about a new kind of community life. The Internet should become a new social network uniting people in different parts of the globe, mobile phones would create 'mobile phone communities', new communications technology would make radio and television broadcasts 'interactive', with listeners and viewers able to participate in their production, as if as a community. New community spirit would consist of technological networks between individuals.(80

World culture has been seen only as an illusory metaculture which people shut out of their own daily lives, the reality they live in.(81 Postmodern man localizes, communalizes and voluntarizes external knowledge, skill and technology, just like he did in the past. Or, the new culture is glocal, as the Japanese like to define it, containing both local and global spheres. The urban citizen of the world still lives in some place or social space, seeks out his own microcommunity, travels through his arc of life, enters his marriage and wants to tell his own story. Locality is everyday heroism and tacit resistance.(82 Culture modifies its material structures, but communality continues to exist. Scholars have begun to call communality social capital, said to be as



important as financial capital for human well-being. Research shows that community people are physically and mentally healthier and live longer than those who lack an immediate community. Or, to apply other fashionable concepts, in addition to rational intelligence, people should also possess emotional intelligence, an ability to live with other people and to share in their destiny. One of the key words is social trust; social capital is only created when members of a community rely on each other's help and feel that their communal life is secure.(83

Social capital, partnership and emotional intelligence! These concepts crystallize the new message of salvation of the West. Researchers are now competing in their declarations that one's own community or social network is essential for man, an undivided part of quality of life. In a good society, relations between people should be based on partnership, and commercial morality should be replaced by a culture of brotherhood and caring. The rational West has drifted into an excessively hard, one-sided living standards society, a culture of solitary winners, with return to locality offering the only way out. Utopias of world-wide solidarity, a shared globe or world village have died down. Numerous ecological movements have turned their backs on globalization both in Thailand and in Finland. Modern technology cannot replace a real community where people share a long history of common experiences, friendships, within which they can also act for mutual benefit, help one another. More and more people want to get away from centralizing and unifying development, megaculture, a future of world leaders.

I have defined cultural finalization in various contexts, in a way that has irked both readers and researchers. But finalization has come ever closer, and then the deepest visions of meritocracy finally come true: total scientific-technological development and control of existence, total productivity and competitiveness. Finalization is (1) unity. Each area of life has only one technosystem which maintains its own perfection, and no area of existence is left outside scientific-technological control. Future environment is created by ever larger and more centralized world class techno-cultures, global techno-machineries of products industry, human production, environmental control and future industry. Digital control technology and supercomputers enable global administrative structures, emergence of continental states. World domination of meritocracy is maybe already becoming finalized, it is a digital imperium that forgets nothing, that makes use of the very latest information technology, automated production and robotics, self-directing megaprocesses and machineries of consciousness production. Only global technosystems are still capable of producing new innovations, new environmental technology and everyday culture, folklore of world channels.

Final culture is (2) without boundaries. It is inhabited by man without boundaries; the whole mankind achieves a boundless unity. Universal information networks, the world brain, unite people living in different technosystems into one culture. The world level religious meritocrat endlessly extends the limits of people's religious experiences, the continental consciousness technician limits of independent thought, the international sensuality meritocrat limits of sexual experiences. Life consists of planetary visions, cyber spaces, limitless experience science. Universal man's taste, style and mentality are totally

researched, and technosystems are capable of producing all his bodily needs and of serving him in all world networks.

Finalization is (3) inexhaustible, it continuously renews the latest novelty. Postlocal man is able to endlessly select new contents for his consciousness and multicultural life experiences, final explanations of limitless existences. Man who is liberated from local communities can incessantly entertain himself, consume ever more freedoms, sex, violence and intoxicants. Scientific-technological perfection. Thus, the world citizen finally attains perfect happiness, he no longer needs to live his own life.

Western countries are also now forced to experience what global economy and postlocal development really mean. Local people have moved out of the villages of this book, too, and entered technosystems to compete with the people of Finland and all the world's nations on know-how and jobs, production of goods, resources of the shared globe. They are included in modern reality, where ever larger techno-machineries, transnational monopolies and continent states have begun to fight over unified development. It is modern warfare that will never end in peace. Nor will this war ever be won by spiritually and morally degenerate Western countries, where people are losing their faith in the future. The only certainty in predictions for the future is that fossil fuels will run out and cultures of the world will move on to the 'postoil' era. The ploughing machines will stop working. The environment will take another new form and people will start to seek new ways of adaptation. And maybe the 'energy revolution' will bring about a greater structural change than modernization, both in Finland and in Thailand.

## REFERENCES

With reference to ancient Finnish folk culture, my only source is *Finnische Volksüberlieferung. Atlas der Finnischen Volkskultur 2* (Sarmela 2000a), which contains a list of references. Statistical data on Finland is produced by Statistics Finland ([www.stat.fi](http://www.stat.fi)) and STAKES, the National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health ([www.stakes.fi](http://www.stakes.fi)); on Thailand by the National Statistical Office of the Prime Minister (Thailand Official Yearbook; [www.nso.go.th](http://www.nso.go.th)).

## Foreword

1. The theory is based on e.g. my Finnish language work *Rakennemuutos tulevaisuuteen. Postlokaalinen maailma ja Suomi* ['Structural change into the future. The postlocal world and Finland.'](WSOY 1989), in which I have described environmental systems of various periods and their structural changes starting from the Nordic hunting culture and ending with the postlocal era, more briefly in the article *Postlocal Culture* (1991); and in the Introduction to my work *Finnische Volksüberlieferung* (2000a). Theoretical applications in e.g. Sarmela 1979a. Julkunen - Sarmela 1987. ([www.kolumbus.fi/matti.sarmela/index.html](http://www.kolumbus.fi/matti.sarmela/index.html))
2. The concept of *meritocracy* is used in a wider sense than to mean officialdom that has risen through education and its own ability, as distinct from hereditary aristocracy (Young 1958). A meritocrat is a type of person who operates in delocal and postlocal organizations, through history in e.g. military, religious, political or today in scientific-technological and economic technosystems; the opposite is a human being who is adapted to local communities.
3. Sarmela 1977; 1978. In reality, scientific-technological development, economic growth and centralization continue, technological determinism has rather become a more predominant *cultural domination* (Kaplan 1982) and will apparently end in final world domination.

## I. Village in Northern Thailand

Monographs on Thai villages and village culture: Benedict (1945) 1963. Sharp et al. 1953. De Young 1955. Kickert 1960a. Kingshill 1960. Kaufman 1962. Ayabe 1962. Huzioka 1962. Hanks – Hanks – Sharp 1965. Sarmela 1979a-c. Gidal – Gidal 1970. Mizuno 1971. Klausner 1972; 1981. Wijeyewardene 1967. Van Roy 1967; 1971. Moerman 1968. Potter 1976. Iddhichiracharas 1977. Sharp – Hanks 1978. Mulder 1978. Tomosugi 1980; 1995. Turton 1987. Nartsupha 2000.

4. Statistical Reports of Changwat Lampang 1972/1985/1996/1997/1999. Thailand Official Yearbook. National Statistical Office: 2003 Agricultural Census (Northern region)



5. Penth 1994. Joel John Barlow, History of Lanna. Chiang Rai Guide 2004 ([www.chiangraiprovence.com](http://www.chiangraiprovence.com)).
6. On Thailand Chinese e.g. Skinner 1951; 1957; 1958; 1964. Landon 1941. Coughlin 1960. Kiong – Bun 2001.
7. On village building traditions: Chongrak 1977. Boeles - Sternstein 1966. Turton 1981 (1978). Izikowitz - Sörensen 1982. Sarmela 1984. Hamilton 1987. Rhum 1994.
8. Sarmela 1984.
9. On the concept of ethnoscape: Appadurai 1991; 1996.
10. Of descriptions of village rice farming, I would specially like to mention Rajadhon 1961. Moerman 1968. Wijeyewardene 1965; 1967. Hanks, L. 1972. Also Adams 1948. Hirsch 1960. Janlekha 1955. De Yong 1955. Kaufman 1962. Bissing 1962. Amyot 1965. Ivanova 1966. Silcock 1967; 1970. Sarmela 1969ab; (1988). Van Roy 1971. Jacobs 1971. Changrien 1972. Evers 1973. Judd 1974. Rubin 1974. Skinner – Kirsch 1975. Potter 1976. Podhisita 1985. Mekchaidee 198?
11. On reciprocal working parties and village work communities e.g. Sharp et al. 1953. Kaufman 1962. Moerman 1968. Mizuno 1968. Potter 1974. Foster 1975b. Turton 1987.
12. The International Rice Research Institute or IRRI, which directed improvement of rice, and the concepts of 'wonder rice' and the 'green revolution' it marketed have from the beginning also engendered criticism, e.g. *Agricultural Revolution* 1969. Walters – Willett 1971.
13. On agricultural changes, e.g. Janlekha 1955. Moerman 1964; 1968. Smuckarn 1972. Changrien 1972. Evers 1973. Rubin 1974. Piker 1975. Pongsapich 1976. Murray 1977. Fessen 1978. Sarmela 1979a-c. Tomosugi 1980; 1995. Warr 1980. Kuwinpant 1980. Van der Meer 1981. Podhisita 1985. Gohlert 1991. Viton 1991; 1992. Nartsupha 2000. On economic development of rural areas and agrarian policy e.g. Wyatt 1969. Ingram 1971. Fuchs - Vingerhoets 1972. Lengel 1976. Amyot 1976. Fessen 1978. Unger 1998. Ganjanapan 1989. Hirsch 1990; 1994. Warr 1993. Sarntisart 2000. Phongpaichit – Baker 1998; 2001.
14. Statistical Reports of Changwat Lampang, e.g. 1996: 2,4.
15. On swidden rice farming see Hanks, L. 1972. Judd 1964. (Geddes 1976). On ecological and social elements of swidden culture Sarmela 1987; 2000a.
16. Newspaper reports e.g. Bangkok Post 22.10.2001; 4.11.2001; 26.10.2002; 26.11.2002.
17. In Thailand, a group of researchers put out the first public warning in 1985 of the harmful effects of plant biocides on Thailand's nature and people's health, e.g. Bangkok Post 7.1.1985, but the general view is that intensive farming is necessary for rice exports, e.g. Bangkok Post 6.2.1985. Now the effects of biocides are recognized, although they are rarely discussed in the media.
18. On social and economic change in Thailand in general, e.g. Cruagao 1962. Bissing 1962. Davies 1967. Silcock 1967; 1970. Van Roy 1967; 1971. Blanchard 1968. Noranitipadungkarn 1970. Jacobs 1971. Smuckarn 1972. Evers 1973. Scott

