KUANG PAU IN TRANSITION:

A STUDY OF A COMMUNITY AND ITS ENTERTAINMENT

by

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Abstract

Kuang Pau in transition: a study of a community and its entertainment

The fieldwork material for this thesis was carried out between November 1970 and May 1972 in Kuang Pau, a suburb of a small town in northern Thailand. The community was in transition between a settled pattern of agricultural self-sufficiency and a more progressive industrialising phase encouraged by government policy initiated in Bangkok.

Traditional forms of entertainment were also adjusting to the new pressures and to the challenge of radio, television, recording and mass literacy. The main traditional forms of entertainment were embedded in occasions such as times of festival when the community attended fairs and sermons, listened to stories and songs and watched performances of drama (like) and instruction songs (so).

The aim of the thesis is to describe the transformations that have taken place in forms of entertainment as a result of the different social milieu in which they are performed and to show that entertainments themselves can play a critical role in the process of adaptation to social change.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

The Kuang Pau community was in transition between a relatively stable structure of local self-sufficiency and a new structure with a national orientation. Parts of the community were making the transition more quickly than others. An indication of the different rates of adaptation was expressed in choices that were made from the wide range of entertainments available, but since there was a parallel process of transformation noticeable in even the most conservative entertainment forms, all parts of the community were being led towards the new orientation. The thesis advanced here is that the entertainments themselves can be shown to play a critical role in the process of adaptation to social change. Although entertainments manifestly exist for the amusement of a community, the system of entertainments in a group also fulfils interconnected latent functions which should be studied with as much seriousness as has been given to the study of kinship, political, economic and religious systems.

The statement that entertainments exist for amusement is made from the point of view of an observer. In Kuang Pau, entertainment was traditionally associated with the festival times that marked off points in the agricultural, seasonal, religious and personal life cycles, and there was an element of serious duty in the celebrations that marked these points. This ritual aspect of entertainment was important in that a proper structure was associated with the celebration of every occasion. Although part of the attraction of entertainment was in its promise of adventure into new pleasures,

entertainment was not, in Kuang Pau, treated as frivolous. There is a Thai word, mahorasop used in the literature to describe collectively the entertainment forms available for a particular range of fairs and ceremonies, but the less specific term 'entertainment' has been chosen partly because mahorasop was seldom used in Kuang Pau and partly so that those entertainment occasions with more ritual content, sermons, and those that seemed to have less such as pop concerts and paying films might all be included in the discussion.

The choice in this thesis of the word 'entertainment' needs some further explanation. 'Entertainment' is an ambiguous term: it can be used to refer to a specific performance or to a dimension of any performance. Recent connotations of the term are unfortunately trivial, prompted by those aspects of the 'entertainments industry' which would be more accurately labelled 'diversion' and 'propaganda', but an important property of entertainment is still to give pleasure. Both in common usage and in dictionary definitions entertainment is associated with giving hospitality which has always been a holy duty. In Biblical as well as Buddhist tradition, there was the possibility that the wayfarer could be an angel. He offered his hosts a gift of news, of a miracle, of a song or story in exchange for the food and lodging that had been given with an open heart. Vestiges of the relationship between wayfarer and host still remained between entertainers and audience in Kuang Pau, even to the extent of expecting the entertainers to have miraculous powers. Just as the modern holiday is celebrated in a way different from the old Holy Day but still retains similar functions, so entertainment, while some aspects are brash, frivolous, mechanised, commercialised and perverting, cannot be dismissed as trivial. It is not only an occasion when

representatives of different groups are brought together in support of common structure and values, it is also a symbolic assertion of a community's vision of itself.

The relation between a group and its festivities is shown here by presenting data collected in a northern Thai suburb, Kuang Pau on the outskirts of Chom Thong, over a research period of 18 months. During that time, both the way of life for people in Kuang Pau and the entertainments they chose were changing. A relatively isolated farming community, for whom time had been marked off by the succession of crops and the annual weather cycle, was opening to city influences from Bangkok and the urgings of a government whose policy was to promote feelings of Thai nationalism over local loyalties and to encourage the kind of 'progress' that would make Thailand competitive in world markets with 'modern' and 'industrial' neighbours.

Before the ambition for 'progress' began to applaud 'change', change in Kuang Pau seemed unlikely and therefore uninteresting. Instead, since each year brought the same round of crops and variations in weather, interest was concentrated on understanding and ornamenting that cycle. Traditional stories, songs and drama explored the place of types of people, of worlds of immortals, of animals and vegetables in relation to each other, and offered a careful appreciation of each thing in its appropriate place, each presentation like a perfect vase arrangement chosen from a garden full of flowers. Wisdom consisted in finding each his proper place among the intricacies of related universes, and complementing the whole pattern through a perfect observance of its details.

In a 'progressive' world, time flattened out. As younger people moved away from the farms to make money at the same job all the year round, they forfeited the sequence of events that had made the framework of their world. Their need was to know what could happen next. They hungered for blueprints of a new world where initiatives brought results unimagined in traditional songs, and where dangers were not from supernatural powers but from misjudgments by individuals. Films, songs and faster versions of traditional drama with bold story lines were favoured by those equipping themselves for 'progress'. (Although the preference for the new type of entertainment was clearly expressed by the support given to films and songs by younger people, the interpretations put on material from urban cultures were often startlingly other than those intended by Western influenced film-makers and broadcasters.[1])

Few people in Kuang Pau could remain totally unaffected by the changes around them and few adapted themselves entirely to the new national orientation being filtered through from the capital. There was a range of compromise both among age groups and economic groupings within the local community and in the locally available spectrum of entertainments. Specialists in traditional entertainments made some concessions to their younger and more urbanised audiences by simplifying language and introducing new subject matter, while broadcasters, some themselves country people, tried to tailor traditional entertainments into forms suitable for radio.

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1 See in Mass Media Policies in Changing Cultures, edited by George Gerbner 1977, John Wiley & Sons, my chapter 'The Price of Progress in Thailand', where I have described a film intended to promote hygiene and a balanced diet which was interpreted as an advertisement warning of Communist cunning.

Entertainment Forms

Entertainments in Kuang Pau were related to each other in a way that allowed intimate cross-referencing through images, language style, motifs and ornament, and appropriate entertainment forms also corresponded with specific social occasions. Neither the correspondencies nor the relationships were exclusive, but rather there was a range within which entertainment forms could borrow from each other and a range of suitability from which to choose entertainments for specific occasions.

It was convenient to picture the diverse forms of entertainment as related radially, like petals on a Daisy. There was no obvious starting point for analysis, but the three means of expression on which the forms had to rest, movement, music and words, suggested a possible basis for arrangement. Each 'petal' of entertainment fed back into the centre with its contribution to the more complicated structure of drama and film. (see diagram)

Festive Occasions

Intimately related to the traditional time structure of Kuang Pau were festival periods that marked off phases in cycles that were also arranged like overlapping circlets of petals on a flower head. These were arranged to coincide with the annual celebrations of religious and agricultural festivals, annual seasonal fairs for Winter and New Year, special events arranged at regular times through the year such as house building and ordinations, and they were all interspersed with domestic celebrations for marriages, funerals, exorcism of bad influences and commemorative and merit-making festivities.

DIAGRAM ILLUSTRATING OVERLAPPING

CYCLES OF FESTIVALS.

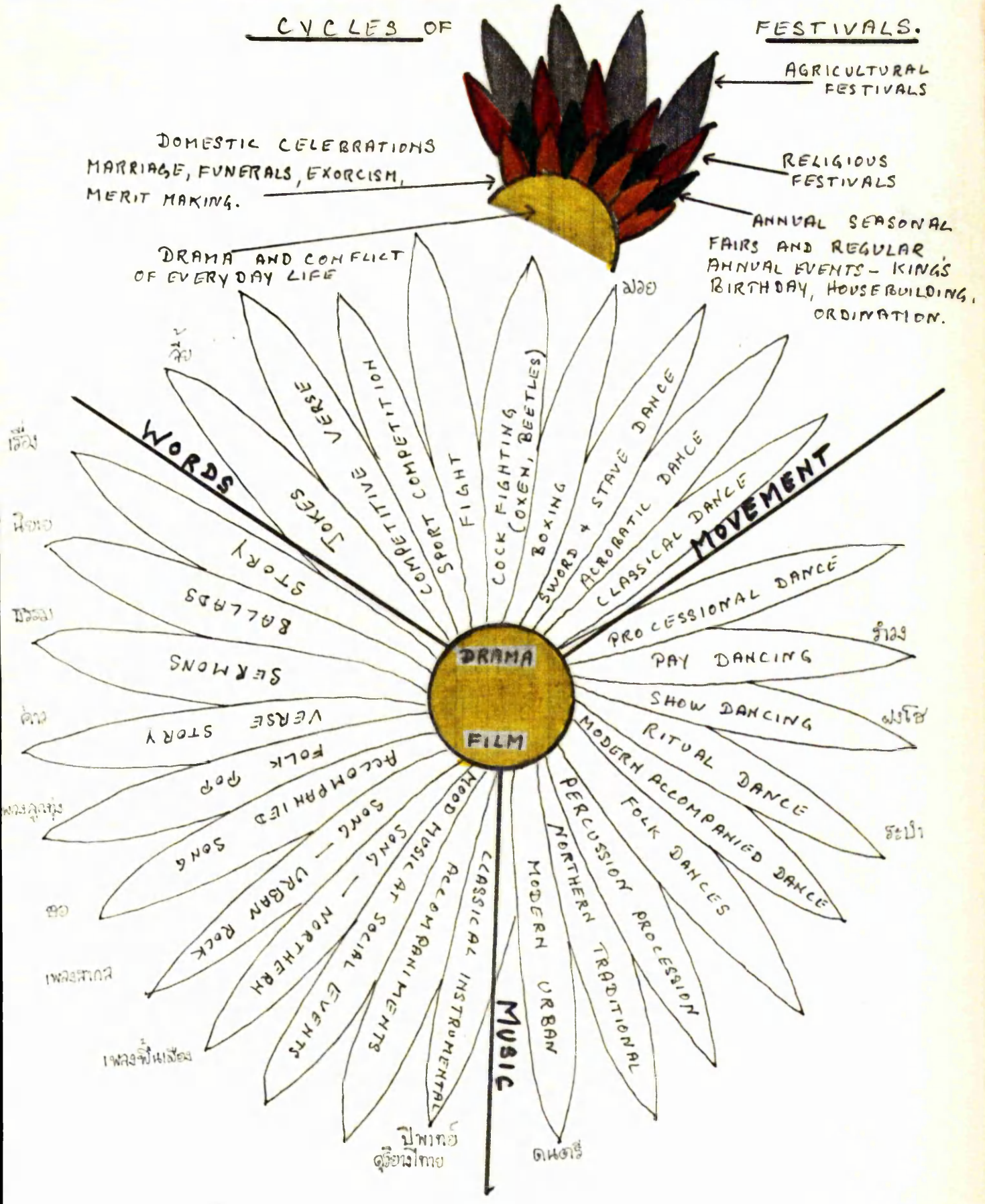

DIAGRAM SHOWING PETAL ARRANGEMENT OF ENTERTAINMENT FORMS.

At the centre of the flower head was represented the drama and conflict of everyday life from which the festivals radiated.

Correspondence between Entertainment Forms and Festive Occasions

Some petals from the entertainment system fitted exactly with some from the pattern of festivals but others could not be paired. Overlapping and 'special considerations' made it difficult to discover fast rules, but the following table gives examples of the way entertainment forms used as illustrations in this study corresponded with some festive occasions. (An example of a 'special consideration' was given in the case of a commemorative service for a monk. Normally, like would have been considered unsuitable for such an occasion, but since the monk had been a very important person, he had been dead a long time and the three day service would attract big numbers, objections were waived and the committee agreed on entertainment more expensive than the traditional sg.)

Although the following table concentrates on forms of entertainment that were suitable for particular occasions, the content of each form was also significant and had to be occasion specific. During a Housewarming celebrated by a sg for instance, the singers entered into the details of building houses in general and related each step to the wider context of religion and local popular beliefs, but they also asked for details about the name of the owner and builders of the new house, its cost and its particular construction and wove the sometimes contradictory stories together of what should ideally happen and what had happened. There was the same mingling of the ideal with contemporary custom in a good sermon: the sacred text told of behaviour in the golden age of the Buddha, but the message was brought

into the present time and locality by incorporating local personalities, popular songs, discussion of prices, favourite meals and even local market and abusive vocabulary with the doings of common people in the Buddha's age and land.

1 TABLE of Entertainment Forms & Festive Occasions:

FORM	DESCRIPTION	OCCASION
Sǫ Professionally performed: male & female singer 4 pipe accompaniment (& singers for 'pop' songs in interval)	All day recital of extempore verse sung by a man and a woman in competition, accompanied by three or four pipes of varying pitches. Specialised archaic language and strict rhythm patterns. Emphasis: classification of members of all kingdoms (animal, vegetable and human) with detailed specification of duties and obligations suitable in each context. Relationship between actors becomes increasingly flirtatious and saucy towards evening.	Incorporating new development into existing pattern: suitable for beginnings, e.g. opening: house, road, bridge, market, kuti (dormitory for monks), and ordination - new life in wat. NOT suitable for funerals, fairs or religious feasts.
Like Professionally performed: Troupe leader to make up and control story with ranât player and other musicians Actors: i.e. Hero, heroine, villain, comic.	Operatic drama, performed through several days. Story often evolved as action progresses, and directed by music from ranât (xylophone). Roles remain constant. Hero, heroine, villain, etc. slot in appropriate dance movements, songs and dialogue according to relatively flexible story line. Stories of abduction, separation, battle and adventure involve demons, immortals, princes and peasants.	Records struggle between conflicting forces affecting daily life and expresses the wider world of which ~~Body~~ the community is ~~Social~~ a part. Suitable for bigger occasions: Fairs, establishing new markets, bigger public commemorative occasions and housewarmings. NOT suitable for ordinations or religious festivals.