1976; 1985. Mulder 1978; 1996. Girling 1981. Ekachai 1990. Gohlert 1991. Kulick - Wilson 1992. Parnwell 1996. Sarntisart 2000. Phongpaichit - Baker 1998; 2001. Mills 2001. Tanabe - Keyes 2002. McCargo 2002.

**19.** Steward 1955. Bennet 1976. D'Andrade 1997. Shore 1999.

**20.** Sisa Asoke, e.g. Bangkok Post Outlooks 7.12.1997; 21.3.1998; Heikkilä-Horn 1996; 2002. (Sarmela 1998.) There is also much information on the Internet (e.g. Suwida Sangsehanat, An Alternative Social Development in Thailand: the Asoke Buddhist Community).

**21.** E.g. Bangkok Post 30.3.1998 (banks); 5.1.1998; 20.1.1998; 1.2.1998; 16.3.1998; 17.4.1998.

## **II. Community culture**

**22.** Compound, family and kinship group: Haas 1951. Rajadhon 1968, 255- ; 1961. Kingshill 1960. LeBar – Hickey – Musgrave 1964. Hanks, J. 1964. Hanks – Hanks 1964. Wijeyewardene 1965. Hamburger 1965. Ayabe 1966. Mizuno 1968; 1971. Kemp 1970; 1982. Turton 1972. Davis 1973. Foster 1975a; 1982. Keyes 1975. Potter, J. 1976. Potter, S. 1977. Hale 1979. Mougne 1984. Podhisita 1985. Thorbek 1987. Smuckarn 1998. Rhum 1994. Matrifocality e.g. Davis 1973. Mougne 1984. Cf. Freedman 1970; 1971.

**23.** Civil servants have pensions; private employees/employers have pension insurances; from 2002 all businesses must pay employees' social security payments. Statistics also show that children take care of their parents: Report of the 1994 Survey of Elderly in Thailand, National Statistical Office, Table 4.

**24.** In research on Thailand, most debate has been engendered by the concept of a "loosely structured" community (Embree 1950), that was said to reflect the whole culture of Thai villages. Characteristics of looseness were e.g. 'loosely structured' extended families and foster children. An extended family is not a 'loose' structure, discussion e.g. Moerman 1964; 1969. Hamburger 1965. Evers (ed.) 1969 (Cunningham, Kirsch, Mulder, Phillips, Piker). Suwanajata 1976. Bunnag 1979. Vaddhanaphuti 1980 etc. Swidden culture has been small-scale diversified economy, where all family members participated in making a shared living, nobody was 'useless'. (Cf. Sarmela 1979a; 1987; 2000a,20-).

**25.** Bangkok Post e.g. 17.5.1999; 17.4.2000. Pyne 1994.

**26.** Cf. Anderson 1980; 1998.

**27.** Education in Thailand 1997. Statistical Reports of Changwat Lampang.

**28.** A cultivated person, who engaged in self-improvement, physical discipline, hygiene and good manners has above all been a 19<sup>th</sup> century European (German, bourgeois, middle-class) human ideal (the advent of which in the Nordic countries was amusingly described by e.g. J. Frykman - O. Löfgren 1979, 1987). A meritocrat is defined as particularly an American idol who succeeds through his own abilities and energy (cf. McNamee – Miller 2004). In business, the postlocal human

type is a global level performer, who is capable of operating (in his own technosystem) everywhere in the world (Kanter 1995).

**29.** On education and training: Hanks, L. 1959. Hanks – Phillips 1961. Boesch 1962. Wyatt 1975. Watson 1980. Mulder 1997; 1999.

**30.** Mulder 1997. Goldsen et al. 1960. Guskin 1964. Mole 1973. Bangkok Post 29.10.2000.

**31.** Bangkok Post 24.11.1997; (1.3.2000).

**32.** Anderson 1983. In a postlocal environment, nationality also unavoidably loses its significance and a new elite creates new interpretations of both history and the present.

**33.** It may also be said that media imperialism reaches Thailand too (Chin-Chuan 1980; Sarmela 1977).

**34.** On village young people: Goldsen et al. 1960. Hanks – Phillips 1961. Tirabutana 1958; 1968. Guskin 1964. Piker 1964; 1968a. Foster 1976. Keyes 1984. Thorbeck 1987. Bumroongsook 1995. Finland: Sarmela 2000a, 127-; map 37.

**35.** On girls' idols cf. Van Esterik 1982 (articles). Keyes 1984; 1986. Kirsch 1985. Thorbeck 1988. Pyne 1994. Taywaditep – Coleman – Dumronggittigule 1997-2001.

**36.** Cf. Thorbeck 1987. Taywaditep – Coleman – Dumronggittigule 1997-2001.

**37.** Divorces, concubines. National Statistical Office table 1.31. Mills 2001. Van Esterik 2000. Bangkok Post 30.9.1984; 5.2.2001.

**38.** Sarmela 2000a, 77-; maps 9-21. On Thai weddings Wells 1939, 155-. Rajadhon 1968, 255-. Tambiah 1969. Hanks, J. 1964, 11-; 1965. Potter 1976, 114-. Terwiel 1979a, 145-. Pedersen 1968, 128-. Diskul s.a.

**39.** Taywaditep – Coleman – Dumronggittigule 1997-2001. Jackson – Nerida 2000. Van Esterik 2000. Abortions Bangkok Post 14.8.2002 (Sanisuda Ekachai).

**40.** Northern Thailand 1995: Sexual relations among young people in developing countries 2001. Bangkok Post 41.9.1984., Mahidol University, the Faculty of Public Health; 9.1.1999; 25.3.1999; 25.11.1999; 3.1.2000; 7.1.2000; 3.2.2000; 15.2.2000; 7.11.2000; 12.3.2001; 11.4.2001; 3.6.2001; 13.10.2001; 11.11.2002; 16.11.2002. According to a recent study, 1.6% of final year high school girl students had had sexual intercourse with their boyfriends, and at the turn of the millennium perhaps about 10-20% of girls and 60-80% of boys had generally had sexual intercourse before their marriage is made official.

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**41.** E.g. Bangkok Post 1.1-11.1.2003; (8.1.2003).

**42.** Wells 1939, 163-. Diskul s.a. Kickert 1960b. Attagara 1968, 113-. Tambiah 1970, 179-. Potter, J. 1976. Potter, S. 1977. Terwiel 1979a, 180-; 1979b. Sarmela 1989; 2000b.

**43.** On Thai music Yupho 1960. Morton 1974; 1976. Phutharaporn 1998.

**44.** Davis 1976. Wales 1983. Rajadhon 1961; 1968. Tambiah 1969; 1970. Davis 1976. Klausner 1966. Wells 1939. Kickert 1960. Pedersen 1968; 1975.

**45.** Rajadhon 1968, 37-.



- 46.** On Buddhist calendar year e.g. Wells 1939, 62-. Tambiah 1970, 152-. Klausner 1962; 1966.
- 47.** E.g. Bangkok Post 18.4.2002.
- 48.** Phongpaichit – Piriyaarangsarn – Treerat 1998, 196-. National Statistical Office table 70. It is estimated that there are 10,000 women engaged in the sex industry in Finland (!). On sex tourism and changing sexual attitudes: Phongpaichit 1980. Thorbek 1987. Trangell 1996. Jackson – Sullivan 1999. Jackson – Nerida 2000. Van Esterik 2000. E.g. Bangkok Post published a special issue on sex tourism on 8.3. 1984 (Sanisuda Ekachai), new debate e.g. BP 5.4.1999; 6.4.1999; 3.7.1999.
- 49.** Female students Bangkok Post 30.7.1999; 5.9.1999; 11.4.2001. Pornography and the Internet, e.g. BP 1.10.2002; 11.11.2002.
- 50.** National Statistical Office: Education and Public Health Statistics table 6.18-20. As a rule, estimated figures are 10 times greater; in 2003 the number of people with Aids/HIV was probably around 600,000 and the number of people killed by the disease 65,000. Jackson – Nerida 2000. Sarmela 2001. HIV Prevention 2001. Bangkok Post e.g. 26.1.1999; 14.5.1999; 28.7.1999; 3.8.1999; 17.3.2000; 23.3.2000; 9.7.2000; 15.7.2000; 22.3.2001; 20.8.2000; 30.11.2000; 3.12.2000; 1.4.2001; 7.11.2002. Sangha Metta 3.8.1999. (On organizations: [www.floatinglotus.com](http://www.floatinglotus.com); [www.buddhanet.net/sangha-metta/project.html](http://www.buddhanet.net/sangha-metta/project.html) ). On families e.g. BP 29.3.1999; 23.4.1999; 24.8.1999. The fight against Aids has continued in the media, in schools and health centres. In the 1990s, the country's 488 national radio and TV channels have from time to time transmitted a bulleting every hour against Aids, and a special education programme has been set up for schools. Ministry of Education Plan for the Prevention and Solving of AIDS Education, 1997-2001. National Plan for the Prevention and Alleviation of HIV/AIDS in Thailand 2002-2006. AVERT - AIDS Education & Research Trust HIV & AIDS in Thailand.
- 51.** National Narcotics Control Board. On drug abuse by young people (schoolchildren) Bangkok Post e.g. 2.1.1985; 23.1.1985; 16.3.1999; 9.4.1999; 17.5.1999; 18.8.1999; 18.10.1999; 7.4.2000; 28.5.2000; 30.1.2001; 9.3.2001; 22.3.2001; 22.11.2001. Finland: STAKES 2003.
- 52.** On the ecology of opium farming by mountain peoples Geddes 1976. On drug-related criminality in Thailand Phongpaichit – Piriyaarangsarn – Treerat 1998, (86-).
- 53.** The real number of executed drug criminals has remained unclear. Civic organizations, such as Amnesty International, have deemed executions to contravene human rights. In his statements (e.g. Bangkok Post 2.3.2003), the Prime Minister has emphasized the explosive growth of the drug problem and the right of citizens to safeguard their children. Apparently, villagers largely approved of the war against drugs, as well as against the Mafia or the Dark Influence.
- 54.** Thailand. Ministry of Public Health, Department of Mental Health (statistics). National Statistical Office: suicides table 68-69, criminality etc. table 12:8,10-11. Newspaper articles: Bangkok Post 4.2.1999; 16.4.1999; 25.11.1999; 25.4.2000.

### III. Village religion

55. On belief in supernatural guardians in villages: E.g. Rajadhon 1961. Nimmanahaeminda 1967. Attagara 1968. Tambiah 1970, 263-. Smuckarn 1998. On matrifocal supernatural guardian of kinship group especially Turton 1972. Davis 1973; 1984. Wijeyewardene 1977. Cohen 1984. Cohen – Wijeyewardene 1984. McMorran 1984. Mougne 1984. Irvine 1984. Rhum 1994.
56. On Finnish tradition of supernatural guardians: Sarmela 2000a, 69-: 189-; maps 7, 62-68.
57. Guardian of rice Ayabe 1965. Rajadhon 1961,(38-) . Hanks, J. 1964; 1969. Lando 1983. Villagers' accounts no longer include references to other rites of the farming season.
58. Lampang festivals of ancestors have been described in detail by Tanabe 1991 and Rhum 1994. Karelia: Sarmela 2000a, map 7.
59. Sarmela 2000a, 203-; maps 73-75.
60. Offering punnets e.g. Turton 1978. Terwiel 1979, 161-.
61. Cf. Tambiah 1970, 271-. Hinderling 1972. Mulholland 1977. Terwiel 1979. Golomb 1985. Watson – Ellen 1993.
62. Brun – Schumacher 1986.
63. E.g. Golomb 1985, 230-. Mulholland 1977.
64. Rajadhon 1961, 129-. Hart – Rajadhon – Coughlin 1965. Sarmela 2000a, 245-; map 91.
65. Sarmela 2000a, 165-; map 50.
66. In Thai language, *khwan* has expresssly meant a 'loose' substance that sustains life of humans and other living beings and can leave the body, with secondary meanings of e.g. 'breathing' and 'breath', in common with e.g. Finno-Ugric peoples, but which has taken on a wider meaning of human vitality, fortune and ability to succeed (e.g. Rajadhon 1968, 202-). Archaic song "Antero Vipunen". Sarmela 2000a, 241-; map 90.
67. Sarmela 2000a, 13-18; 140; 149-151; map 39.
68. Sarmela 200a, 18-25; 141-186; 225; maps 40-61.
69. Sulak Sivaraksa, Bangkok Post 18.11.1997.
70. There are about 32,000 monasteries in Thailand. On Buddhism as village religion e.g. Young 1898. Wells 1939. Rajadhon 1961; 1986 (1954). Kaufman 1962. Klausner 1962; 1966; 1981. Pfanner - Ingersoll 1962. Hanks, L. 1962. Moerman 1966. Nash 1966. Ingersoll 1966b; 1975. Kirsch 1967; 1973; 1977. Attagara 1968. Obeyesekere 1968. Tambiah 1968; 1970. Wijeyewardene 1970; 1986. Bunnag 1973. Davis 1973; 1984. Mulder 1973; 1996b. Terwiel 1979. Tomosugi 1980, 25-. Keyes 1983a,b; 1986. Podhisita 1998. ([www.thaistudents.com/buddha/index.html](http://www.thaistudents.com/buddha/index.html))
71. On Buddhism as state religion e.g. Pfanner – Ingersoll 1962. Obeyesekere 1968. Mulder 1973. Piker 1973. Tambiah 1976. Kirsch 1975, 1977. Suksamran 1977. Keyes 1971; 1989. Jackson 1989. Sivaraksa 1993. Kingshill 2000. Ekachai

2001. On the monastic organization Pratt 1980 (1928). Ingersoll 1966b. Wells 1939. Keyes 1989. Brun 1976. Terwiel 1979. Tambiah 1984. Ministry of Education, Religion and Cultural Policy
- 72.** Thailand Official Yearbook; Statistical Reports of Changwat Lampang.
- 73.** Cf. Rajadhon 1961. Van Esterik 1982. Keyes 1984; 1986. Thorbeck 1988.
- 74.** Ordination of monks in the past has been described by e.g. Anuman Rajadhon (1961, 69-). Today there are special handbooks on ordination (e.g. [www.thailandlife.com/ordination\\_002.htm](http://www.thailandlife.com/ordination_002.htm)).
- 75.** Rites of passage: van Gennep 1960 (1909). Turner 1974a,b.
- 76.** Herbert Phillips's study *Thai Peasant Personality* (1950s) identifies values that have been considered important in the villages of this book and all agrarian cultures. Other literature: de Young 1955. Boesch 1962. Hanks, L. 1962; 1965; 1975. Ayal 1963. Piker 1964. Hanks, J. 1965. Ingersoll 1966a. Ayabe 1966. Diamond 1969. Moerman 1969b. Jones 1971. Mole 1973. Keyes 1975. Turton 1976. Scott 1976; 1985. Delaney 1977. Mulder 1977; 1997; 1999. Potter, S. 1979. Ganjanapan 1984; 1989. Komin 1974; 1998. Komin – Smuckarn 1979. Suntaree 1991. Bandhumedha 1998. Smuckarn 1998. Podhisita 1998. McVey 2000.
- 77.** Hofstede 1980.
- 78.** Komin 1974; 1998. Komin – Smuckarn 1979.
- 79.** On the administrative and economic elite of Thailand: Evers 1965. Riggs 1966. Siffin 1966. Noranitipadungkarn 1970. Boesch 1962a; 1970. Chaloeontiarana 1979. Brummelhuis - Kemp 1984. Parnwell 1996. Phongpaichit – Piriyaarangsarn 1990. Sarntisart 2000. Connors 2002. Patron-client relationship: E.g. Ingersoll 1966a. Kemp 1982. (Rabibhadana 1969; 1980.)
- 80.** Roosens 1989.
- 81.** Hebdige 1979; Ewen 1988; A. Tomlinson 1990. Body: Turner, B. 1984; Featherstone et. al. 1991.
- 82.** E.g. DeVos - Romanucci-Ross 1975. J. Tomlinson 1991.
- 83.** E.g. Castells 1997.
- 84.** Robertson 1992.
- 85.** Much has been written in sociology about postmodern future, when Western progressive time would kind of stop and the lifestyle and everyday culture of local people would again be valued (e.g. Lyotard 1986. Rosenau 1987. Featherstone 1991; 1995. Bertens 1995)
- 86.** Burawoy et al. 1991.
- 87.** Social capital (Coleman 1988, Putnam 1993, 2000) is a common concept today (cf. Thailand: Ungern 1998), similarly emotional intelligence (Goleman 1995). In Finland, Markku Hyypiä has studied the interdependency of communality and health. Disappearance of communities is the greatest problem of postlocal culture.