2 TABLE of Entertainment Forms & Festive Occasions:

FORM	DESCRIPTION	OCCASION
khâu locally performed: chanted from memory by old people, read by middle aged.	Part story and part song. Long episodic stories related in strict rhythmic patterns using repetition, formal lists of flora and fauna used like chorus and interchangeable between different stories, and vocal devices to complete rhyme and rhythm requirements without adding to meaning. New material, to greet important guests, to list compliments to a superior, to incorporate details of a particular occasion could be converted into khâu.	Form favoured as being peculiarly northern and local. Used in courting, working songs, mourning and as songs to cheer the corpse, and to celebrate completion of a community achievement, a building or road.
Song Phleng lûk thung Phleng phûn mûang Phleng sâkon Played on records, sung professionally at Fairs and sung locally over loud-speakers by men and girls.	Short songs, available on record and with lyrics printed in Bangkok magazines, concentrated on disappointed love, dangers of city life for country girls, separation, sadness and comic themes. Phleng phûn mûang were in Northern language, phleng lûk thung had heavy 'country' rhythm and appeal to less sophisticated areas and phleng sâkon dealt in smoother rhythms with urban problems.	The Young Buddhist Association set up amplifiers for records during most religious feasts, particularly Maccha Bucha and Wisa Bucha. Songs accompanied Fairs, played for the three days of mourning before funeral and welcomed New Year. Always played loudly.
Music Northern	Northern traditional music on locally made instruments played by two informal bands, the farmers and the school teachers.	Played at funerals and celebration of completion of community achievement (building school house).
Percussion	Percussion on Burmese drums, gongs and various stick instruments, accompanied by men dancing in procession, leading boy to ordination, and percussion to accompany 'money trees' to wat at New Rice and transferring merit festivals.	Ordination New Rice, Firework festival and merit making services.
Modern pop	Big orchestras with singers	Paid concerts.

Arrangement of Exposition

The study of festivities in their relation to the group requires firstly, that the festivities themselves be described as forming a system of entertainments; secondly, that the gatherings met together at the entertainments are analysed in terms of their social relationships; and thirdly, that the interdependence of these two systems is shown by demonstrating that the same direction and degree of change is discernible in both.

In an effort to present this complicated mesh of inter-relationships with some degree of organisation, this exposition oversimplifies to the extent of exploring one of the directions of change in the context of a single aspect of the social system, illustrated by a particular form of entertainment. It should however be borne in mind that this procedure is adopted solely for reasons of clarity and that each point could as well be explored in conjunction with any other two.

CHAPTER 2

Audience, Entertainments and Actors

This exposition focuses on entertainments enjoyed by people in a particular area. It attempts to show that there is a pattern of related entertainments and that this pattern is embedded in parts of the social system constituting the more traditional foci of Anthropological research. During the research period, it became evident that in events often organised chiefly for entertainment could be traced developments that were affecting local kinship, economic, political and religious orientations.

Audience

During the period of research, improvements in communications made possible greater mobility and made available a wider cultural hinterland for Kuang Pau. The research area, Kuang Pau, was a village suburb of Chom Thong town, Chiengmai province, Northern Thailand. Kuang Pau had a wat (temple/monastery), four schools (junior, senior, private and leprosy school), three churches (one Roman Catholic, one Protestant and one Protestant leprosy), a morning and afternoon market, scattered stores, 1,750 houses and 9,680 people (official figure for January 1972). Within this area, the focus for many of the details supporting this thesis was on 347 people living in 74 households along both sides of a cart track that bridged two adjacent administrative hamlets between the wat at the northern end of the road and a market area at the southern end. (See map III)

The research period was 18 months, between November 1970 and May

1972. At that time, the Thai government was encouraging "progress" (kan caroen kau nâ) in the countryside, and within the research area, building programmes and the extension of communications facilities coincided with this encouragement. Community efforts added a classroom to the junior school and began building sleeping quarters at the wat for five times the number of its current inmates. Physical communications were augmented during the period: Buses from Chiengmai increased in frequency from three a day to one every half hour; the taxi system attracted enough vehicles to begin a 24 hour door to door service between Chiengmai and Kuang Pau; and work began on a new major road through the village linking Chom Thong with Doi Inthanon (Thailand's highest mountain, a tourist attraction and proposed site for a power station). With improvements in road surfacing and bridge repairs, the increased volume of traffic brought more tourists and foreigners to the area (which was attractive for its monuments and waterfalls) and the younger people were able to use the same facilities to bring cash into the village. Their money made available more television and radio receivers, and by the same routes the numbers of newspapers and periodicals in circulation steadily increased during the research period.

Of the 74 households that responded to a questionnaire and interviews, 47 had radio receivers and six of them television sets. The first radio had come into the village twenty years before but until cheap transistors became available about three years before the research period, radios had been beyond the means of most Kuang Pau households. According to reminiscences, gatherings to hear stories at the houses of older villagers had been a favoured form of evening entertainment before

radios began to keep families in their own compounds. However, even during the research period, many of the traditional forms of entertainment still drew large crowds.

Entertainments

Sermons, particularly those designated for special festivals and delivered by guest monks were properly classified among 'entertainments'. They could be amusing to the point of irreverence and the more skilled the narrator, the more frequently would be quoted the anecdotes and secular material he used to illustrate and augment the unchangeable text of the scripture set for the festival day. Stories from the scriptures, moral tales, teaching stories and sagas were still told by the older people who had memorised them before reading skills and mass circulation of printed matter had begun to discourage such prodigies of memory, but many younger people preferred film shows, rock concerts and recorded songs in the central Thai language rather than the northern language of the stories.

There was a cycle of fairs of varying importance in Kuang Pau, Chom Thong and surrounding villages and towns that attracted patrons of all ages. At the fairs, apart from the normal shooting booths, coconut shies, small stalls and big wheels common to all fairs, there were films showing in competition, bands playing in competition, boxing and dancing, and often a staging of like theatre. Before radio had come into the area, two local troupes had played regularly in Kuang Pau, but during the research period, their leaders were 'resting' and running market stalls while troupes made famous by broadcasting drew bigger crowds on their old territory.

The other mainstay of the local entertainment system was Sǫ. Sǫ was the name for day-long recitals in spontaneous verse sung by a man and a woman in friendly competition, accompanied by three or four pipes of various pitches. This verse was in the northern language khon mɨang and described details of northern customs while at the same time promoting a flirtation between the two singers. The songs were flexible in that verse was extempore and could include references to modern songs and local events, but the language was elaborate and traditional and beyond the understanding of many youngsters. Even the message which said in effect: 'this is the way we do things, so follow the pattern closely' was being outdated by changing conditions.

History of Kuang Pau

Kuang Pau was an area of rapid expansion within the context of Chom Thong town. In June 1970 Kuang Pau had been raised in administrative status from a hamlet (mùbân) to a village (tambon). Within the administrative District (amphoe) of Chom Thong, Kuang Pau was one of six villages (there were 74 hamlets) and the District Officer (Nâi Amphoe) was the overall head administrator responsible to Chiengmai and Bangkok.

The first settlements of Chom Thong town had been on a bend in the river Ping at what is now the south eastern extremity of Kuang Pau village. The Ping (Mé ping), a tributary of the Chao Phraya, took river traffic south from Chiengmai to Tak on its way to Nakhonsawan and Bangkok. The Police Station was established by the side of the river in 1903. By 1932, the road from Chiengmai to Hot was carrying more traffic than the river, and the Police and Administrative quarters moved further south beyond the former boundaries of the town to the old

cremation ground. The first Superintendent (phû kong) was assigned to the station in 1937, but it was not until 1967 that the road was given a metalled surface. While the road was still an ox-track, people were gradually clearing new land in Kuang Pau. As that land pushed further into the north west towards the Mê Klang waterfall, too far to walk each day, the farmers followed their land with their houses, gradually leaving the banks of the Mê Ping. (See Map II)

Before the roads were improved, the visit of a troupe of actors or team of singers was a major event. It was a two day journey by oxcart from Chiengmai. On the way where they stopped for refreshment, they picked up local news. Their sponsors in Chom Thong expected to offer hospitality to the troupe for at least a week. In this time, the singers and actors learnt enough about local conditions and personalities to weave Chom Thong into the action of their plays, local names into the jokes and peculiarities of custom into their songs. The roads and bridges from Chienmai and through to Hot and Maeserieng were constantly under improvement making journeys quicker and more comfortable so that by the end of the field period it was convenient for troupes and teams to drive to Chom Thong for the day and back the same night. There was no time for accumulation of local information. Productions were becoming more standardised through the region. Regional variations in tunes and orchestra composition were being fed back through radio into the national networks, and the names of national heroes and politicians were replacing those of local celebrities in like and so performances. It was becoming economically feasible for famous like troupes with actors imported from the 'fertile crescent' of like (those provinces north of the central plain but south of the North, Uttaradit, Nakhorn Sawanne, Sukhothai) to make visits to

Chom Thong, and for promoters to hire a coachload of popular singers and musicians from Bangkok to give a single concert.

Geography and Physical Resources

Chom Thong was a district (amphoe) in the province (cangwat) of Chengmai, Northern Thailand, which included within its boundaries Thailand's highest mountain Doi Inthanon and the hillside homes of about 1,000 Meo and 3,000 Karen tribespeople. Two major rivers fed the area, the Mê Ping and a clear, fastflowing mountain river tumbling over a series of waterfalls, called locally the Mê Klang, but written on some maps as the Chom.

In January 1971, 66,147 people lived in the amphoe, a substantial increase over the 54,121 recorded by USOM in 1965.[1] In 1965, a total of 7% of the area was under agriculture, and of this, 93% was irrigated croplands. Since then, several irrigation projects had been completed and a major dam was still under construction at the confluence of the Mê Ping and the Mê Klang at Sop Tieh. Chom Thong was one of the most fertile districts of the North, bearing two annual crops in many places and producing good tobacco, fruit and vegetables as well as rice. In 1965[1], 79% of the population was engaged in agriculture on 7,166 agricultural holdings that averaged 6.2 rai apiece (2.53 rai equals one acre).

Chom Thong town, the district capital, was a market focus for the

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1 Figures recorded by local office of United States Overseas Mission in Chiengmai, published in Statistical Directory U.S.O.M. 1965, Siam Society Library.

whole area. Meo tribespeople living in the next district of Hot often walked for more than 8 hours to bring their apricots and potatoes and other more profitable (less legal) produce to exchange in the Chom Thong markets. Wat Phra That, a major tourist attraction in the town, owned a large covered market which began mid-morning and closed towards evening, and there was an early market opening at 5 a.m. and closing when the other opened. Kuang Pau's own small market opened at lunch time and carried on to mid-afternoon every day. The stalls were all operated by individuals with small capital resources so except for one stall that regularly sold fresh vegetables from Chiengmai, there were surprisingly few trade links with the really big markets of Chiengmai. The bus fare to Chiengmai and back was 10 bàht (20p) so the journey was worth making only for small expensive items, such as the tiny 'Mouse Dropping' peppers (prik khi nû) which sold in Chom Thong for twice their Chiengmai price. Except for luxuries, Chom Thong was comfortably self-supporting in food stuffs.

The town of Chom Thong was the focus for most of the amenities of the district and Kuang Pau, part of it being within the central high-tax, high-privilege part of the town called the sùkhâphìbân, had access to those services. An electricity company set up in 1954[1] to serve 100 houses was in 1971 supplying 665 homes. There was town water, but too expensive for many people to use. There were two banks, an insurance office, a fire-engine to replace, after a gap of 5 years, the appliance that had been burnt in a disastrous fire in 1965, and a Post Office with telegraph but no telephone. The District Offices, Police

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1 Records in District Office, Chom Thong and confirmed by Supervisor of Electricity Company.

Station and biggest of 59 schools were all within the town, but of the seven Health Centres, only a second class one was in the town. Of the other six, the first class centre with a doctor was two villages (tambon) further along, and there were two other second-class centres and three third-class sub-centres all without doctors, in different villages of the District. There were plans for another sub-centre in Kuang Pau.

Chom Thong was a centre not only for administration, police, markets and postal services, but also for entertainment. During the 18 months field period, there were within walking distance of Kuang Pau, eight fairs of three to five days each and numerous lesser festivals and celebrations that could almost qualify as fairs. The five-day Chom Thong winter fair was important enough to attract coachloads of visitors from Chiengmai, and since the King was patron of Wat Phra That, its fair attracted buses from Bangkok, about nine hours distant. The hill peoples walked all day to arrive in time for the fairs and stayed in Chom Thong with relatives and business contacts for the duration. Groups of Karen and Meo sometimes stayed after a selling trip if there were any free travelling film shows being sponsored by a medicine or hot-drink company or if a lowlander related by marriage to a tribesman were having a celebration with so, film or like. Improving physical communications were making Chom Thong big and attractive to visitors, but by the fieldwork period, the 'outside' influence on the area, the different languages and expectations brought with the augmented audiences, had not yet swamped the traditional forms and presentations of entertainment.

Actors

In the pace of their productions, the range of vocabulary, the degree of ornamentation and the diminishing references to local personalities and idiosyncracies, the actors showed evidence of pressure on the traditional entertainment forms. Sǫ singers had to admit in their songs that there were ways of conducting the business of living other than those they described. They made references to songs from Bangkok about northern girls lured to the 'R & R' playground for American soldiers from Vietnam coming home with 'red-haired' babies and their special brand of sickness. They allowed their exuberant vocabulary which was the sǫ singers' traditional pride to become depleted as fewer and fewer people recognised and enjoyed, for instance, the sixteen different ways of saying "lotus blossom", and they gradually incorporated popular songs into their repertoire to be sung during intervals of sǫ - and at one ordination towards the end of the field period, one of the singers staged a modest but unsuccessful strip show.