# Appendix

Matti Sarmela

## STRUCTURAL CHANGE IN LOCAL CULTURE

Shortened English summary of ***Paikalliskulttuurin rakennemuutos. Raportti Pohjois-Thaimaan riisikylistä.***

Transactions of the Finnish Anthropological Society No 6. Helsinki 1979 (1985). The original book (summary) includes 11 tables and 4 statistical figures.

### Content of the summary

#### *Research theory*

1. Purpose of the research. 2. Basic terms. 3. Cultural-ecological division into niches. 4. The fragmentation of cultural identity. 5. Research material.

#### *Local and centralized technology*

1. Local and global technology. 2. Knowledge and ideology. 3. Structural change in ecosystems.

#### *The family in crisis*

1. The institution of the family and structural change. 2. Disintegration of kinship.

#### *The imperialism of mass culture*

1. The center of environment. 2. The mass media. 3. Mass entertainment. 4. Town and country folk. 5. Social groups and superculture.

#### *Local culture and superculture*

1. Opposing trends. 2. Ecological independence and ecological dependence. 3. Local and centralized society. 4. Local and centralized man. 5. The law of change and unification

List of tables and figures

## RESEARCH THEORY

### 1. Purpose of the research

This report strives to outline the changes taking place in the province of Lampang in North Thailand as the country finally becomes absorbed into the international industrial trend. For centuries the rice village has been life's focal point for the ordinary Thai. Centralized economic, political and military systems are revealing to the rice villager a new future, new goals and new cultural media. We can no longer speak of an individual innovation, of the slow diffusion of novelties. The people of Thailand, too, are subject to an incessant flood of commercial advertising, the opinion industry and mass entertainment. The world of the rice villager is being split further and further in two: his own community and the town. His own village culture is represented by internal village organizations, relations and neighbours; work in accordance with the seasons and religious life crystallized around the village temple. Urban culture means consumer commodities: radios, televisions, mopeds, and also urban entertainment: cinemas, pop music, display windows on the world of goods. One of the aims of this research is to describe how a country's village culture is gradually being replaced by urban culture.

The change in village culture does not merely concern individual choices of goods and commodities but also the transformation of the local cultural-ecological system of the entire community, the adaptation to an economic and social system centering round the metropolis and controlled from outside. It is impossible to follow all the stages in the process of change in one study. In this report change is anchored on certain empirical points reflecting (1) how technology changes, (2) how the inner village entity held together by the family, relations and neighbors disintegrates or continues to exist, and (3) how the villagers begin to use urban culture. The outlines of the change in system are already visible. Thus this report also tries to look further a field and to create an image of what happens when the structure of a local village culture changes - as has been the case in all the industrialized countries - and how the village becomes a new periphery of global metropolis culture.

### 2. Basic terms

The fundamental concepts are defined in this research as follows:

*The local ecosystem* is the overall economic, social and cultural system adapted to its regional and historical environment that draws on local resources, applies local technology (soft technology, village technology) controls resources and divides up production within the local community.

*The global ecosystem* is the centralized, metropolis-oriented production and social system operating within the confines of world trade and dictated by the mass production of the world economy. The global ecosystem totally exploits the world's natural resources, creates hierarchical supranational structures and applies uniform scientific-technical production and cultural solutions.

*Local culture* means the community cultural system regulating and controlling the local ecosystem, its structures arising in the application of local technology, knowledge, skills and community solutions.

*Superculture* is mass industry, technology, social and political ideologies and religions, knowledge, skills and art produced for non-local markets, global consumption and supranational applications. As a system superculture is an organizational, professional culture, technocracy and meritocracy relying on international developments in structure and ideology.

*Cultural imperialism* is the economic, technological and intellectual supremacy of superculture. Superculture is at the moment controlled by the major industrialized western powers, the west-oriented science and technology institutions dictating the economic and societal development of the world.

*Change in local culture* is the structural adaptation of the local ecosystem and the local cultural system to an environment dominated by the global superculture. In this study the change is not regarded as a slow acculturation process or the spreading of innovations, but referring to the theory of Niklas Luhmann, as a structural change. The changing of the environment (Umwelt) is a new function, in solving which the local ecosystem (production system and thereafter also the other cultural systems) changes the structure of all its components. In the component theory a new integrated nutritional chain emerges from equivalent alternatives. The change in local culture, the reply of the local ecosystem, is a new overall structure. The change effects all fields of culture, production ideology, cultural values, man's outlook on the world and his identity, i.e. his reasons for existence.

### 3, Cultural-ecological division into niches



The change in the ecosystem creates a new control system, ecological winners and losers. (1) The ecological winners are a completely new, ecologically better adapted group or ecological class (e.g. a professional group that has received an international training) that in the course of structural change raises its status or position; in the new ecosystem the group whose material and social resources either come into being or increase following the structural change. (2) The ecological transfers are the group or class that transfers to roughly the same level or position in the structural change. (3) The ecological losers are the group or class whose social and material resources diminish following the change. The group falls or disappears completely in the new resource network or production process (e.g. community rice-growers).

#### 4. The fragmentation of cultural identity

Cultural identity is the term commonly employed to describe internalized cultural consciousness, identification with one's own culture. In this study cultural identity is generally understood to mean the concept of reality held by a member of a particular culture, the way in which he comprehends and motivates his own socio-cultural existence.

Changes of identity and the essential content of different identities could perhaps be tabulated as follows:

##### *Regional (spatial) identity*

- recognition of environment
- experience of continuity
- communal spirit

##### *Group identity*

- delimitation of group of members
- experience of membership
- group-centricity

##### *Goal identity*

- definition of goal as an entity
- experience of motivation
- emphasis on achievement

##### *Mass identity*

- recognition of opportunities for consumption and stimulus
- experience of novelty
- existentialism

*Regional identity* (spatial/ethnic identity) includes the individual's personally lived-out experience of culture in the environment in which he lives: the social intercourse that links an individual to his community, his capacity as a member

of society. Regional identity also includes a fundamental sense of continuity and permanence, social awareness and the idea of the community as the most important framework of existence.

*Group identity* means identification with groups (or meta-groups) whose members are united by common professional, political or ideological interests, the struggle between interest groups or the fear of losing rights in differentiated society. On the other hand social alienation and compartment-mentalisation have led to a search for a real feeling of belonging through religious group fervor or other monolith movements, which often represent a counter-culture in the centralized society.

*Coal identity* is identification with a material or ideological goal, a career, which seems sufficiently worthwhile in the long-term. It is the identity of creative, development-minded and forward-looking organizers, for whom work and achievement are the purpose of life.

*Mass identity* is identification with the industrial mass production society as a consumer of the technological products of a specialized metropolitan culture. The meaning of life is to be found in egocentric, new experiences, in taking advantage of all the technically maximal entertainments and stimuli offered by the professionals: restaurants, sport, television, or so-called creative hobbies and art-forms, or the new technological challenges - parachuting, slalom and motor racing. Existential experiences provided by specialized departments of the welfare state are the be-all and end-all of human existence.

## 5. Research material

The primary material was collected in the province of Lampang in North Thailand in 1972-73 by interviewing 200 people, who were presented with a pre-formulated list of questions. A comparison was made of the town of Lampang and three different types of village, in each of which 50 people were interviewed. The villages were Ban Sree Muod Klao, 5 km from Lampang, Ban Mae Kong Nya, 15 km away along a sideroad, and Ban Dong, a village in the hills 35 km away, in this village burning swiddens is the most common form of cultivation. Statistical data on the villages are given in Table 1.

Apart from villages and towns the study also compares sex, age and professional groups. The age grouping makes allowance for primary schooling; people under 35 in the Lampang region have had schooling opportunities and thus a chance to integrate with the training society. The dimensions in the professional grouping were the rurality or

traditionality of a profession (rice growers), urbanity or industriality (e.g. electric fitters, drivers) and degree of education (educated officials and businessmen).

There were a total of about 80 questions. Manas Indraban, a former civil servant from Lampang of over 60, whose age and character gave him the authority that made collecting material in the villages possible, did the interviewing. Mr. Manas lived with us and acted as our interpreter and key informant all the time we were collecting material. The observation material includes c. 2,000 photographs, newspaper cuttings collected daily, and statistics provided by the Lampang governor's office. The primary material does not constitute a random sample, nor should the statistical distributions be interpreted as parameter estimations. The purpose of the statistical analyses is to illustrate differences between the villages and comparison groups within the primary material (nonparametric tests).

## **LOCAL AND CENTRALIZED TECHNOLOGY**

### **1. Local and global technology**

Traditional and technological rice growing are structurally opposed forms of production: Traditional, soft rice-growing uses almost exclusively local energy; the water buffalo and the zebu are the major sources of living energy. The paddy irrigation system function according to the laws of nature and as dictated by natural conditions. Outside energy is limited to artificial fertilizers, though these too can be reduced to a minimum through planting technique. Technologically the system relies on local resources. One problem of village cultivation is perhaps the slow impoverishment of the soil, though this too could be corrected without supertechnology by increasing the production of compost soil.