Like, instead of continuing for a few days or a week with a single story, was expected to play one traditional story at the morning and afternoon session for the women and older people, and then a fast moving sequence like a television cops and robbers escapade in the evening for the younger people. The more popular troupes were finding that their audiences wanted more dialogue, less dancing, more action and fewer elaborations of costume, poetry and music. Instead of meandering episodes designed to show off the special skills of each player, the demands of broadcasting and the expectations of the new audiences began to force troupe leaders into tailoring playlets to a time-limit rather than waiting for timing to be regulated by audience feed-back. There

was an increasing tendency to encapsulate plots in the Western tradition, building stories to a single climax instead of weaving together threads of equal importance into a tapestry of relationship.

Even the sermons were affected by the new mobility of both audience and artists. Although the texts of set sermons were unalterable, monks with special talent could be trained in Bangkok, allowed access to normally forbidden entertainments, including film, radio and the latest pop records and magazines and sent to the more remote areas to persuade country populations that the government cared for them, that the Buddhist religion was not only true but 'modern' and 'progressive' and that Communists were alien and bad.

Summary

Kuang Pau was an area exposed within a relatively short period of about ten years to influences that challenged an outlook evolved to complement the agricultural cycle. Prestige formerly accrued to older people with their experience of accumulated details in the ordering of farming, social and ritual offices. The values of this world centred on the pursuit of harmony among the contradictory pressures affecting farming life. Urban influences from Chiengmai and Bangkok, introduced through improved roads and widely disseminated song recordings, radios, magazines and films, brought a new way of life and a new set of values emphasizing personal and national success advertised by an increase in production and possessions. Songs, stories, drama, music and even sermons began to make room for the new ideal.

CHAPTER 3

The Fair

Big fairs were regular and frequent. From November until June each year there was at least one fair a month to which Kuang Pau people of moderate means could choose to go. There was a large County Winter Fair at Chiengmai every year, and a District Winter Fair at Chom Thong. There was an annual Wat Fair at Wat Phra That, Chom Thong, there were annual fairs for Wat Kuang Pau and the smaller Wat around the area, and there were annual school fairs. Apart from the regular calendar appointed fairs, there were special fairs arranged on a number of excuses by District, wat and schools. The research period extended over two Chom Thong Winter Fairs, and a comparison of these two similar events will be used to show a direction of change, particularly in the context of politics where commercial ability and private wealth could begin to control decisions formerly reserved to those climbing the administrative hierarchy by traditional steps.

Fairs were just one example of an entertainment event, but they were the biggest and the most public, so that they threw into relief elements less apparent but still evident in all other entertainment events. They were examples of conspicuous consumption where the 'fair givers' demonstrated their generosity and 'fair takers' responded with their support. The most modest of entertainments arranged by a single household to celebrate some domestic event carried with it the same complex associations of gift-giving as were already embedded in the important patronage relationships strengthening each hierarchy of the community. The gift-giver, in this case the Fair-giver, benefitted

from his generosity in each arena of activity. By his extravagant spending and often by the help he received in arranging his contribution, he advertised the fact that he was rich, had control of a large family and had influential contacts. This gave him credit in his economic standing which in turn influenced and was influenced by his increased social prestige, seen as a natural expression and corollary of his mounting religious Merit. Those who took advantage of his generosity at the same time offered the support that was necessary for him to climb each rung of a political ladder that relied to a certain extent on vote collecting.

This chapter, using the fairs as illustrative material, seeks to demonstrate that where the conspicuous consumption at fair-time had traditionally tended to strengthen local hierarchies through competition across parallel levels, more recent trends indicated that power in the community was shifting and threatening either to by-pass or splinter the hierarchies. When the Fair-givers had been respected elders and elected representatives, and the funds used those raised from the Fair-takers themselves, then the pattern of entertainments at the fair had reflected and re-inforced popular tastes and traditional values. The new patrons could use their wealth to sponsor entertainments dictated by their personal tastes and to attract those sectors and individuals within the community who would be of the most use to them in furthering commercial and political ambitions.

Three sections will discuss: 1) The Fairground as a platform for display; 2) the Fair-givers; and 3) the Fair-takers.

In the first section, it has to be made clear what is being

displayed. From an important point of view, it is the whole community creating a temporary image of its own structure. To understand this structure, it is necessary to explore what is meant by an hierarchy and to put into context the cementing role of competition. A necessary aspect of competition is comparison. If there were no points for comparison there could be no competition between them. The more parallel points there are for comparison, the more refined becomes the skill of discriminating. This skill traditionally has been the key to appreciating Thai entertainment. The same skill, of discriminating between varying presentations of similar events (whether in matters related to farming practice, dispute settlement, ritual or any other village concern) was the most respected accomplishment in Kuang Pau when the rhythm of life was still regulated by the agricultural cycle.

Fairground

a) To explore a hierarchy, this section will describe an administrative hierarchy beginning at the level of hamlet and reaching to the District.
b) On the journey up the hierarchy will be given indications of the way local pride is expressed in relation to other like units.
c) A description of two similar fairs, using comparison as an analytic instrument, will show how the community itself had changed orientation during a single year.

An appreciation of the temporary display of its own structure that the Body Social makes explicit at Fairtime depends on a generous interpretation of institutions described here as 'hierarchies'. It is the relationship between a clear guiding principal at the peak of the hierarchic pyramid and its plethora of detail at 'lower' levels which, in this paper, is taken to mark out an hierarchy. This means that a

ranked hierarchy of the straightforward pyramid type used for instance in local and national administration can be considered in the same context with more abstract structures where the peak of the pyramid might be an authority at some golden age which although in the historic past is still present as a guiding principal. The most perfect pyramid structure of this type was represented by sermons. The words of the sacred texts were unalterable and therefore taken to represent exactly what had been said by the Buddha and his disciples. Less perfect, but still operating by the same standards, were for instance, _like_ productions. Those which offered elegant dance steps, singing or poetry that accorded most closely with traditional ideals were the most applauded. Each entertainment form ideally related back to an original 'perfect' representation from which modern derivatives were seen as more or less corrupt copies. In theory, a comparison of the various details of each representation would reveal renditions that came closer to the 'original' and therefore were the most satisfactory. The same criteria for excellence extended to all traditional practices whether in housebuilding, farming or ceremonial. Traditionally, those best qualified to judge the degree of perfection were the older people who had both lived closer to the time of perfection and also had had the greatest opportunity for making comparisons.

The justification for this unusual grouping of structures was in the local attitude to authority. Respect was owed to those who represented the proper way of doing things. The proper way was the way handed down by custom. It was called _suphâp_ elegant, appropriate, suitable. The king, monks and storytellers all knew the proper way and were entitled to degrees of respect. Thus, the District Officer and a _like_ troupe leader were both representing hierarchies that deserved

respect. They both held in trust for the community part of its image of itself. The distinction as to whether that part were present or past was immaterial and a distinction that would not have occurred to a Kuang Pau villager.

At Fairtime, both kinds of hierarchy were in focus. Whether the fair were promoted by the schools, the wat or administrative units there was always competition between parallel levels of similar institutions as to which could put on the biggest, noisiest and most varied show. Within the fair, the items on each stand were in competition with each other. Similar items were often played simultaneously on adjoining stages, their competing soundtracks blaring at full amplification from speakers rigged on the same pole. At Fairtime there were a number of hierarchies represented and they were linked by competition and the possibility of comparison: everything was seen to happen at once in the context of each other. In this sense the community created a temporary image of its own structure.

Although there was a persistent reiteration of the message that all groups within the community had their various places in a number of different hierarchic structures, and that there was a limit to the relationships that could be formed either across ranks horizontally or within the hierarchy vertically, there was still the possibility of personal mobility. Certainly, one ideal type was the wise man who found his place in the community and spent his life learning to fill its complicated requirements with the utmost fidelity. But another type recognised in popular stories of tricksters and entrepreneurs was the bold innovator who flouted expectations and cheeked authority to win his goal through luck and cunning. Politicians trod the path between

the two. There were people who had merit, bun, to win support and position, and the proof that they had the necessary bun was that they won support and position.

An Administrative Hierarchy

Each hierarchy had its positions of respect. Administrators, Police, incumbents of positions in the Buddhist Church, astrologers and ritual experts, singers and storytellers were all entitled to respect in the context of their expertise. The way to climb up an hierarchy was the same in each case: apprenticeship (formal or informal) and acclaim. Accidents of birth contributed normal constraints but fundamentally, the system was democratic, based on popular vote.

As an administrative District, Chom Thong came under the jurisdiction of Chiengmai, capital of the Northern Region as well as the Province of Chiengmai. Both the District Office and the Police Department were given their instructions by direct radio link with Chiengmai, but the instructions themselves were issued from Bangkok. If in an emergency Chom Thong District needed to radio Bangkok direct, they were bound to inform Chiengmai and confirm radio communication with a letter.

In the Northern Region (phâk), Chiengmai was one of eight Provinces (cangwat). Within Chiengmai Province, Chom Thong was one of 16 Districts (amphoe). The District was divided into six units called tambon, one of which was Kuang Pau, and the clusters of houses within these Village areas were mùbân, hamlets. Overlapping two tambon (Kuang Pau and the Town, tambon bân luang) were the boundaries of the sùkhâphìbân, translated in the USOM Statistical Directory as 'sanitary district' but more nearly parallel with the British 'borough'.

Four years before research began, three candidates had competed for the position of Headman, the lowest level in the administrative hierarchy, in the hamlet that was the focus for this research. The successful candidate had won the support of more than half the 1,000 adults who represented the 280 houses in the hamlet. He was a rich and hardworking man, aged 49, living with his wife and grandson. He had 30 rai of land (12 acres) 20 in rice and 10 in fruit and vegetables. He owned 10 buffalo and traded in wood, pigs, chickens and fruit. It was important that a Headman should have private means, since there was no official salary, only an 'award' (rāng wan) of between 125 and 250 bāht a month (£2.50 to £5.00) according to the prosperity of the hamlet, but even so the villagers complained because he was too busy and seldom at home.

The Headman saw his duties as being to keep the peace, to help the villagers and to develop the rural areas. In practice, he organised repair teams for wells, bridges and irrigation canals; he advised on custom and procedure for household ceremonies, invited people for more formal occasions and helped to keep the peace at big gatherings; he welcomed visitors, gave permission for house-building, policed slaughtering and had to be informed of new pupils wanting to enter the school. One of his most important duties was liaison with the officer above him, the kamnan (Village Officer) and attendance at the monthly District meeting, school board and wat meetings, and special meetings to discuss health, safety and public works.

The kamnan was the former Headman of the same hamlet. He had been 'promoted' (but through the mechanism of an election) when Kuang Pau, formerly a hamlet among 25 in the Town tambon, had been broken off with six other hamlets to become a tambon four years before. He had been

voted into office by his fellow Headmen to serve for an unlimited period. He was a local man, 52 years old, living in the same house in Kuang Pau where he was born, with his wife, six children, a son-in-law and a grandchild. He gave his salary from the District as 'about' £6.00, and he also owned ten rai (4 acres) of land, three rai of riceland and seven of fruit and vegetables. He had two assistants to help with keeping public order at big gatherings, to settle disputes, to oversee matters related to health and sanitation and to co-ordinate efforts by the Headmen in irrigation and public works.

At the level of tambon, the kamnan was in competition with his five fellow kamnan. He was at an advantage in that he represented an area of high density housing, with three schools, a wat and a market under his jurisdiction. He was on all committees within his area, and had responsibility for all building programmes, even at the school or wat. One of his tasks was to supervise funds for projects from three possible sources: there were limited District funds available for some projects; he could make appeals for public donations; or he could agree to the school or wat organising a fair. The majority of people in Kuang Pau were relatively poor since it was an area of new settlement where rough land was being broken in and there were many demands on their resources. District funds available to the Kuang Pau area were already exhausted because it was an area of rapid expansion. The alternative, fairs, were attractive because they brought money from outside the area, they enhanced Kuang Pau's reputation for being a go-ahead place to live with an energetic and efficientmkamnan, and the local people enjoyed them.

Friends and relatives made up groups to visit each other at

fairtimes and offer their support from far off tambon. During the research period expeditions were mounted to Phrae province, Tak, Chiengmai, Lampang and even to Chainat south of Bangkok to coincide with small fairs arranged at tambon level. Sympathies and rivalries ignored Province boundaries but spanned across the tambon level of the administrative hierarchy, so that in this context, people in Kuang Pau felt they had more in common with friends in Laos and even Burma than with the upper elements of their national hierarchy in Bangkok.

Technically, all public celebrations throughout the District were the responsibility of the District Officer, Nâi Amphoe, but he organised only the biggest with full support from the smaller administrative units. At the tambon and hamlet (mûbân) levels, the Nâi Amphoe visited celebrations as an honoured guest. He kept in close touch with activities down to hamlet level through regular meetings with Headmen, Village Officers, school and wat officials and any villagers who wished to attend, and he was a final court of appeal if he was needed, but the running of practical affairs was delegated down the hierarchy to the appropriate level.

Chom Thong's District Officer was 50 years old, born in the neighbouring Province of Lamphun, and had a degree from Thammasât University, Bangkok. He had arrived from duties in Phrae Province in May 1970. With him in the District Office (amphoe) was a staff of 36, 28 men and 8 women. Among them were 12 Chom Thong people, five men and seven of the women. The District Officer had two Assistants (platamphoe), one long established in the area and the other a young English-speaking career Civil Servant from Bangkok. There was an Education Officer, a Land officer, a Tax officer, an officer in charge

of religious affairs and other officers and clerks dealing with registration and licencing, population movement and statistics, timber and forestry, public health, fire, hill peoples, roads, irrigation and specific local projects.

These three men, the District Officer, the Village Officer and the Headman marked rungs up the administrative hierarchy and incidentally steps up in a scale of public entertainment. At Hamlet level, the Headman counselled, supported and policed celebrations initiated by individual households and encouraged his hamlet to make the biggest, noisiest and best decorated float to present, in competition with other singing, dancing hamlets, a painted wooden prop for the sacred Bhodi tree in the grounds of the central Wat Phra That at New Year. (These presentations usually ended in a fight between hamlets using pre-prepared bamboo cudgels. Competition was always intense and often noisy, but usually less bloodthirsty.) At tambon level, the kamnan supervised travelling film companies visiting his area, and arranged fairs at the wat and school. Dates of tambon fairs were arranged to fit in with plans of neighbouring tambon, whatever District they belonged to.

When it was time for the Chom Thong District fairs, the six kamnan and 70 Headmen were ready to support their District Officer. The Winter Fairs were held in the grounds of the District Offices, and although there were Winter Fairs in different Districts throughout the Chiengmai cangwat almost every week of November and December, Chom Thong's fair attracted coachloads of visitors from other Districts, Chiengmai and even a few visitors from Lampang, Phrae and Chiengrai.

Two Fairs compared

The research period extended over two Winter Fairs. A description of common elements in both 1970 and 1971 gives a background for noting changes in detail that pointed to a new orientation for Chom Thong. There were indications of clashes between the traditional aesthetic ideal of a complicated texture of enmeshed patterns and the new unidirectional ambition of the government to 'progress and develop'.

Although in the year between the two Winter Fairs, there had been a political coup and officially, in 1971, large gatherings were discouraged, the emphases were the same: to encourage as much variety and noise as possible to attract the maximum number of people. According to rough head counts on the last night of each five day fair, there were more visitors in the second year, 9,000 against 6,000 in 1970. But local popular opinion reversed the trend. After the second fair, there were grumblings that there had been fewer people, less to do and not so much fun (mai sanuk). In fact, there were more attractions at the second fair, but the dissatisfaction expressed a changed quality.

The fairs were advertised in the same way both years, with banners across the streets, through loudspeakers on the fire engine, over the radio, and informally through passengers and drivers using the taxi and bus services. Most people ate their evening meal at sundown, about 6 p.m., so towards 7 o'clock, knots of neighbours began to gather and wander in clusters along the wide dirt track that was the main artery of Kuang Pau hamlet. The straggle from individual compounds along the road thickened and clumped together into a quickening procession as it neared the tar-sealed road and came within sound of the amplifiers

from the Fairground. In the first year, the first sound to reach the procession was that of the ranåt, a wooden xylophone, summoning its audience to the opening of the like show, and the first sight when the fairground came into view was of the Big Dipper. Both these sounds and sights were missing in the second year.

As the procession drew within range, the amplifiers, each at full volume and full distortion, competed in a cacophony that made talking impossible. Groups of teenage boys and groups of teenage girls, never mingling but sometimes sustaining a brief exchange of greetings between individuals on their outer edges, stood around the entrances, waiting for friends before they paid their entrance money. Buses bringing visitors from Sanbatong, Hot and Chiengmai manoeuvred into parking places and temporary scooter parks filled quickly. The entrance fee for adults was 2 båht (4p) except on the final night when it was 3 båht (6p). Children slid in free, but armed police were on duty at the gates to discourage other fee dodgers. (Throughout the bigger Wat Phra That fair, the police patrolled with sub-machine guns.)

Inside, the pathway to the District Office was lit up with stalls on either side selling sweets, snacks and cakes, lucky amulets, rings, hairslides and the omnipresent strong-smelling dried and toasted squid. Each stall paid 2 båht a night for its pitch. One informant, a Kuang Pau grandmother, regularly squatted with an oil lamp selling sticks of sweet steamed rice, making a profit of about 15 båht (30p) during an evening from 6 p.m. until midnight. The evening's major attractions, the films, boxing, concerts and shows, were slow to open, but there were exhibitions to divert earlycomers. The schoolchildren had an exhibition of handicrafts, there was an agricultural exhibition about plant diseases, and other leaf-roofed shelter housed a display about

Doi Inthanon, the flora and fauna to be found on the mountain. Lesser films began to be shown on two and later three different screens, and slowly, the boxing got under way, a troupe of mini-skirted girls from the next district began to offer dances for sale at 1 bàht a time to those men who had already drunk enough to embolden themselves, and the less popular of the two bands scheduled to play simultaneously throughout the evening began to draw its first audience with its less talented singers of 'pop'.

There were two major differences between the fairs of 1970 and 1971. One lay in the attractions themselves: in 1971, there were more attractions but fewer types of attraction than in 1970, so that substitutions impoverished the range of entertainment available for comparison. For like and the Big Dipper in 1970, were substituted an extra band and three different contests: a local talent singing competition, a transvestite beauty contest and a basketball five-a-side match. The other difference lay in the people who chose and sponsored those substitutions. In the first year, the Nâi Amphoe had chosen the proven favourites for the fair and paid for them through District funds. In the second year, the local businessmen were permitted to choose and sponsor the major items.

Presumably, those changes in the orientation of the community which it was possible to infer from a comparison of fairs in two succeeding years happened neither suddenly nor in isolation. They were part of a process that was weaning Chom Thong from the recurring complexities of an economy relying on weather and the vagaries of imperfectly understood agricultural procedures to an economy dominated by the simple ethic of getting more than before. An emphasis on

quality was giving way to a need for quantity. The older people from Kuang Pau who attended both fairs were disappointed because there was 'nothing to do' at the second fair. As will be explored further in the section on Fair-takers, 'something to do' in the context of a fair referred to the amount of stimulation afforded the audience by the variety of events that had to be compared. If there were a variety of different types of entertainment, groups in the audience were kept busy moving between the show areas, comparing details of presentations. It was appreciation of ornamentation on a well-known theme that stimulated the audience and the more there was to compare, the more the fair was sanuk, fun.

Professor E.H.S. Simmonds translated the description of a fair, probably a poet's ideal fair, in the Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies 1967, Vol. XXX, Pt. 2 called: Mahorasop in a Thai Manora Manuscript (Mahorasop being the central Thai word for fairs, celebrations and entertainment events). Kuang Pau old ladies, had they been invited to that celebration for Manora, heroine in the perfect past of legend, would have found their happiest expectations fulfilled, but probably the young people who paid high prices to sit through concerts given by single 'pop' bands from Bangkok, would have been bored. The text quoted by Professor Simmonds was incomplete, lacking a list of the night time attractions, but during the day there were mentioned as running concurrently a prodigious number of events. There were, in competition, two companies of masked players showing episodes from the abduction of Sita in the Ramayana; two dance-drama companies played competing plays; two puppet masters animated different stories; Lao and Mon puppets were in competition; Chinese puppets competed; there was a Chinese theatre contest; there was a singing pair in skilful

altercation; rabam dancing was on one stage; men and women circled round singing a folk song; a Mon dance was being displayed; a pantomime lion rolled its eyes at the children; some athletic dances used clubs and shooting, gongs and songs; other dancers used hoops and poles, pillars and high wires; acrobats tumbled on spears and swords; others fought with swords and krises, and men 'full of hardihood', such fighters as 'wager their wives on the result', came out to show skill in boxing. Whether or not all these delights were presented on the same occasion, the text demonstrates that the ideal is for all entertainment events to be enjoyed in the context of each other.

The genres of entertainment were linked together into a single system by the cross-referencing that was the delight of the audience. Details of specific steps in a dance, of a sad song sung by a heroine in like, film or even sǫ, of ornament in a headdress: these were the highlights of entertainment. They enriched the heritage of the audience. There was, traditionally, less interest in the way a story developed because the stories developed in the way everyone expected and there was no encouragement for a twist or a surprise. A single story was not interesting, any more than the development of a single person was interesting in the context of the community or a single melody in music. It was the context and texture of all the contributions that made excitement in confirming and extending by repetition in new surroundings the familiar patterns.

The same feeling for this latticed rhythm of context was expressed in a broad range of situations. Traditionally, there was no 'star' system in entertainment. Each artist had a role to play, and sometimes the material of the performance brought into prominence the skills of one artist and sometimes another. In the Kuang Pau community, there

was no encouragement for adults or children with a tendency to push their personalities, or for individuals to take 'initiative'. The rewards were for those who learnt the expected pattern and conformed to it with the most scrupulous exactitude. Since no individual variation was tolerated in behaviour patterns, the hierarchy of ranks between the King and his youngest peasant stayed clearly defined at every rung of the ladder. The same was true in the entertainment system where each genre offered a platform for particular refinements of display. Even the stability of the administrative system was ensured, although unwieldy in size and constantly challenged internally by competitiveness at each level. The behaviours appropriate between different statuses prevented confusion in the respect hierarchy but encouraged 'horizontal' activity. This same grid pattern was part of the apparatus that had linked Kuang Pau village life safely into the national life. But the pattern was being challenged. The government had begun calling for 'progress' (kan caroen kau nâ), a 'star' system was emerging in entertainment, and individuals were beginning to clamber out of their appointed places.

A Grandstand for Politicians:- Fair-Givers

The national campaign for 'progress' had been gaining momentum in the year of research. With it had come new ideals. Individual excellence was beginning to be rewarded in children, the brightest of whom could win government scholarships for study abroad (a Kuang Pau girl, daughter of a market stall-holder, was currently studying in England) and ideas of 'leadership' were beginning to take on different connotations. Those born with high status, those who acquired special knowledge of the skills of the community, and those who through a careful life learned to manipulate its complex relationships were the traditional 'leaders'. They were leaders in the sense that those with fewer skills,

lower status and less experience followed their advice and example. With the impetus towards 'progress' the term 'leadership' also began to describe the behaviour of those with influence who chose to break out of the established pattern instead of conforming to it exactly.

In Chom Thong, community leaders were emerging who owed less to the traditional qualifications of age and status than to the more modern assets of a good business head and financial liquidity. In 1971, the boxing, basketball, one band and the transvestite beauty competition were all sponsored by a businessman hoping to build an hotel (he was young and impatient with like and sǫ) and the pharmacy-cum-noodle shop sponsored the other band, ramwong dancing and the films. In the previous year, the Nâi Amphoe had been the most important sponsor, backing the like and the Big Dipper (the most expensive items) as well as the displays and sideshows. His choices had reflected the tastes of the whole community: those of the young businessmen were dictated by personal preference.

The items themselves, all contests except the films, reflected a tendency to promote the individual rather than to strengthen relationships within traditional structures. Each performance of like or sǫ had embellished a traditional structure just as members of the community were expected to contribute richness and ornament to the existing pattern of social relations. The winners of the contests, the singers and transvestite beauties, represented no-one except themselves. They wanted to be 'Stars' like Petchara, queen of the screen, or Surapon, the pop idol shot while singing at a concert.

Traditionally, sponsorship had an important place in the hierarchic structures of the community. Patron/client relationships

cemented each level so that personnel on one level were linked to personal patrons on levels above them and they in turn patronised individuals and groups below their level. A caricature of a perfect civil servant should have hunched shoulders and a pot belly (the shoulders rounded with perpetual bowing to superiors and the belly rounded with frequent feasting of subordinates). Even through the official administrative hierarchies, links between ranks were cemented by personal patron/protégé relationships. A patron was a means through which a less influential person had access to privileges not available to him by his own efforts. The duty of a protégé was to rally his family and neighbours to support his patron at election times and to keep him supplied with such small luxuries from, for instance, the vegetable garden that a busy patron would have no time to cultivate for himself.

The competition across the ranks of hierarchies was stimulated in part by the patron/client relationships. Parallel levels strove to outshine each other to bring glory to their patron or their area and so to make available to their own hierarchy, through an increase in prestige and power, more privileges. Fairs were one instrument through which to demonstrate strength. The school or <u>wat</u> that put on the best show for its neighbours and attracted the most support, besides making financial gain, won more scholars or more regular worshippers from people on the boundaries of its influence.

Although most of the people in the Kuang Pau research area were accustomed to making quick calculations in commercial transactions and they were well aware of the complex demands of reciprocity that went with gift giving, they also respected the more abstract ethics that

bound on them the duty of giving. These were both religious and social. The local interpretation of Hinayana Buddhism laid strong stress on the merit to be accumulated by giving to the wat, to the monks, and to anyone in need. There was also an often reiterated saying that urged generosity: "we are all brothers and sisters: we must help each other". Poverty was understood but stinginess despised. Generosity won both religious merit and social prestige - and among the older people a high proportion of income even in low income brackets was given to the wat as food for the monks, donations to building funds and given in the shape of precious Buddha images. Younger families with similar incomes tended to say they could not afford to give.

It was bad manners to over-thank the giver of a gift because the thanks took away from the merit he earned, but on the other hand, the gift gained nothing by being kept secret. In fact, there seemed to be a feeling that the more public the gift the greater the merit. Money donations made to special projects were announced over loudspeakers with the name of the giver and the amount, and amounts given towards buildings were inscribed on the pillars of those buildings. Visitors to domestic celebrations took set offerings of rice, condiments and vegetables and also money in an envelope. The money was counted, announced and the amount entered in a record. If a household or an area mounted a particularly popular entertainment that attracted big numbers, then comments indicated that the sponsor of the event would gain much more merit than if the event had attracted only small numbers.

When sponsors were those already respected for their high status and influence in the community, the increased prestige they were

accorded for acts of generosity reinforced their position. Duties connected with giving and receiving were properly channelled and the levels of the hierarchies were brought into parallel with competition between them. When an entrepreneur took on the role of sponsor he could shed the duties of a patron but still benefit from political support.