The hard new technology observes the rationalization and mechanization principles of productive agriculture that have been applied in the agriculture of the industrialized countries. The technological production calls for larger fields, not only for productivity reasons but also because it is difficult to manoeuvre machines on small fields tended by hand. A typical innovation of western technology was miracle rice, which should have initiated a green revolution. This hybrid, which required the whole apparatus of supertechnology (tractors, fertilizers, insecticides), would have yoked the world's largest traditional cultural area, the rice-growing area, to western technology. The western path of development is not a patent solution when development is unable to exploit the raw materials of the globe as in the decades of development.



Technological cultivation demands technological seed grain, artificial fertilizers, control substances and machines for every stage of the work: tractors, industrial ploughs and harrows, sprayers and manure spreaders. The irrigation system no longer operates naturally. Even the water regulation has to be handled by machines, and to be profitable mechanical farming must be continued all year round by means of artificial irrigation. The rhythm of farming changes and is no longer dependent on nature: it may even be opposed to the conditions of nature. The ecosystem is maximal, but it relies on outside energy and techniques.

Soft technology observes the natural rhythm of work according to the seasons of the year, the ecological round in complete harmony with that of nature and the physical environment. The working year is natural, and by using species of rice ripening at different times the peak working times can be levelled off. Work is done at an unhurried pace and it can be made easier through cooperation between families, neighbours and friends. Work is a social function upholding the community.

## **Local and centralized rice growing**

### **Traditional farming**

Local species

#### *1. Soft technology*

- water buffalo or zebu
- flood or rain fields
- not necessarily any control substances
- slight use of energy

#### *2. Soft working rhythm*

- working year according to nature
- dovetailing of work
- cooperation; "social" work stages

### **Technological farming**

Miracle rice

#### *1. Hard technology*

- cultivating machines
- water pumps
- chemical control
- need for energy

#### *2. Hard working rhythm*

- precision of work, bookkeeping
- increase in work
- accumulation of work at critical points (sowing, planting, harvesting)

### *3. Community independence*

- traditional, self-acquired knowledge
- community, independent organization
- economic self-sufficiency

### *4. Self-sufficiency ideology*

- community input-output thinking
- family/community-centered enterprise
- competition upholding the community

### *3. Dependence on outsiders*

- outside knowledge
- organizational dependence
- economic dependence

### *4. Consumer ideology*

- market economy input-output thinking
- egocentric enterprise
- competition destroying the community

New-technological production farming carefully adheres to a scientific-technical production programme in which choices are primarily determined by market economy profitability and input-output calculations. Farming observes the idea of the industrial production chain and each farm constitutes a production unit that should in theory operate without any outside labour. Production must be standardized to conform to the demands of the rice industry and the chief property in selecting species is their yield and marketability. Production farming of rice is technically more complicated than traditional rice growing and also comprises more work stages.

Potential for eliminating ecological crisis: weather conditions and work peaks in various forms of cultivation Standardized, carefully timed farming cannot rely on cooperation within the village, and peaks in labour must be eliminated by mechanizing at least all the most rushed work stages. Production rice does not succeed without artificial fertilizers and control substances, the use of which again calls for carefully timed operations. The working rhythm of production farming is similar to the strict rhythm of industrial production. As a way of life production farming is no longer suited to natural, community farming (figure).

## 2. Knowledge and ideology

As a cultural-ecological system traditional rice growing is independent, only minimally dependent on outside knowledge, skills and production organizations. Traditional farming relies on traditional know-how based on experience handed down

within the community from one generation to the next. Productively village farming constitutes an independent organization that is economically almost independent of outside capital and outside marketing organizations. Production farming is based on standardized, outside scientific and technical know-how. The farmer is already intellectually dependent on the organizations producing the instruments of farming: grain grades, fertilizers, machines and the applied techniques. For his knowledge and skills the farmer is increasingly dependent on other professions and above all the international organizations of driving supertechnology.

Throughout the world farmers are finding themselves becoming parts of the superculture organizations, world trade, the centralized production, marketing and consumer industry, the functioning of which can no longer be observed or governed at village level. The farmer becomes a specialized professional in a professional network made up of the agricultural industry, trainers, advisors, salesmen and technocrats and completely dependent on organizations regulating village, but by the trade union, the instrument of power of their own professional class being concentrated in the division of resources.

In the society favouring production farming and hard technology the individual wins recognition only by raising his own standard of living, not by distributing his production collectively. Community ceremonies, village weddings and big funerals bringing the villagers together and other festive occasions are foreign to the production community. The consumer being invests nothing outwards for his community, scarcely for his neighbours even, only for the consumer unit made up of his own nucleus family, for his own consumption. Egocentric consumer competition is scarcely able to create any community culture, only to consume whatever is produced outside the community.

### 3. Structural change in ecosystems

The structural changes of agrarian production systems can be illustrated as follows:

#### **Production systems**

<b>Swidden cultivation</b>	<b>Field cultivation</b>	<b>Irrigation cultivation</b>	<b>Technological cultivation</b>
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<b>Land requirement</b>	very great	small	very small	great
<b>Investment</b>	very small	small	great	very great
<b>Labour requirement</b>	small	great	very great	very small
<b>Productivity</b>	great	small	great	very great

(Cf. Hanks, L. 1972)

The change from clearing cultivation via field cultivation to irrigation cultivation meant a development which (1) increased natural, not artificial, productivity but above all ensured that the harvest would be more and more the same year after year; (2) increased the need for labour and tied labour to one place; (3) created a village culture and its numerous communal forms of intercourse and cooperation; (4) led to a division of production within the community, to religious and other ceremonies by whose aid production is divided: the village in the end consumes everything collectively.

A community-centered production method means (1) the emergence of farm owners who consume everything themselves; (2) the need for more and more capital to be spent on farming; (3) the need for more and more land in order to ensure return from investment. In practice this means that (1) the bulk of production goes to the industrial countries that have supplied the technology. What remains is not enough, so (2) an ever-greater proportion of the population must move to urban slums and (3) the distribution of production within the village dies along with the whole communal culture. Perhaps even the village disintegrates and the typical western structure of house surrounded by fields takes over, the technological rural environment, which is, in human terms, dead.

A change in the structure of production leads to a new global cultural-ecological system dominated by a centralized metropolis-oriented organization. Production farming and hard technology often lead to neofeodalism. Winners and losers emerge as the system changes. In the global ecosystem the winners are those who operate on global technology's terms, who transfer to a monetary economy, production farming, acquire more and more land and more and more technology. As land becomes concentrated in bigger and bigger production units there emerges an ever-growing class of landless workers, agriculture "frees" labour, as the manipulation language of national economics expresses it.

## Social structures

	<i>Settlement</i>	<i>Main social structure</i>	<i>Main social property</i>	<i>Distribution of production</i>	<i>Production ideology</i>
<b>Swidden cultivation</b>	impermanent	extended family	labour group	within the household	independence self-sufficiency
<b>Field cultivation</b>	village	farmhouse neighbour	tools of production	within village	social value within village
<b>Irrigation cultivation</b>	village aggregate	farmhouse village	resources of cultivation	within community	social value within community
<b>Production cultivation</b>	isolated houses	nuclear family	machines technology	own consumption	commercial maximization

The majority of the villagers become labour force which centralizing industry transfers in accordance with the iron laws of centralizing production. As a national region and ecosystem Thailand, too, is becoming increasingly tied to the global system and in its production is having to adapt to its environment on the terms dictated by international production, consumption and demand. In the consumer society competition is materialistic and it is possible to succeed only by increasing the instruments of production, land cultivated, output, work efficiency. The competition between production units for land, ownership of the means of production, land around houses, grows keener and keener.

The new agricultural development feudalism can be checked by land reforms, revolutions and civil wars, but nothing can achieve the continuity of the community. The village community is condemned as a culture-producing unit to be merged with the global, uniform culture.

## THE FAMILY IN CRISIS

## 1. The institution of the family and structural change

In Lampang the large (extended) family is still the chief group surrounding the individual and it has retained its significance in the urban environment too. The average size of families was still 6-7 persons (Table 2). There are few really large families (4.5 % in this material), but old people still usually live with their children (35 %) and many families also have distant relatives living with them (16 %). The extended families have vanished from the village communities of North Thailand, as is generally the case as private ownership of fields and an agrarian culture become established, but the institution has won a new footing in the towns. The larger families are among the wealthiest sector the Lampang population, and the families of certain successful (Chinese) businessmen may number as many as 20 members. The reason for this is that it is still common to help relatives and the move from village to town is made via family relations. In the course of structural change the townspeople have come off best and can maintain family traditions or are forced to help their relations most.

Table 10 and Table 2 show that some of the largest families are in the comparison village with a hill-farming economy and in the town of Lampang. In the mountains the large family institution is no doubt tied to the swidden culture, a natural multifarious economy and also economic scarcity, whereas in the town the large family displays wealth. In the early stages of an exchange economy the richest traders and officials are the class of society best able to help or benefit their relatives. The hill village and the town or Lampang differ clearly from the agrarian comparison villages. House centered thinking, private ownership of fields and inheritance has probably helped to eliminate the large family as an institution in the villages engaging in intensive farming.