Kuang Pau was rich in sponsors. Being poor but with a relatively high population density and situated in a central position with respect to the main Chiengmai highway and the tourist areas, it attracted entrepreneurs with both political and commercial ambitions. A Chiengmai tobacco merchant, the Representative for Chom Thong in Chiengmai, was an active 'sponsor' for the hamlets of Kuang Pau in the neighbourhood of research - and also of the researcher. He had helped the new Young Buddhist Association achieve proper registration (an honour unique for a country district of Chiengmai and deeply appreciated by the Association's 384 members), he established trade links for Kuang Pau carvers and basket makers with retail outlets in Chiengmai and he acted as go-between with officials. He introduced the researcher to the area, made contributions to the building funds for wat Kuang Pau and Kuang Pau school, and sponsored the single most successful entertainment of the 18 month research period: a Harvest sermon delivered by a storyteller of genius, a monk trained in Bangkok. It was never made explicit that the merchant wanted the support of Kuang Pau voters to win a seat in the House of Representatives, but when the Revolution intervened and abolished representation, the merchant's activities in Kuang Pau ceased.

The two main sponsors for the Winter Fair were both traders in Chom Thong. They were wealthy in land and buildings, but they had built up their influence on various tambon and District committees

controlling entertainment because they could provide the equipment for entertainments that appealed to the younger people. One sponsor, who wanted to build an hotel in Kuang Pau, owned a large number of generators which he lent and hired out to supply light and sound for household celebrations, to hamlets to power their amplifiers for records played during festivals and on decorated floats, to wat, to schools and to fairs. He also owned (besides a taxi, a rice mill and a citrus plantation) the big hardware store that supplied fuel, spare parts and service for the generators. If he were on a particular entertainment committee he could supply his generators at cut rates. He also sponsored two bands, payed expenses for a football team and promoted a number of young boxers. The bands and boxers found work at fairs their sponsor helped to organise. He was in charge of all the technical arrangements for the Chom Thong Winter Fair in 1971, and he took responsibility for a fair to raise money for Kuang Pau school (a well-supported fair from which his detractors said he had made a lot of money but which he claimed had made 3,800 ฿ for the school and left him 2,000 ฿ out of pocket). He also contributed generously to the wat Kuang Pau building fund and was a member of the fair committee. He was young and impatient with the traditional forms of entertainment finding like and so too slow and preferring modern music and sport.

The other Winter Fair sponsor had a noodle shop and pharmacy, and also owned all the cinematographic apparatus in the town, four sets of equipment and five projectors each worth about 35,000 ฿. He ran the open air cinema three nights a week and hired out projectors and old films for celebrations. Films were extremely popular and his only competition was from travelling film companies that came to advertise particular products: hot drinks, toothpaste and miracle medicines.

He was another useful man to have on committees for entertainment at each level. He chose the films shown through the year in Chom Thong and also at the fairs - and it was the team of ram wong dancers that he sponsored who sold dances at the '71 Winter Fair.

Once it had been the old people who were needed on the committees to give their advice on the proper running of the events and to use their influence and prestige to secure good companies to perform. Wealth and a monopoloy of the equipment needed for modern entertainments put younger merchants in a stronger bargaining position than the traditional patrons of the arts. The choice of entertainments was no longer ruled by traditional considerations, but overruled by the tastes and special interests of the younger, more urbanised, more 'progressive' minority. In both music and films, the special interests of these sponsors, the newest, best and most prized came from Bangkok and related to local idiosyncracies hardly at all.

A Cradle for Stars: Fair-Takers

The audience for entertainments was also changing. Attending festivals of all kinds was traditionally a duty from which merit could be gained. With films and pay-concerts there came available entertainments that were designed to appeal to any individual with sufficient funds. For traditional entertainment forms to be properly appreciated the audiences had to be composed of groups not individuals.

Attendance a duty:

The word ngân is variable in meaning. It is used to refer to a plot of land workable by one man in a day, to work generally, duty or business, and to all kinds of celebration. It was a duty (ngân) to

attend a housewarming, marriage, funeral, ordination and spirit exorcism celebrations at neighbouring households just as it was a duty to support the school by attending its fair, the wat by helping to decorate the 'money trees' at certain times of the year, walking in noisy procession with them letting off fire crackers to announce the gifts, and the Nâi Amphoe by going to the Winter Fair to show the visitors from surrounding Districts and Chiengmai that Chom Thong was the most 'progressive' amphoe with the best District Officer. Some kinds of attendance were considered to earn more merit than others: the older people were careful to attend all holy days at the wat and the big wat fairs and to support their immediate neighbours but they cut down on the more secular fairs. They agreed that these still carried merit but not so much. Although this section is called 'Fair-Takers', those supporting festivities were in a real sense giving to them with their presence.

There was a cycle of festivities through the year, and even that cycle operated according to the familiar pattern found in the structures described here as 'hierarchies'. There was a quiet beginning to the year with the rainy season Retreat (phansâ) when there was a plethora of smaller celebrations, then festivities gradually built up in extravagance and excitement to New Year - which really signalled the culmination of the old year. At each level of festival there was competition, even down to the arbitrary divisions between groups of households within the same hamlet (about six groups of 20 households per hamlet), each responsible for decorating and donating to trees hung with money and presents that were taken to the wat on gift-giving occasions during the year.

Wisaka Buchå led the quieter, more sedate festivals after the noisy excesses of New Year. This was in May, the season for ordinations, and celebrated the Buddha's birth, enlightenment and death. Families or groups of households with sons going into the monkhood invited neighbours and relatives to a meal and performance of Sǫ. In June, the miracle working piece of bone from the Buddha, the Holy Relic of Wat Phra That, began its rainy season Retreat phanså and was escorted into retirement during a five day wat fair with films in the evenings and continuous like performance. Before the monks went into phanså retreat in July, there were Rocket Festivals to encourage the rains to break. Recent fatal accidents in Kuang Pau had discouraged the use of wat compounds in more densely populated areas for competitions with home-made musical fireworks and so the village emptied through the rice fields for the day to an impoverished wat a few miles into the surrounding hills.

Midway through phanså, between July and October, there was a ceremony called Eating Uncooked Rice kin khåu såk to give presents to the monks and transfer the merit acquired through such pious deeds to the credit of dead relatives. Gift-giving and merit making ceremonies with like and music welcomed the monks out of phanså. In November at the full moon, the faithful floated bad luck and sins away down the rivers with their lighted candles on board banana leaf barques at picturesque ceremonies of Loi Krathong (Launching the Floats). More gift-giving occasions expressed devotion in careful calibrations of magnificence according to the riches and rank of each wat at Kathin and Pha På, and led into the round of Winter Fairs. Harvest was celebrated in January with the sermon highlight of the year, offered with rockets, gifts and music; there were more ceremonies transferring merit to the

dead; Chinese New Year gave the excuse for more festivities; and at the end of January, the Holy Relic was welcomed out of Retreat with another wat fair.

February led back into the season for Sǫ to celebrate ordinations and housebuilding and the smaller wat fairs to celebrate Maccha Buchå, the four Miracles of the Buddha. More sǫ, music, films, like and competitive sports between schools led up again at the peak of heat and dryness to the relief of Songkrån New Year, the water festival celebrated with privileged licence.

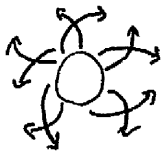
Particular festivals took their significance from their place in the cycle. They were satisfactory celebrations only if they followed the traditional patterns and there was as much noise and variety as possible within the set framework. The terms of reference were parallel with those for the social hierarchy where each unit made a clearly defined contribution to the harmonious workings of the total pattern. A central Thai word, suphåp, was often used to describe agreeable conformity with an established and proper ordering, but the propriety and elegance expressed by suphåp was only half the requirement for a satisfactory celebration. The other portion was summed up in the frequently used word sanuk (mån in the northern dialect), loosely translated 'fun'. The 1970 Fair was seen as 'fun' (sanuk) and the 1971 Fair 'not fun' (mai sanuk) although each had been appropriate and well-ordered. In the earlier fair there had been more noise, more variety and greater stimulation for an audience trained to notice and compare small variations in details of stylized presentations. There was a tension between the concepts of suphåp(order) and sanuk (innovation) which was the essence of both traditional entertainment and traditional social interaction. The balance was changing away from

the restrained elegance of what was appreciated as suphâp towards the vitality and speed preferred by younger people and described by them as sanuk. This change in balance was of the same order as the challenge to established hierarchies from entrepreneurs.

Groups as Audience

Individuals in the community were not viable units. They had little significance except as they were related to other parts of the community and took their place among the hierarchies, just as festivities were significant only in relation to others making up the set cycle, and just as single entertainments were only interesting in so far as they could be enjoyed in the context of the whole pattern of entertainment forms, the more being presented concurrently, the better.

Groups were the units that constituted the traditional audience at entertainment events and fairs. There were groups of young men, groups of young women, groups of old women and groups of old men, with children dodging between them and forming and reforming in different groups. There were never individuals or mixed couples wandering separate from groups, and the arrangement of a fair would have made enjoyment difficult for such anomalies; A Fair was a whole, and the way to appreciate it was to take in the entire pattern rather than try to split it up into constituent units. Individuals could not keep track of everything at once, but groups could. When groups were at rest in different parts of the fairground, they shaped themselves like paired rays coming from the sun: couples half facing each other were angled to look over each other's shoulders in units part in part out of the group, and in this arrangement the group missed nothing that went on in the rest of the fairground.



Highlights within the framework of each entertainment form made the pattern and excitement of the fair. So long as the group moved to each arena in time to enjoy its highlights there was no need to pay attention to development in any particular entertainment presentation. The stories in like and films were merely excuses to string together sequences, and it was the beginnings and endings of boxing bouts that were interesting. There were enough cues in the music and placing of these highlight moments for the groups to have notice of a particular song or comedy turn in time to arrange themselves in front of the appropriate arena. If one had wanted to concentrate on a single event, it would have been difficult to manoeuvre into a position where the sound matched the sight. More often, a good view of the band was coupled with the soundtrack of a film and the like sung solos were drowned in fighting music to accompany the boxing. Each pitch had its music or soundtrack amplified to maximum over loudspeakers wired three or four to the same post.

The moments that attracted a crowd were those when something new happened. If one of the film screens began to show a lively fight, there was a surge towards that part of the grounds, or if the like music sent the message that the leading man was about to appear, the girls drifted across. A few minutes before the Basketball began in the second year, there were no places left around the pitch, but immediately play started, bare patches appeared. Through the rest of the match (a good one between the high school and a visiting team of tall Chinese) the groups kept track of the score and made their way back if action promised. Nobody demonstrated a feeling of commitment to watch the thing through and get involved in tension generated through the fight. The major film when it began, emptied the rest of the fairground until Petchara, the inevitable female lead, had sung her

opening song, and then only a screen-hugging swathe of engrossed children stayed cross-legged on the grass until the comedians came on. Since the pattern of Thai film was almost as predictable as that of the more traditional like drama, the groups knew when to be on the alert for the next song, fight or comedy turn.

By the 1971 Winter Fair, the types of entertainment were changing, and with them, although more gradually, the orientation and nature of the audience. It was being forced into the technique of concentrating on the development of a single progression of events rather than on the slower more complex task of assimilating a whole cobweb pattern and gradually filling it in with details in their appropriate places. This opened the way to individualism.

Stars

A star system was alien to the Kuang Pau waf of life. Traditionally the respected elders had grown slowly to their eminence like the tall slow growing teak trees in the forests. In like and so honour was given to the teachers, living and spirits, who taught the artists and brought success. In a like troupe there were no stars, only players of different roles - the hero, the heroine, the villain, the clown, and the most admired player was the one who conveyed the intricate nuances of his stereotype through the most accurate rendering of set steps, voice pattern, gesture and ornament. The only stars were those already in the heavens, the wise of former eras who had taught the proper way that things should be done.

The new star system diffused from the cities. Film stars, particularly Petchara, the portly heroine of most Thai productions, were painted on hoardings throughout the cities and singing stars filled

the Bangkok magazines with their glossy portraits. But it was radio that had the most influence on the creation of rural stars once the national galaxy had been established for emulation. Film and Pop stars were admired by all the young and middle-aged in the research area and only a few of the elders objected that they were 'too bold'. They were praised not so much for particular singing or acting talents, but because they wore beautiful clothes, were wealthy and were kêng - meaning in this context clever and successful.

It was in the interest of radio to encourage individual listeners to buy radios, to educate them to listen at the times when particular advertisers would pay high prices for advertisements and to appeal to a wide cross-section of the rural and urban population. In this campaign it was the policy of radio companies based in Chiengmai and Lampang to offer prizes to outstanding individuals in rural areas, and for radio broadcasters to make personal tours around the villages, and to run contests to discover talent from different areas. To perform on radio was becoming a test of excellence. Of the three bands playing at the '71 Fair, two were described to the researcher as particularly good 'because they had played on the radio'. It was this ability of the radio to create stars that attracted contestants into the singing competitions: the prize was that they should sing over the radio.

The Cradle

Radio could promote individual performers, but it still had to rely on local communities to select their own potential stars. At fair times radio listeners in particular areas assembled and it became apparent that these communities were themselves undergoing a process

of learning a new orientation that would make them more efficient and supportive cradles for the potential stars they selected.

Radio had to refashion its own audience. Instead of groups it needed individuals. Instead of working with a daisy pattern of entertainments that related one to the other it needed to work with self-contained progressions of events that could be tailored to fit into time-slots and keep interest tuned to the receiving set. Radio was training its audience to be regular, to tune into tidy episodes of the soap opera nirat that promoted a strong story line, and to judge excellence in terms of slickness of presentation. Radio was teaching its audience to appreciate the professional, which was trans-cultural, rather than the traditional which had to be narrowly culture-specific. At the Fair of '71, the changes of orientation that were able to accommodate the new kinds of sponsor and the potential stars were more noticeable than they had been at the Fair a year earlier.

Summary

Fairs have been used as a background against which to examine the social concomitants of entertainment, manifested as a system of competitive display supporting hierarchical structures.

As urban and government pressures towards 'progress' reach into the area of research, entrepreneurs with qualifications and responsibilities different from those of traditional leaders have by-passed the pattern of hierarchies to promote personal projects.

Radio and the media in general have tended to support this development so that both the community and its entertainment system are

undergoing a total re-orientation from a situation which emphasised interdependence of parts in a whole pattern to one in which individuals are promoted without regard for the interests of the whole.

CHAPTER 4

Stories and Songs

Those who responded to the government pressure for 'progress' emerged into a world without signposts. Elaborate charts had evolved for guiding the community through the traditional passages of village life, and these took the form of stories told by the older people. The young, suddenly freed from local limitations by their education in Bangkok Thai language, their access to money and a new mobility turned to each other for direction and listened to songs from their peers in the cities. The stories of the old people demonstrated an inter-dependence between the animal, vegetable and human world, the past, future and present and the realms of men, of demons and of gods. The songs of the young were often sad and personal, telling of danger and loneliness.

In one generation at Kuang Pau, the universe had changed its aspect. As the older people had grown from childhood, they had been introduced gradually to a world populated to overflowing with all manner of creatures visible and invisible who had their own rules for living and who should be met or avoided according to criss-crossing rules. Many of their children and grandchildren found themselves alone in an empty world exposed to the threat of shadows. Their elders had gained power over the forces they lived among by learning to understand their ways, but their knowledge was no longer useful to the young.

This chapter looks at stories and songs against a background of the changing educational system and traces some of the effects that reflect back onto a respect hierarchy fundamental to the organisation of

the community, and onto the farming economy and social system that traditionally supported it. There was a flow pattern through which goods and services were exchanged within the village context and the direction of flow was orientated according to those who were towards the peak of the respect hierarchy. Part of their capital was converted to information, which they fed back into the flow through stories and advice. As stories and traditional wisdom became an obsolete currency with a section of the younger generation, the flow was bound to be interrupted and the local economy reshaped.

The first section of this chapter examines stories as 'currency' in this sense, showing how they were integrated with the respect system, how the occasions of their telling reinforced that system and how the stories themselves demonstrated by their construction and emphasis (never direct, always ambiguous) the most efficient way for the community to operate, so that each member had his proper place. The second section looks at a new use of stories presented by the schools as part of a 'national heritage' to be the property of each child. In order to give the stories to the children they had to be prized away from their context. They lost their currency value so that the older people no longer had anything to give to the youngsters. Storytelling ceased to be a function of inter-personal relations and the young ones lost their sense of belonging to an all-enveloping system of protections and restraints. But they had access to other parts of their 'national heritage' to replace the local. Their songs linked them with those in other areas who also had been removed from the worlds of their grandparents and even parents.

Stories: A Currency

"Respect" is a weak translation of the Thai term nap thụ which expresses more the sacrifice of self to hold in complete trust and reverence the teachings and person of another more worthy. The system of directing respect through its due channels was still fundamental in Kuang Pau during the research period. The wat and the King were held the highest, but below them was an intricate ordering that gave shape to affairs in the village. Age, family, education, wealth and rank all contributed to status. Those in whom respect was vested were admired as those who 'ru ruang', used generally in the northern dialect to mean 'to know about things' or 'to understand' but translated literally the term meant 'those who know stories'.

Accumulating stories was a life long process, and the types of story learnt were a reflection of the kind of life that had been led. Drinking stories and jokes learnt at the cock-fighting ring were thought mai suphạp (inelegant, not in line with the traditional hierarchy of proprieties) and had low value in respect currency. Those, on the other hand, who before the days of state education had taken advantage of schooling in the wat to learn the northern script, to make use of wat libraries and to learn the most sacred stories from older monks earned titles of respect that they kept for life. Although many men had been ordained for a short period and could claim the title of nan or noi (according to whether they had been ordained as a novice or a monk) it was customary to use those titles only for those who had come back into the secular world bringing with them highly valued knowledge that they were willing to share with others less fortunate than themselves. There was no special secrecy or ritual surrounding the stories, the only criteria for learning them being the opportunity to hear them and

a retentive memory.

The value of the stories was both intrinsic as teaching texts and incidental through the way they stimulated the circulation of goods and services.

Intrinsic Value for Teaching

Stories furnished a unique currency: the more generously they were 'spent' by their telling, the more sure they were to earn 'interest' in the form of respect and presents for the teller, while the story capital still remained in his repertoire. The occasions for story-telling when the younger people were brought to listen to their elders, themselves endorsed the system of reverence for those who had knowledge. On ceremonial occasions, such as the three day wake before a cremation, it was the older people who knew the appropriate stories to while away the time, and before each family owned a radio, evening storytelling had been a favourite entertainment form. Records were taking over from stories on ceremonial occasions and radios keeping people at home in the evening, but there were vestiges of the old system still alive during the research period.

Storytelling normally began after the evening meal. A wick was lit in a tin of kerosene, and neighbours who had been invited during the day made their way to the compound, often against a stream of teenagers and young parents on their way to a film. Children who had no money for the film hung around the house steps and under the balcony while elders in their fifties and beyond, shy in clean shirts and bringing a bottle of rice wine or a sheaf of handwritten notes, clambered up to seek a corner furthest from the lamp. The hostess took them a pot of

water, and lit another kerosene wick. Someone with no reputation to lose, a younger woman or man reading his song, started a story in the khảu rhythms peculiar to the phộn mựang (northern) dialect. Then there was no shyness. The older people began capping each others' stories, correcting lines, making puns, breaking off half way to ask for a drink, and keeping up the flow of chanting until their voices cracked and the chatter of crowds returning from the cinema drove the older folk home.

The houses where people went to hear stories belonged to older men and women, usually with the title of pho luang signifying that during their lives they had at some time been elected kamnan (village officer) or phủ yải bản (headman). Pho luang Tổn, a particularly fluent informant, had been born of poor parents who died when he was young and he had wandered over the North of Thailand taming elephants. He said that before age began to take his memory he could recite hour-long story poems after only a single or two hearings. He claimed that he had been married sixteen times before he met his current mẻ luang. She was an orphan, so instead of leaving her when he moved to his next elephant taming job, he 'felt sorry for her' and kept her with him. (Since she was an orphan and without land, she probably had less incentive than the other 16 for resisting the charms of her peripatetic husband.) That was when he began to settle down and make merit, first by giving rice to the monks, then money and finally Buddha images to the wat. Pho luang Tổn was 66 years old and between January 1972 and May, he recorded more than fifty stories for the researcher, many of them parts of book-length epics which he once knew in their entirety.

A favourite teaching story recorded by Pho luang Tổn and other informants with minor variations on a number of different occasions demonstrated a fundamental understanding in Kuang Pau: each had his

strength and his weakness to contribute to a pattern in balance. It was best to know one's place and to keep to it.

Story A

No-one is the Greatest

(Story told by Pho Luang Tôn 16 February 1972, Kuang Pau)

> There was a young man who had great abilities. He could fly up into the sky or he could dive down into the earth. But his father taught him: don't be an evil man. It is much better to hold to the Precepts and follow the Law. Nothing is so great that it is supreme above all others. His father explained to him: "Just you look at the sun which is shining so boldly. It sends its rays around the whole world, and yet even the sun has to offer deference. So my son, beware of arrogance: don't think you are the smartest".
>
> But the son was not convinced by his father's words. He went and asked the sun: "Hey, sun! You send your rays over all the world. Is there anything that can upset you?" "Certainly I have my problems", replied the sun. "What could you fear?" "I fear the clouds."
>
> So the boy went and asked the clouds saying: "Hey, clouds! You are so bold and daring that you don't even fear the rays of the sun. You don't have to give way to anything, do you?" "But we do! We are at the mercy of the wind", replied the clouds.
>
> The boy went to the wind and said: "Hey wind! You don't have to respect anything at all, do you? Not even the clouds can stand up to you." "Oh, but there is something", said the wind. "We cannot shift the termite mounds." So the boy asked a termite mound, and the ants replied: "We fear the buffalo". He went and asked the buffalo, and they replied: "We fear the rope because if a rope were tied to our noses every day, we would not be able to feed." So then the boy went and asked the rope and it replied: "We fear the mouse more than anything. If it chews us, we break". Then he asked the mouse. It replied: "We fear the cat most of all". He asked the cat and it replied: "We fear dogs because they like to bite us". So he asked the dog and the dog replied: "We fear bamboo canes because they like to beat us".
>
> Then he asked the bamboo canes: "You Sirs, that clump of bamboo standing there, you don't fear anything at all, do you?" "But we do indeed", replied the bamboo. "We fear fire".

Another story told by Tôn followed a pattern recurring in episodes of all the epics locally popular, including Hong Hin, Sang Thong, Cau Sú Wat, Cau Can Tha Kha and Nang Phom Hom. It showed that

a disregard for superficials of shape and individual preference but a respect for one's duties would inevitably bring the rewards of virtue, while those who were deceived by appearances would be punished for their stupidity.

Story B

A Turtle for a Child

(Story told by Pho Luang Tôn 1972, Kuang Pau)

There was a girl who had no father. She and her mother lived alone together. One night, she dreamt that the thewadá (gods) gave her a magic jewel. When she took the crystal and came to pay respect to it, the jewel shattered and changed into a lump of earth, just sand. When dawn came, the girl told her dream to an old person who predicted: "That's good. You will have a child". And a little later on, the girl really was pregnant. Her mother was very suspicious and asked her: "You have a lover. You have been with a man, haven't you?" "No - this child has nothing to do with a man", the girl replied.

The girl had morning sickness just like all women, and thought she'd like to eat fish, so she went to catch fish in the swamp. There were plenty of fish. One time when she dipped in her net, she brought up a small turtle. The little turtle tried persistently to hold the girl around the waist, but in the end, she managed to release it back into the water.

The girl was pregnant for a full ten months, and then her belly ached and she gave birth. What she gave birth to was a small turtle. The girl's mother saw that the child her daughter had produced was a turtle and was very upset and took it secretly to throw it away. But when she took the turtle to throw it away, she heard its voice saying: "Oh Granny! Don't abandon me! I've come to help my Granny." The old lady was very astonished that the turtle could speak, so she didn't throw it away. She took it and cared for it well until the turtle was big - very big.

One day, the Turtle told the old Granny that it would like to get the daughter of the Cau Mụang for a wife. When the old lady heard the Turtle saying this, she was very startled. "You're a turtle. How can you marry a person? Whoever would give their daughter as wife to a turtle?" "Come on Granny! Please take me into the Palace and ask for the daughter of the Cau Mụang to be given to me." The old Granny couldn't endure the pleading voice of the Turtle so she had to agree. She carried the Turtle and went in to the Cau Mụang and asked for his daughter to be given to the Turtle. The Cau Mụang was very angry with the Granny that she had asked for his Royal Daughter for a turtle, and he ordered his courtiers to chase her out of the Palace. The old lady had to run to escape the

palace guard who were pursuing her and determined to grab her without regard for her life.

Another time, the Turtle begged the old lady to take a cucumber, a water melon and a white pumpkin and offer them to the Cau Mụang, but the soldiers chased her so that she had to run again to escape them. As for the Cau Mụang, he was suspicious about why the Turtle should want to give him pumpkin, cucumber and water melon - so he ordered the soldiers to bring the vegetables for him to look at. He was astonished because the vegetables were all gold. He ordered his soldiers to go and fetch the old lady who was the owner of the Turtle, and bring her to him. When the old lady heard that the soldiers were going to take her for audience with the Cau Mụang, she took the Turtle too and put it in her bag. When she was in front of the Cau Mụang, he asked her: "Granny, where did the water melon and other vegetables come from?" "The Turtle was the one who said to bring them to you", the old lady told him, and took the Turtle out of her bag and put it on the floor. The Turtle walked around.

The Cau Mụang had seven daughters. When he saw that the Turtle was a magic animal, he wanted it for a son-in-law. He asked six of his daughters, but they didn't want to be married to a turtle. There remained only the youngest who was very obedient. She always obeyed the orders and requests of her father. When the six daughters didn't want to be married to the Turtle, the Cau Mụang told his youngest daughter that she should marry it and the girl agreed without making any difficulties.

The Cau Mụang made over a piece of land at the rear of the City and gave it to the Turtle and his youngest daughter for a place to live and farm and make their orchard. The Turtle said to his wife: "Would you take me and let me loose at the back of the farm, please?" His wife did as he asked. She took the Turtle and let it loose at the back of the farm near the swamp, and his wife went back and slept at the house as usual. By night-fall the Turtle had scratched up the ground and swept away the hills that obstructed his way until it was all like a big flat rice field and there was ripe rice filling the field.

One day, a god changed its shape to a herd of elephants and came to trample the rice in the Turtle's field. The Turtle ordered his wife: "Take me and let me loose in the rice field. I will chase out this herd of elephants". His wife said to him: "You're only a little turtle, how can you chase elephants? The elephants will trample you and squash you into the mud". "Come on, do as your Phi tells you." So the girl had to obey him, and took the Turtle to set him loose in the middle of the rice field - and that night, all on his own, the Turtle chased out the whole herd of elephants. And then, from the shape of the turtle, he changed and became a young man with a handsome figure. He went to the house and spoke with his wife saying: "Such a pretty lady! Why did you get married to a turtle? Come, be my wife instead. Run away with me". The girl who was the wife of the Turtle wasn't interested in listening. She sat quietly and didn't want to talk with the young man who was a stranger. The young man tried to allure her and persuade her, but without result, and so he left the girl.

In the morning, the girl went to pick up the Turtle who was her husband and bring him home. On the journey, the Turtle jeered at his wife saying: "Last night, there was a handsome young Prince who came to beg you to live with him, didn't he? Why didn't you go? Why did you come to live with me, an animal?" The girl heard him, but wasn't interested and escaped to go and work in the rice fields.