The position of parents and grandparents in the family is still respected and young people in neither town nor country wish to marry without their mission (Table 2). The sexual revolution has not yet reached Lampang, and almost all of those who replied - both young and old - expected girls to refrain from premarital sexual experiences. Among the boys the pressure towards sexual experience has increased, along with the spreading of films and other international sex culture, as is reflected in e.g. the increase in sexual violence. Absolute sexual morality has become a dual morality for men. New western forms of courting (dances, etc.) have not yet reached the villages, but boys may visit girls at their homes in the evenings, a custom reminiscent of boys' night visits in European village communities.



Clear structural changes have already taken place in wedding customs in the town. Wedding rituals between families are giving way to restaurant or consumer weddings, bought services. In the villages too the wedding feasts are losing their collective, community feast nature.

All in all the family and marriage are still important institutions to the Thai, and their values, such as respect for one's elders and high sexual morality, have remained. The family is one of the basic structures that are slowly influenced by societal change or secularisation. The town can even be considered more large family dominated than the agrarian comparison villages, but large urban families are perhaps only early stage industrialization.

## 2. The disintegration of kinship

An attempt was made to analyse the position of the family by means of questions concerning acquaintance with the family and visits by relatives. The results are difficult to compare with other studies and they cannot be generalized. According to the results (Table 3) c. 60 % of those who replied know their older relations, 40 % all the relations of their own generation (cousins). There are differences between villages and age and professional groups, but they do not indicate that family acquaintance is on the decrease in urban conditions (Lampang) or among highly-educated professional groups. As the questions were highly abstract the differences were not tested.

Subjects assessed their family contacts as slight. More than half stated that relatives visited them only seldom and close on half thought they themselves visited relatives only seldom or not at all. In the village community, neighbourhood has become more important than kinship - this is probably common in agrarian villages and communities in which lineage and inheritance are bilateral. 75 % of the educated townspeople regarded their family contacts as slight; this would seem to be a clear indication of the decrease in the importance of kinship with the advance of structural changes in society.

Neighbourly aid is still common in the comparison villages if measured according to the forms of cooperation or other aid stated (Table 4). In the town, family or neighbourly aid decreases or is restricted to funerals and the like, and in the educated professional class reciprocal aid no longer appears to any extent worth mentioning. There is no great difference between helping family and non-family (neighbours), in the agrarian villages assistance was part of community farming, soft technology. The change occurs with the transfer to a monetary economy and production farming. The reduction in co-operation and neighbourly aid is a common consequence of structural change, though in the densely-populated rice

villages occasional assistance, e.g. on buildings, preparing funerals and other family festivals, will probably remain. Cooperation is, however, no longer for gain, instead it is a form of social intercourse between neighbours.

The North Thai family is still responsible for its members and is the individual's only real form of social security: 92 % of those who replied stated that in the case of some misfortune, such as illness, they could seek help from their relations alone (Tables 5 and 6); they would preferably turn to relatives for temporary aid, such as a small loan of money (70 %), though many of them thought they could borrow from the savings funds operating in the villages. In the villages work is chiefly obtained from relatives or friends (Table 5) and even in the business world of the city, jobs are most often obtained through some influential representative of the family. The replies given by the young educated people already reflect a new situation: in the training society the individual may get a job only by the official route (newspaper advertisements) and the family living in the village can no longer help or support members seeking jobs in the urban meritocratic organizations (Table 6). The professional group replaces the kin and village.

Relatives are still indispensable in a society where there is no other system maintaining basic security. About 40 % of those who replied had at some stage in their lives resorted to relatives for financial aid, a dwelling, education or to get a job. In the Lampang region society does not yet function purely on money and bought services. For the individual the family, relatives and friends (most of whom are also relatives, Table 5) still signify a safe circle and only a total structural change, the changing of society into a training and trade union and organization society - can oust the family and the village community.

Table 10 already shows that family aid as a whole (combination variable 10:50) decreases with the transfer from the clearing economy village to the town or from rural professions to urban ones. The curve drops consistently, though the differences are not statistically great. As a whole the combination variable (10:51) depicting family-centricity: family acquaintance, family visits, family assistance and family friendship shows the same: that kinship loses its significance in the towns and among industrial professions. The results forecast structural change. Official establishments and organizations are gradually replacing the family institutions. Even in this material the townspeople already have a more society-centred attitude than the villagers. The variable describing society orientation (10:58), which measures the desire and potential for turning to people other than relatives (labour exchange, bank or even social welfare) indicates the opposite trend to the combination variables concerning kinship. Townspeople and trained professionals must consciously adapt to a situation in which the family can no longer support them professionally in a differentiated and formally organizing society.

The results would appear to show generally that in changing conditions family ties are weakening, though the breakdown of the family institution is still latent. In a real crisis, relatives represent existing security for the individual, but in everyday life family contacts are on the decrease. North Thailand is not yet a training and mass migration society in which the individual can completely break off his family ties and his roots in his own local community.

## **THE IMPERIALISM OF MASS CULTURE**

### **1. The centre of environment**

For the rice villager too, the town has become the centre of a new technological way of life and mass culture. More and more of the villagers - especially the young ones - spend their free time in the town. Depending on the distance of the village from the town 10-20 % of those interviewed visited Lampang almost every day, and c. 40 % of the young people (Table 7). The increase in social mobility is also evident in visits to the metropolis. C. 70 % of the Lampang representatives of the trained professions had visited Bangkok and almost all of them Chiang Mai. Travelling within Thailand has become more common and people's chances of seeing a real metropolis have grown. The young people are no longer content to stay in their villages as they were earlier, and as training increases Thailand too may witness a real mass movement into the towns.

The town has begun to influence the life of the villagers in many ways. Of the mass culture media, radio has spread almost everywhere; cinemas take second place in the new international popular culture, followed by television. Newspapers and other literature are still not read much, but newspapers, like the other mass media, are helping to divert people's interest away from local culture to general culture and from the village to the metropolis.

### **2. The mass media**

80-90 % of all the families in the villages owned a radio, and almost all of the townspeople. The radio has brought international pop music to every village. Since there was no electricity the villages had no television either, but of those



interviewed in the towns, more than half (50 % of workers and 63 % of the trained professional class) already owned a television, Alongside the cinema television is becoming a mass medium for the now entertainment culture. More than half the townspeople (c. 60 %) watch television almost daily. In the country watching television, like going to the cinema, depends on the distance of the village from a town. People from the comparison villages near Lampang had the best opportunities for going into town in the evenings too, and watching television either in a café or at friends or relatives' (Table 8).

The village school system was set up in the 1950's and 1960s, and by the beginning of the '70s almost all people under the age of 35 could read and write. Reading cannot compete with the cinema, and in general only the trained, well-to-do section of the population in the towns reads newspapers daily (65-70 %). In the most remote comparison villages about half those interviewed never read a newspaper, other literature even less (Table 8).

### 3. Mass entertainment

In Thailand, as in all the commercial countries of Asia, the cinema has become the most popular national pastime and form of metropolis-oriented entertainment. Asia even produces more films than its western models. Close on 60 % of the people of Lampang and c. 35 % of those interviewed in the most remote comparison village went to the cinema at least once a fortnight, and 10% of the young people did so every week. In the past week 90 % of the townspeople and 50 % of those interviewed in the nearest comparison village had watched a TV film. The city television owners spend their evenings in front of western serials and international TV advertisements, as does urban man throughout the mass culture world (Table 7).

The people of Thailand are undergoing an era of passionate devotion to cinema culture, film stars and pop singers. The new film heroes and heroines are urban, cosmopolitan types and sex, fashion and beauty idols representing superculture in their appearance, dress and whole being. The content of the cinema and TV films is either international or an Asian flight into illusion: fantasy and adventure that has nothing at all to do with social reality. Thailand is moving towards the imperialism of supranational advertisement, entertainment, tourist and mass culture.

### 4. Town and country folk

All in all 50-60 % of the townspeople interviewed had already assimilated the values of superculture and laid most store on western pop and films. They had also learnt western dances (30:59), the boys in the towns grow their hair long and the girls wear mini skirts or follow other trends in international commercial fashion. In the case of the questions concerning values (Table 9) there was an extremely clear statistical difference between the answers given by the town and the country people. Superculture is everywhere the mass culture of the townspeople. The villagers have fewer opportunities to buy and consume the new culture. Their opinions and values are also more ethnical, and c. 80 % of the villagers liked Thai pop music, Thai films and traditional folk clothes most of all.

There is a cultural gulf growing up between the people of the towns and the villages, and among the young and the old people in the villages there is likewise a wider and wider generation gap. The position of the young villagers is contradictory: on moving into Lampang the young country people did not wish to differ from the townspeople and dressed in urban style, the girls preferably in trousers, far example, and even in mini skirts. On visiting town (the cinema) the young country people wished to identify with the townsfolk and assimilate urban behaviour. In time the young people wish to be townspeople in their own villages too. The old people are no longer impressed by mass culture and they are perhaps most affected by changes in traditional values and the old culture, e.g. old music. The middle-aged villagers have to make a choice between technological and traditional rice growing, but westernness as such and mass culture have not greatly influenced their dress and their opinions.

The direction in mass culture is illustrated in combination Table 11. The differences between town and country are consistent (statistically usually extremely significant) and the directions of the curves the opposite of combination Table 10 presenting local or family centricity. There are also differences of degree between villages. As recipients of metropolitan communications the villages near the towns are more urban than the more remote ones (variable 11:24, newspapers, radio, TV and films), likewise in metropolitan mobility (11:25), but not yet in their attitudes, their attitude to westernness (11:70 taste in music and films, attitudes to dance, fashion and moral opinions). In their attitudes and outlook on the world the rice villagers are local and have not assimilated all the mass fashion and mass opinions of the townsfolk. On the other hand the townspeople have already clearly identified with the world of the superculture and have increasingly international expectations of their entertainment and film experiences.

## 5. Social groups and superculture

There is a difference in city orientation between men and women: in Table 11 the men are more urban in their total number of points, the women more ethnic or, according to the eurocentric definition, more conservative than the men, but the questions possibly emphasized masculine cultural features. The oldest age groups turn more to their micro-community and family rather than to the town, and it is the young people who are more urban - after all, films and entertainment are the culture of the young the world over (Table 11).

Most westernised are the townspeople, the professional or otherwise educated young people. The representatives of this group - in somewhat lofty terms - most often accepted the western mini skirts, even hippie hairstyles, liked western pop music and western films, and thought western women's clothes most beautiful, rather than the traditional sarong (Table 9). Also people belonging to the worker and professional classes have assimilated international superculture, but more superficially. The representatives of the new technological trades often dress in a way that is strikingly western, the young men even wear their hair long, which schoolchildren and students are forbidden to do. The urban professionals wish to be distinguished from the country people and in their appearance and opinions demonstrate that they differ from the rice villagers. Western fashion was one means of emphasizing the new professional identity, the desire to identify with the modern world and to imitate the western level of consumption.

In some of their opinions the trained civil servants and wealthy businessmen were more ethnic than the other townspeople but economically exploited the potential of an industrializing and commercialising society. The wealthy civil servant and businessmen circles lay store by new economic openings and training; they also educate their children according to international requirements for the managerial levels of the new society. The businessman - civil servant group is capable of purchasing most western consumer goods and status symbols (cars, mopeds, televisions), regularly reads newspapers and is westernised in knowledge and education. The ethnicity of opinions on certain questions of taste was more of a conservative patriotism, the desire to retain one's own position in society, rather than real identification with the local culture. It is of note that the most metropolis-centred group in attitudes and probably also way of thinking are the representatives of the trained professions, the ecological winners who will no doubt be determining the basic values of culture, what is culture, civilization and 'development' in developed Thailand.

Delocalisation and cultural imperialism begin with the young. Village-centred existence inevitably becomes town-centred. Community events or the village's own annual festivals are replaced by town festivals and entertainments controlled from outside in which the performers are pop groups, pop singers and professional entertainers imitating international examples. Small-scale local village culture gets trodden underfoot by organized mass culture, and in North Thailand too becomes part of a common marketing area for international superculture. The changing of the local cultural system does



not mean the spreading of individual fashions or innovations but an overall structural change affecting all classes of society and phenomena in the life of the community.

## LOCAL CULTURE AND SUPERCULTURE

### 1. Opposing trends

**Local cultural development.** The stages in rice growing contain a series of structural changes concerning production technology, the basic units of production (the family), production ideology and man's attitude to his environment as a whole. In the days of pre-industrial cultures the trend was in the direction of stable, spontaneous local cultures and cultural-ecological systems in balance with their own environment. Communities relying on local technology have created ethnic folk cultures: local standards of living, local social institutions, their own tradition, even special linguistic features (dialects). In a natural culture man identified with his environment, compared himself to members of his own community and tried to create his own way of life in accordance with local demands. In the era of agrarian culture, which still embraces the Thai rice villages, the individual's frame of reference is his own community, relatives and neighbours. The community is a self-supporting production unit that exchanges very little with outsiders and which has command of its own village technology and its own resources.

In the development of local means of subsistence the shift from clearing cultivation via field cultivation to irrigation (planting) cultivation has meant (1) an increase in natural productivity, especially an increase in crop certainty. Increasingly intensive irrigation farming has also (2) increased work and tied the labour force to one place, (3) given rise to village communities and (4) permitted an increasingly intensive local form of production and local culture. The village technology and inherent cooperation, social institutions within the village, even village religion make up an entity, a local cultural-ecological system.

**Centralizing cultural development.** During global, western development the trend in culture is the reverse: from the local to metropolis-centred, non-local systems. In a centralized agricultural production system the basic unit is the farm. Each rice-grower is a private producer and consumer and identifies egocentrically with his own centrally directed interest group,

no longer the local community. The concept of environment is completely different. In technological production farming and an exchange economy international superculture is the environment. In order to succeed the farmer must above all adapt to the superculture and its organizations.

In a centralized supertechnology society the best adapted ecologically is the farmer who (1) accepts western egocentric producer-consumer thinking, (2) a monetary economy and (3) invests increasing amounts of capital in raising technological productivity. The investor (producer) farmer is backed by agricultural-technocratic organizations, banks and the entire centralized machinery of society. The producer farmer is the opposite of the peasant and the ecological winner in structural change. Adaptation to superculture causes a comprehensive structural change as a consequence of which the local ecosystem disintegrates. Once the distribution of production within the village has broken down the community (village) culture also loses its significance. It is perhaps to be expected that in applying a policy of efficiency the village communities will disappear from the world and their place will be taken by a western house-and-surrounding-land production structure, scattered settlement and ethnically dead countryside.

## 2. Ecological independence and ecological dependence

**Ecological independence.** The farming technology in the rice villages is based on locally adjusted species developed in the course of hundreds of years, local sources of energy, techniques of which the villagers have a command and community forms of work - in brief, (1) local resources and (2) technological solutions adapted to the local environment. Soft technology communities have not striven towards maximal growth, efficiency or the subordination of Nature, but at ensuring a local livelihood and minimizing the risks and uncertainty using the resources available to the community in its own living environment.

Soft village technology tries to fit in with natural conditions, exceptional weather conditions and uncertainty - the possibility of ecological crises - is already allowed for in the technological choices. Much of the farming work is done jointly (maintenance of the irrigation system) or among relatives and neighbours (reciprocal aid). Cooperation is a fundamental factor in eliminating ecological crises, such as rushed, critical work stages. In the local form of production the new generation grows into the community, independent ecosystem and independent cultural system (Figure 8).

**Ecological dependence.** As farming undergoes structural change the rice growers and village communities become (1) technologically, (2) organizationally, (3) intellectually and (4) ideologically dependent on centralized organizations. Above

the village communities operating locally - above the entire local culture - an increasing number of differentiated, hierarchical systems begin to form. These are directed and manipulated by businessmen speculating with the potential of international trade or technocrats and meritocrats who have assimilated western learning and organization ideology - the new development leaders (the ecological winners), the groups wielding the power of institutionalized knowledge.

The most effective means towards technological revolution in the rice villages have been e.g. miracle rice, other high-yield standard species and industrial, milled and bleached rice, means to control production and consumption. The decision to begin growing these has meant being tied to the mill industry, mechanized and chemicals cultivation dominated by the marketing systems. The rice grower becomes the final link in the production chain and he becomes dependent on the world economy, commercial organizations and the numerous technosystems growing up around international techniques: operating, maintenance and service technology. In Thailand imperialism of the production system has so far been restricted to rice speculation on the part of the middle-men and the dependence of the villagers on outside tractor and machine contractors, in irrigation areas on centralized water and power economy technocracy.

Hard rice-growing production technology is part of the global, centralized superculture. Centralized production technology strives to maximize the yield but at the same time leads to increasingly vulnerable overall systems (maximal ecosystem). Technosystems attempt to solve ecological crises by boosting technology, not by adjusting to natural conditions. A hard production system no longer operates on Nature's conditions, nor does it take in collective cooperation; where possible machines take the place of neighbourly aid.

The consequences of technological change radiate over the whole of society. In countries with a predominance of small farms (like Thailand, the average size of farm is c. 2 ha, even less in the villages in this research) the transfer to technological farming must inevitably lead to a new land-distribution, technological feudalism. The formerly self sufficient, medium-sized farm cannot produce the capital necessary for machine technology, nor are the resources or the village culture sufficient to divide up among producer-farmers, the centralized organizations and technology salesmen, i.e. the industrial countries.

### 3. Local and centralized society

**Local power structures (niches).** The local ecosystem relies on local superstructures, institutions within the community. The village communities maintained their own economic, social and religious institutions, village organizations and village



temples. The forms of social intercourse and the institutions are communal, likewise the systems maintaining social security within families or a village. The self-sufficient rice village is also socially independent. Natural cultures are locally adjusted ecosystems in which the systems controlling production consumption and social activities are local and in which the social hierarchy, the status of individuals, is likewise restricted to the community only. In minimal ecosystems institutionalized or organizational inequality is still "undeveloped", and there are few status symbols or other modes of consumption expressing class differences; as a living environment the village community is outwardly highly egalitarian.