The Turtle saw his wife went out into the fields, and he rested. He came out of his turtle shape and became a handsome young man and lay down to doze for a while, but carelessly went to sleep. He slept until evening when his wife came home and saw that there was a young man lying asleep and that her husband had taken himself out of the turtle shape. So she stole the body of the turtle and took it and burned it so that the young man could not go back to the turtle shape again.

They worked together to make a living and achieved wealth and brilliance. The elder sisters of the Turtle's wife saw that the Turtle had changed into a handsome man and were jealous and wanted to get their sister's husband for themselves. They devised a ruse to trick their sister who was the wife of the Turtle. They took a torch into the rice granary and lit it, then they told their sister to go up the steps. When the girl climbed the steps to the granary, her sisters told her to look up and see the brilliance of the torch. Oil from the torch fell and struck the girl in the eyes, and the wax sealed her eyes tightly. She cried and groaned and moaned with the pain and agony: "Please help me! Please pull the torch wax out for me! Whoever will help me shall have all the rice in this granary to eat". A mouse volunteered to take it out for her and took it out in little bits until it was all gone. When it was out, the girl gave the rice to the mouse to eat, the whole granary full. And so, the mouse still eats rice right up to this day. The girl recovered her sight and could see as well as before.

As for the sisters, they didn't dare to come back and abuse their sister and they didn't dare to grab her husband, so they thought up a new approach. They went to look for a turtle to live with, hoping to make the turtle leave its body and become a handsome young man. But it chanced that they caught a Snapping Water Turtle which has some of the characteristics of a turtle. The Water Snapper Turtle was ferociously hungry and bit the girls, all six of them - and they all died.

Buried in the stories A and B and in all the stories that reached the researcher, there was a blueprint for living. There was i) the implied injunction to preserve the status quo; ii) there was a warning about the dangers that threatened the unprotected; iii) there was offered a formula for resisting and overcoming dangers.

i) Story A was more obviously a teaching story than most: listeners were alerted by the opening lines that the message of the story was important. An older man was instructing his son and by extension, the storyteller was instructing his listeners. He enjoined them all to follow the Law and the Precepts - but that was a reminder heard so often from older people that it had no more force than a greeting. The story went on to tell why they should obey: Individually they had not the strength to resist.

It was the same in nature as it was in the society: each element was in competition with every other for its survival so that even the seeming greatest had to give way or perish, but if each kept to his allotted place there was an efficient and balanced system. Because all things had a weakness the inference was that none could plead superiority and each should be ready to help the others. This interdependence was recognised among neighbours in Kuang Pau and constantly referred to in the saying: "We are all brothers and sisters: we must help each other". The cyclic nature of the story, from the sun and back to fire, emphasised that there was no way off the chain: the bamboo was threatened by the sun but the sun had to admit defeat by the clouds. In nature and in the community, there was a place for each, and wisdom was to learn that place, to seek it and to keep it. Exemplary behaviour in Kuang Pau could be summarised as 'doing what was fitting'.

While Story A made explicit its teaching on preserving harmony (in a way unusually clear for a literary tradition that delighted in riddles and puns), Story B demonstrated the same principle in operation. It presented as normal an interaction between the worlds of men, gods (thewadā) and animals showing that the same rules applied in each of

the kingdoms and through generations from the beginning until a present which is no different from the past. The story spanned three generations, but the early 'characters', the mother and grandmother of the Turtle had no function other than as passive vehicles for the begetting and nurturing of the miraculous changeling. But they played their part: their virtue was in doing what they had to do, and the line of virtue was carried on by the youngest daughter of the Cau Mụang who obeyed her father's wishes without thought for herself. She stayed true to her duty by obeying her husband (when he referred to himself as phi, older sibling) against her own judgment, continuing in her role of faithful wife even when ridiculed by her own husband. As a reward, even the animals helped the virtuous girl when she was the victim of her jealous sisters: the mouse nibbled the wax from her eyes confident that it could trust her promise of a barnful of rice to eat.

The Turtle, although only his heart was human, also followed the rules: he gained his wife fairly through approved channels, asking for her through an intermediary and giving generous presents to her father, and then he behaved as a proper husband, working his wife's fields so that they both prospered. He was protected and even in his encounter with the immortals (thewadā in the shape of the elephants) he came through unscathed. By contrast, the six elder sisters failed to trust the wishes of their father. Since they were out of harmony with one world because they had acted according to their own greed, the whole pattern was disrupted and the imbalance carried over into the animal world so that they perished in a way that showed them to be ridiculous.

ii) The six sisters were punished as much for their stupidity as for their lack of virtue. They fell victim to the danger of trusting

appearances. Running through all the stories was the theme, steady though never specified, that: "everything changes, nothing is new". Heros and heroines changed their shapes through turtles, lizards, fruit, shells and trees, or took on different characteristics through rebirths or lives in the heavens, but their stories continued. Only a simpleton, so the stories taught, would place trust in the fluid appearances of life, but it was the pattern of interrelations that deserved attention.

The heroine of Story B was undismayed by the apparent shape of her husband since he met the requirements of the pattern, and she rejected advice to leave him given by a handsome stranger or even by her husband because that violated the pattern of her duties. (Even a heroine was not expected to be entirely passive in uncomfortable conditions: when opportunity offered she was quick to destroy the turtle shape and enjoy the more congenial human shape.) The sisters were arrogant: instead of respecting the pattern of obeying elders, they trusted their own judgment. The laugh was on them because their judgment was inadequate. They presumed to be able to distinguish between a magical and a common turtle, but they had not even learned to observe carefully enough to tell the difference between ordinary species of turtle. If they had listened carefully to Story A, they would have known that all things have a weakness, including themselves, and that it was best to benefit by the experience and inherited wisdom of their elders.

iii) Reliance on those who had experience and wisdom was adequate protection from the danger of deception and the folly of being lured into faulty judgment. This promise, implicit in the stories, was yet another strand in the reinforcing of the status quo. There was no

distinction in the stories between different kinds of wisdom, but the emphasis was securely on the teacher: whether the knowledge had been gained through the Buddhist church, through lay or Brahmin teachers, through spirits of dead teachers, or even through shrewd observation of the natural world, it was enough to assume that an older person knew best. They spoke for the forefathers of the community who, though not visible, were still considered an active part of it. Pho Luang Tôn in his early life wandering from job to job and wife to wife would have been no example for the young folk, but after he settled down, the fruits of his experience, his close observation of forests and animals and people and the tricks he had learnt for dealing with them were highly valued.

In both stories A and B it was the older characters who knew how to interpret life. In Story A, the boy could not believe his father that a creation as strong as the sun could have a weakness, but his father was right. In Story B it was an old woman who interpreted her dream for the mother of the Turtle, and the grandmother responded properly to the Turtle's plea for life. The Cau Mụang made the correct decision for the happiness of his daughter and his own prosperity, and each of them accepted magical blessings (the dream, the golden vegetables, the Turtle's superhuman capacity for work) as unremarkable gifts. The thewadâ had the status of 'older than the oldest' and therefore were worthy of the greatest veneration.

There were many teachings in the stories and some of them seemed to encourage quickwitted mischief-makers who made their way through flouting authority and ridiculing monks, Princes and the normally 'untouchable' great. These 'Trickster' stories had great appeal to the Kuang Pau villagers who in all practical affairs were wide awake

to their own advantage and not too hamstrung by moral considerations. In fact these stories too supported the hierarchy. Without a strong system of respect the stories would have had no interest, but more than that: they protected respected institutions that might temporarily have been represented by an unworthy man. In the course of things there were bound to be greedy monks, stupid Princes and gullible old people. These people themselves did not fit into the proper pattern because they should have been wise. When they were mocked, it was not the institutions that had nurtured them nor the hierarchy of respect that was coming under attack: it was a punishment for imposters standing in the position of teachers but having nothing to teach. That also was a kind of arrogance that threatened to weaken the system.

Incidental value of stories for the local economy

The local economy in the research area relied on a philosophy of good neighbourliness, balanced on the dicta repeated ad nauseam: "We are all brothers and sisters: we must help each other", and "Do good: get good". As the last section demonstrated, stories supported the same philosophy to the extent of teaching that there were rules which it was dangerous to contravene. The rules outlined a pattern for the efficient operation of social life within the context of all the other worlds, animal, vegetable and invisible with which it was in competition and harmony. The pattern indicated a direction of flow in drawing respect towards the older people where it could be exchanged for information. ('Information' is a dry way to describe stories that passed on the traditional knowledge that gave hearers power to interact with their environment.) Marks of respect accompanied the sentiment, so that presents and labour were given to old people, just as food and money were offered to the monks and the wat. (In both cases the givers

also acquired Merit: transactions without money were never single-stranded.)

Gifts expressed Relationships

Houses where old people lived prospered under the traditional system. Age alone was enough to draw a crowd of neighbours to ask for a blessing at New Year, on the old person's birthday and other occasions through the year. The visitors never went empty-handed, and since their gifts conformed to a formula the household was never out of pocket throughout hospitality. Households where there were good storytellers were even more frequently visited. Pho Luang Tôn recalled the time before radio when every night there were rows of children lying in the shadows behind the adults listening to stories. The gifts that came with visitors provided for the day-to-day needs of the older folk, but the frequent contact between neighbours was worth more. It was informal agreements between neighbouring households that made viable a local economy where money was unnecessary.

(Pho Luang Tôn himself looked back ten years with nostalgia to the time when no-one had needed money. Despite his sentiments that those were the best times, he presently made a comfortable living as a money lender, using 4,000 bâht (£800) as capital and charging annual interest between 30% (for money) and up to 90% (paid in rice). He was the first in town to buy a record player, before there were any records locally, and his radio was one of the first.)

Frequent contact and at least superficial good relations between neighbours, particularly with those on adjoining lands, was necessary for a smooth running local economy. Farming depended on agreement

between those using the same water supply, and teams for tending roads and bridges and the irrigation canals were made up of volunteers. However, it was on the more intimate domestic scale that co-operation between households made money redundant. "Helping each other" embraced regular practices and courtesy "rights" such as the right to collect vegetables from canals going through neighbouring compounds and to collect grass for animal fodder. It allowed some relatives and neighbours to collect fruit, snails, ant lavae and other edible bugs from compound gardens, and children of poorer neighbours could glean the ricefields after harvest. Others had agreements to graze beasts in a compound with extra feed in return for a few vegetables from a plentiful crop, and children could fish and dig for crabs in the rice fields belonging to neighbouring households. Good relationships meant security in knowing that if a buffalo or an ox broke loose a neighbour would bring it home, and a pair of hot geese could find refuge in someone else's fishpond.

Prices reflected relationships

As money became more important in the economy, small sums were paid for some of the foraging rights but, during the research period, concessions even in the market place were still based on considerations of neighbourliness. There was a proliferation of stalls in the market all displaying basically the same produce. Since fresh food perished quickly in the heat, most people bought in the market twice a day, buying only small amounts. A relationship was established between stallholders and their regular customers and it was on the basis of the relationship that prices were negotiated. The stalls were supplied on the same small scale as they sold: through marketing hours, suppliers would arrive with covered baskets to offer two or three

papaya, a bunch of bananas, some onions and a bundle of tomatoes to a stallholder with whom they had an agreement. The prices they received from stallholders also depended on the quality of the relationship as well as the value given to the goods.

Such a system depended on having steady personal contacts between people sharing the same moral outlook. So long as the participants endorsed a pattern of relationships rather than making unrelated choices on a basis of personal preferences the sharing system could survive. When buyers began to be influenced more by the goods on display than by the people selling them, the result was disruption and inflation. Strangers in the market were always charged higher prices: their buying habits seemed erratic because they could not be calculated and stallholders were unable to stock their stalls efficiently. Households that could no longer rely on gathering enough fish and vegetables from around their neighbourhood had to grow more rice in order to make enough money to buy the extras. This gave them less time for sociability, less surplus for gifts, less time to contribute labour to housebuilding or festivals, and the circle began to close down to small units related to their neighbours by nothing except propinquity and sentiment.

At first glance it could seem far fetched to suggest that storytelling had an effect on the economy. However, with a local economy based on relationships between participants any change in those relationships was bound to affect the economy: even more dramatic was the effect when the standard for transactions changed from relationships to an intrinsic value placed on the goods. Stories (and so and like) supported the economy in the sense that their emphasis was on a pattern of relationships and never on advice for individual units. In their

telling, the opportunity was created for frequent personal contacts between neighbours. On occasions when people went to listen to stories, they took gifts to express their own position in a relationship of respect that was pivotal to all the other kinds of relationship in the local community, thus endorsing the pattern.

Stories: a Heritage

While stories were 'currency' they had to be bought with proper respect and accompanying presents. Honour for the teacher was part of the price willingly paid and that reverence, that extended to the teacher of the teacher and his teachers human and immortal, was part of the value passed on with the story - just as the history of a famous jewel and the prices paid for it become part of its worth.

Modern education used stories in a different way: they were a part of the national heritage and the birthright of every child. They no longer belonged to particular teachers for telling on particular occasions. There was no a need for a relationship between the old and the young so that while a story was being told, the system for living that it demonstrated was being reinforced by the occasion. Stories were freed from their local context to serve a national purpose. Some survived the transplant and were printed in the central Bangkok language, while others wilted to become fairytales and finally faded away.

Teachers were civil servants, paid through the District Office, and expected to teach according to the government rules and syllabus. Mathematics and learning the Thai (Bangkok) language were the most important subjects for the first four compulsory grades of schooling.