**Centralized power structures.** The trend in society such as it has been in centralized states has meant above all an increase in control systems and a change in the local power structures, which have become increasingly complicated production-distribution and power-wielding machinery directed from outside and above. In the new ecosystem the centralized systems monopolize the different sectors of society, including the system-centred knowledge, the entire organization and production of new culture. The village religion has become part of the political power machinery whose primary task is, in the manner of all centralized social and ideological organizations, to further its own organizational goals and to manifest its own power and doctrine structures (Figure 9).

The self-taught village monk is ousted by a trained representative of institutional knowledge and a supervisor of the interests of the organization named from above. The village's inner prestige built on religion loses its significance. Regional administration (officialdom) has become concentrated in the same way. The institutions of social intercourse in the village become entertainment, cinema and TV services representing professional, organizational, and centralized metropolitan culture.

**The new ecological pyramid.** Centralized culture gives rise to a new class division, a new ecological pyramid (Figure 10). In Thailand too westernism, the scientific-technical development ideal, specialism and exploitation of the full potential of a commercial society are the only path to social rise. In the global ecosystem the steps in societal power and hierarchy reach to infinity, to metropolises, international organizations and international super-levels. The global ecosystem begins to concentrate more and more on systems dominated by mass production, technocracy and supranational bureaucracy. Power is transferred to the elite groups with international knowledge, these being the machinery of the prevailing opinion industry with the power to appear, speak and act in centralized organizations and their hierarchical national or social ceremonies of power.

The economic elite of Bangkok, the state and private meritocracy, the army and the intelligentsia, behaves, speaks and thinks in the same way as its standard-of-living group in the international superculture. The urban elite is an ecological

winner group; it trains new leaders and the new meritocracy in Thailand just as in the other developing countries of international superculture. The new winner classes create a new superstructure, an international professional and consumer group culture and its centralized institutional power structures. The inhabitants of independent and egalitarian village communities become attached to a centralized, western-type class and hierarchy society operating on the conditions of the global ecosystem. The efficiency and power of the new cultural system is based on organization of the masses, subordination of the individual, worship of leaders, class solidarity, group-oriented behaviour and increasingly uniform non-local mass institutions and ideologies.

#### 4. Local man and centralized man

**Spontaneous and organizational man.** The small-community man has identified with his local environment, arranged his life and existence in his local culture, spoken the local language, been interested in local affairs and believed in local explanations. In the small community the individual has an overall position in production and the village organizations, the work and human contact group made up of his own family and neighbours. Centralized society needs a different sort of person, a personality type that can be compartmented into urban suburbs and programmed onto a conveyor belt to act in a production process, clocking in and out at exactly the right moment, trained to march the paths indicated by union, party and military leaders and to absorb mass ideologies as personal opinions - a person who believes in organizations and the culture of the leaders.

Individual adjustment to the centralized superculture - succeeding in the new ecosystem - calls for a new identity, the ability to explain one's existence in the 'modern' way. The centralized organizations demand that the individual assimilate the right organization behaviour, the right organization solidarity, that he dedicates himself, the goals of his own group, class and political organization. They require identification on with a group and its one-sided ideological goals, the creation of a group and goal identity.

The technological revolution proceeds along the same lines as other revolutions and the winners are the most cynical, unscrupulous party organizers who are willing to experiment with the fates of millions of people. The individual must be capable of identifying with an increasingly narrow and one-sided position in a society of institutionalized truths, an increasingly narrow position in the production process and a more and more restricted niche in the environment.

**From self-sufficient individual to consumer.** Adapting to the production society also means that the local standards and values of the community member, his entire self-sufficient way of life, must become the self-centred thinking of the interest group consumer or the so-called western individualism in which he expresses his personality by imitating the human type of mass fashion or the intelligent, artistic or scientific idols of western class culture.

In the centralized society popular culture is directed by the mass media, TV, radio and the press, an era Thailand, too, is embarking on. The western type furnishing, dress and thinking programmes of the TV advertisements and weekly magazines still belong to a different world from the rice village, but for people in the towns the consumer identity is already reality, both in Lampang and in larger or smaller metropolises. Having lost his community root- and local identity, man seeks new substance to his immediate environment in city life and industrial culture. The community member thinking and speaking locally becomes a consumer who follows world fashion, copies urban and TV language or uses the international phraseology of his own professional class and strives towards the international standards of his own consumer group. Objects, services and new technological experiences - maybe even cinema illusions - fill the individual's life. The individual identifies with his own existentialist and egocentric experiences as a consumer of the international superculture.

Figure 11

## Local and centralized culture

	Local culture	Centralized culture
	<i>1. Ecological independence</i>	<i>1. Ecological dependence</i>
<b>environment</b>	local environment	global environment
<b>resources</b>	local form of production local resources	industrial world economy global resources
<b>technology</b>	local energy local technology local knowledge	outside energy supranational technology international knowledge
<b>production mode</b>	total production total work	mass production serial or phase work
<b>distribution of</b>	within the local community	outside the local community



**production  
control**

community exchange  
local control  
local niches  
local adaptation  
local choices

organizational exchange  
outside centralized control  
organizational niches  
global adaptation  
non-local choices

**adaptation**

## *2. Local institutions*

**structure**

within community  
community field of activity

**participation**

local participation  
local cooperation

**hierarchy**

local hierarchy  
personal relations

**motivation**

community solidarity  
community integration

**goals**

local goals  
local standards

**activity**

local forms of activity  
local rites and ceremonies

## *2. Centralized organizations*

centralized, specialized  
organization-centered activity  
professional statuses and roles  
organizational cooperation  
centralized hierarchy  
formal subordination  
ideological solidarity  
egocentric integration  
organization-centered goals  
global standards  
organizational forms of activity  
centralized power and  
hierarchy rites

## *3. Local man*

**identity**

local identity  
community consciousness

**identification**

local idols  
local illusions

**experience**

spontaneous experiences  
local reality

**explanation of life**

local order of living  
local explanations, truths

**way of thinking**

local concepts  
local language

**values**

local values  
self-sufficiency ideology

## *3. Centralized man*

organizational identity  
egocentric consciousness  
global idols  
global illusions  
experienced guided from outside  
instrumental, technic reality  
organizational order of living  
institutional explanations, truths  
professional, class concepts  
metropolitan language  
values directed from outside  
mass ideologies

Without systematic western manipulation and training the community member of the rice village cannot be made to establish leaders' organizations, march and kill on behalf of their ideologies, create centralized party, military or civil service bodies and class culture. The mobilization culture needs a mass man who can be guided, mobilized and controlled to follow common ideals and uniform consumer habits.

## 5. The law of change and unification

**Local culture and superculture.** The internationalization of local (national) cultures has become an automatic process that proceeds unavoidably in an industrial world dominated by global systems. The superculture is upheld by (1.) the structures of international production and trade (production imperialism); (2.) the organizations for the direction of consumption and mass sales (consumer imperialism); (3.) uniform political development ideologies based on material growth (mass policy imperialism); (4.) international scientific and technical institutions with uniform epistemological traditions and goals concerning research and knowledge (western imperialism of knowledge); (5.) the international meritocracy turning out an increasing volume of international statistics on economics, sociology and education, uniform comparative figures for development and growth (imperialism of cultural measurement). Also connected with intellectual unification are (6.) uniform goals for scientific and technological civilization (educational imperialism). The trend towards a uniform world is propelled (7.) by the uniform know how, professional language and professional thinking of international professions (imperialism of professional classes) and the entire international professional cultural production.

Uniform westernism is also (8.) dominating the increasingly centralized exchange of news and information, the press, whose organized manipulation or indoctrination, workshop of leaders, concealed or open control of consumption and interests create the values of life, mass movements, and general opinion of today's information cultures (imperialism of mass media).

Global development or uniform cultural evolution is supported by an increasingly uniform technology and the entire system of cultural transmission.

**The law of unification.** Cultural change can also be defined - in terms of systems theory - as the law of unification:

1. As the structure of the cultural ecosystem changes all its economic, social and individual component structures change.
2. When a local ecosystem becomes delocal, the mechanism of optimal choices also changes: functions and adaptable solutions gradually become the same as in delocal systems.
3. The more uniform the new functions are, the fewer potential equivalent structural alternatives there are. The only possible structural solutions the local ecosystem can make are similar to those of the global superculture. Local cultures change their structure and become parts of a global uniform culture.

#### Tables

1. Statistical data on the comparison villages. 2. The family. 3. Contacts with relatives. 4. Mutual assistance. 5. View of social security. 6. Family, neighbourly and friendly aid. 7. Urban leisure spending. 8. Mass communications. 9. Mass culture. 10. Kinship-centeredness. 11. Metropolis orientation

#### Figures

1. Tools used by the rice grower. 2. Energy used by agriculture. 3. Annual village festivals. 4. Trips to town. 5. Movie-going. 6. Tastes in music. 7. Most popular films. 8. Technological structure alternatives. 9. Delocalization of village religion. 10. Thailand's new ecological pyramid. 11. Local and centralized culture. 12. The structural change in village culture.

(Translation *Susan Sinisalo* 1979)



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