The Head Master of Kuang Pau school explained that for these first four years, stories were taught under the subject title of "Thai Language" and for the next three grades, to bo 7, they became "Literature". In naming the stories on the syllabus, he added a gloss on their purpose. A story written by Rama VI was to "make the children love their country"; a story about the Emerald Buddha was "to teach them about the Buddhist religion"; a song from Suphanburi was included "to teach them about other regions"; the section from Khun Chân Khun Phên was about the ordination of Phrai Kêo as a novice, "so that they know about Thai custom". These kinds of single stranded message for the erudition of individuals were alien to the storytelling of Pho Luang Tôn, Noi Mon, Lung Phrom Pan and Mê Luang Tęd who all lived within a few hundred yards of the Kuang Pau School.

Education

While Kuang Pau was still a small riverside community of peasant farmers, the only schools available were those run by the wat. There boys learnt the sacred law (thâm), which included many of the stories the old people told, and they learnt the Northern script for their own spoken language. Their lessons, chanted in unison, reinforced all they learnt from the old people. It was only as roads penetrated the area that government schools could be opened and trained teachers encouraged to venture into more remote districts. (There was a school in Nam Lat, the village next to Kuang Pau but beyond the end of the road. It was a struggle for them to keep staff. When the river was in flood and the bridge washed away, the teachers, an important part of whose duty it was to look smart, had to wait with shoes and stockings in a plastic bag while a boat polled across the current to collect them and their Honda scooters.)

The law, made in 1921 and enforced since 1935, required that all children should receive four years of free schooling between the ages of 8 and 15, or for as long as it took to complete the four primary grades. School terms were organised to coincide with periods of least farming activity, but even so, regular school attendance had always been difficult to enforce so that the age range within a single grade could stretch between 8 and 15 years. In Chom Thong, the 56 municipal schools offering primary grades 1 to 7 (prathom) had 274 teachers for 9,561 students. A Government school financed and run directly by the Ministry of Education and intended as a model school but charging 50 bâht a year per student (£1 - but equivalent to a week's wages) had 5 teachers and 159 students. The senior school offering three secondary grades (mathayom) of the six required for the Civil Service entrance examination, had 16 teachers and 455 students. Provincial and National scholarships for further education were awarded for outstanding results in the regular school examinations.

Schools in the District were financed and controlled from the Province level. Teachers were hired, fired and paid by Chiengmai, although the money and decisions were channelled through the District and could be influenced en route. The District had to ask permission from Chiengmai before building additional classrooms or opening another year. Funds for much of the building and any equipment more sophisticated than a blackboard were raised locally and local labour was given for building. The statistics showed a history of expansion and improvement over a few years. The USOM statistical directory for 1965 recorded 54 schools in Chom Thong with 172 teachers coping with a total school enrolment of 7,916 (i.e. 46 children per teacher). In 1971, the District Officer reported that in the 59 schools in Chom Thong,

there were 295 teachers and 10,175 students, bringing the average number of children per teacher down to about 34.

Each day at Kuang Pau school began with the raising of the national flag while the children sang the National Anthem, then they followed the teachers in making response in unison to prayers. In the first year of fieldwork, there were six primary grades, but in the second year, another classroom was built and a seventh grade added. Twenty-one teachers took classes of between 10 and 33 pupils, dividing between them 311 boys and 268 girls. They taught their classes in all subjects concentrating particularly on the central Thai language and mathematics. Children no longer had to make the krâp salute of deep reverence before opening their books as had been the custom ten years before when the researcher's assistant had been at school. In the mornings the teachers explained the lessons, set exercises and outlined homework, and in the afternoons, the children in unison chanted mathematical tables and practised reading aloud in unison and chanting the rhythms of the stories and poetry. A recently introduced feature of the system was regular examinations: Chom Thong District set the papers for grade 4 but papers for grade 7 were administered by Chiengmai.

In school, children picked up messages that ran counter to those of the old people's stories. The story "No-one is the Greatest" taught that all creation was interdependent because each creature had a weakness, but schools taught that through study, individuals could break out of the circle, do well in their examinations and win scholarships. The student's duty was no longer to understand his place in the community and practise to keep it, complementing the pattern of intricate interdependence, but to make a mark in the world and show that

Thailand could progress to be a modern industrialised country competing for trade on the international market.

In the story of the Turtle, the Mother of the Turtle and her Mother played their part and then were forgotten as the action concentrated on the next generation. But education was teaching children that to fit snugly into a waiting mesh of social commitments, like a jigsaw piece into a puzzle, was no longer the only possible course. Instead of waiting for future births and accumulating Merit to become the parents of miraculous children, they could dream of achieving stardom for themselves.

The price children had to pay for their national heritage was their traditional local heritage. They were given their national stories, the opportunities for individuals, mobility, freedom, and the City dream of 'rags to riches' that made up the bulk of broadcasting, films and popular magazines. But they had to face in a different direction: instead of being taught to value the context in which they lived and to contribute to it, they were turned to look ahead into the unknown and travel there alone. Respect for the old was still required as a moral principal but no longer a necessity. The old people were ignorant of the world their grandchildren were entering and had no help to offer. In the short sad songs the young people in Kuang Pau shared with their peers in the cities there was the consolation that others were on the same lonely road and that they too suffered from deception and disappointment, but that in death there was refuge.

The ideal and the mundane

Just because old people told stories about harmonious interaction it did not mean that such a state existed. It was an ideal pattern and one that was often hard to recognise on the ground. Treachery and suspicion were more usual, but at least, because the stories told them the way, the older people knew the direction they should take. The young people who listened to songs in the central Thai language instead of the stories their grandparents recited in the Northern language cut themselves adrift even from signposts about behaviour. There were no bridges of mutual expectations between generations, and neither could peers in the same 'freed' generation trust each other to follow the old pattern of neighbourliness.

To survive in the loneliness of uncertainty, many young people attached themselves emotionally to a 'superman': they identified with a winner who already had the reward of obvious success, a 'star'. The passion with which young Kuang Pau informants described and defended their 'fan' attested to their deep (if temporary) commitment. Another reaction was to fasten their hopes on to individual people expecting a constancy of conduct from them rather than the flexibility that allowed the situation to influence behaviour. Instead of the 'situational integrity' which the old stories had taught, the younger people began to expect a personal integrity in others which they longed, against the judgment of their experience, to trust. The older people in Kuang Pau were inclined to laugh at their fierce demand for loyalty, but they became painfully aware of its intensity when disappointment or imagined disappointment often led to suicide.

Trust was particularly frail in Kuang Pau. This may have been

connected with the state of transition with which the community was struggling. Compared with other northern communities in cities and in the country there was a stronger expression of violence, and family life in the households studied lacked cohesion. Older people reacted by shuttering themselves behind chains and padlocks. Teenage girls associated in groups of ever changing loyalties and refused to associate with local boys whom they despised. Even children practised profitable deception. There was a shop in the researcher's compound, opposite Kuang Pau school. School children who came regularly to buy sweets made repeated attempts to give wrong money or short change. It was a game, except that if they succeeded they would keep the extra and laugh at the shopkeeper for her stupidity in being duped. While teenagers clung to an ideal of trusting their fellows, there was a more practical understanding that if you put your trust in the wrong person, then the one who was foolish enough to have trusted was at fault.

It was an uncomfortable ethic to live with. The same shopkeeper kept chickens. If they squeezed through the fence onto the neighbour's property, they disappeared into the curry pot. Because of the 'situational integrity' ethic of the older people, the neighbours had to continue to 'speak nicely' to each other. If the shopkeeper had claimed her chickens there would have been a fuss and probably retribution, since the neighbour who had served time for murder kept an unruly wine stall. She kept the peace, but there was gossip, backbiting and backstabbing.

There was a fluidity in household composition that might have been better supported in the days when all neighbouring households

operated on similar patterns influenced by the farming cycle. With the introduction of a money system and compulsory years of education for certain members of the work force, differentiation between useful and less welcome additions to households meant that the flow of itinerant personnel became uneven. The least useful group, in terms of work potential and return for input, were children and the younger teenagers. Girls particularly from 12 to 18 were physically mature but socially misfits unless they married. They were the ones who took comfort from pop songs and their star 'fans'.

Numbers of people in the households varied: a minimum 'normal' number was three (the exceptions were old ladies living alongside married children) but other households had nine and ten. During the survey period, individual households expanded and shrank but kept an average through the hamlet of about 5.5 people per house. Compounds averaged about four houses.

Marriage and adoption practices were responsible for a considerable degree of fluidity in household composition. There was no formality attached to either, though had the law insisted, each couple could have been liable for a 100 <u>bàht</u> (£2) marriage licence fee. A few marriages were accompanied by celebrations and formal blessings from the monks, but except for first marriages in reasonably well-to-do households, 'marriage' more usually referred to the fact that a man had moved into his wife's home. He either stayed there or built a house (perhaps three days' work) in the compound alongside her parents.

The pattern of housing and number of houses in the survey area

was adapted to meet the needs of new domestic arrangements so that on every day appointed in the calendar as auspicious for building some houses came down and others went up with a minimum of fuss.

The titular head of the household was the husband, but women were the more permanent residents. In courting practice, it was up to the man to become an 'accredited' visitor at the home of his intended, and his actual moving in happened by degrees, the fact of his changing 'guest' for 'resident' status being marked with a present to the girl's parents. He then joined in the farm work of the household. Even if he built a house nearby for his new wife and children, it was usual on separation for the man to leave his ex-wife and their children in the house and himself go away to find a new household to move into. Hence, in a survey of 75 houses, all but two of the 60 male householders had wives (of those two, one's wife had died one month before and the other was living with his brother and sister in his mother's house) but there were 15 female heads of households where there was either no man, or an uncle or brother. Of those 13 households where there were parents living with the couple who described themselves as the householders, in 12 cases they were either one or both parents of the wife, and in two cases, her brother as well.

Within the survey area, there was only one household where the husband and wife were married to their original partners. At the other extreme, Pho luang Tôn was happy to boast that his present wife was his 17th. His son, aged 25, had just left his 8th wife. In the survey area, three or four spouses (in succession, not concurrently) was the statistical norm for both sexes. Separating

simply meant moving out: the last quarrel or the last supposed injustice was taken to be the reason for the split. In unusual circumstances a couple came together again, but generally a change of partner was accepted without much fuss. In one particular case, a husband went back to his wife after having left her with a one-month old baby some months before, because she also had to keep her widowed mother and they had no males to work the fields. The husband's family lived in the same hamlet and put an unusual pressure on the boy to go back and help. He had left because he was 'ashamed' at not being able to provide enough to keep the two women and child. Usually there were more relatives living nearby who could help during a crisis.

Children, as a result of this fluid system of alliance and re-alliance, often grew up in several different households. Although when the husband left his wife, the children usually stayed with her (in many surveyed households, the children were half brothers and sisters, some from the wife's former spouses) if a new man came to be head of the house, it was often advisable to board the children with their grandparents or relatives. One Thai word, <u>lân</u>, covered grandchildren, nephews and nieces and 'extra' children attached to the house. In 23 households there were '<u>lân</u>', and in those households where there was a means of checking, several of the young called 'sons' and 'daughters' were in fact adopted into the household. For instance, one informant, the shopkeeper, had had 3 husbands and two daughters, and had adopted another two daughters and a son. For the formal survey, she admitted only one husband, and called the two adopted children then living with her a 'son' and a 'daughter' without further gloss.

One result of the frequency with which children tended to be shunted between parents and foster parents, was that they were wary of committing themselves wholly to any individual. Until they were married, men and girls stayed in their own groups of friends, the girls seldom speaking to the men in public or showing interest. Any demonstration of affection between men and women on films or in like brought howls of mirth from the audience, particularly the younger ones. Within the groups of girls it was unusual for 'best friends' to separate off because alignments were always changing. One moment two of the group would be refusing to speak with each other and the next they would smuggle together for an illicit smoke. Jealousies were hot and quick, but the remedy was always to move away. The groups of friends were constantly dividing and reforming, but there were always groups. Girls drew water together, washed clothes together, went to the fair or the films together, and if there were troubles at home, they could move in temporarily with one of their friends or relatives. Extra rice for a meal and a mat on the floor for sleeping caused little disruption in any household. They had a wide net of affiliations, but many youngsters interviewed felt they belonged nowhere, that their step-fathers hated them and that they could trust nobody.

There was a high incidence of transvesticism in the area: in the survey area, two girls chose to dress and behave as men and one young man dressed as a woman on social occasions (among them, the cremation of his grandfather) though he worked in the fields with the men. This seemed to be related to the general expression of personal insecurity. Many of the girls in the area had grown up with the belief that local men were bad, violent, lazy and untrustworthy, and they subscribed to the common belief that daughters were in danger of

rape from their fathers and stepfathers when their mother was not around to protect them. A popular song in the so singers' repertoire was called 'Today I won't go home', and began: "Please tell my mother won't you? today I'm not going home. It is because my stepfather has been worrying me and will do me harm". That girls should turn to one another for more complex and binding relationships seemed a reasonable alternative. Among men there was no shame involved in transvesticism. Informants said that transvestites were popular among their fellows because they looked attractive and gentle and understanding, and if men talked to them, they giggled and blushed prettily rather than lashing back with a harsh tongue or cutting the man dead as a well-bred girl was likely to do, particularly if her friends were with her.

Songs

The messages of the stories had been: i) that there was a place for each in the order of things; ii) that all were vulnerable to deception; iii) but that there was protection from deception in the inherited wisdom and experience of elders and betters. The songs bore out the warning of the stories: alone, the youngsters fell prey to deception and the only answer seemed to be death. Of 30 songs recorded during the research period in Kuang Pau, 22 were sad songs of disappointed love, five were flirting songs, one was about the rocket festival, one was about a raid on a marijuana party and the last told what happened when country boys went to the city - and left all their clothes behind when their modesty scared them out of the Turkish baths.

Exposure to songs in Kuang Pau was unavoidable. The old people

complained that they gave them a headache and the researcher often sympathised. Every kind of festival and ceremony was an excuse for the Young Buddhist Association to rig every power pole, tall tree or convenient house in the area with loudspeakers so that there could be songs at full amplification from five in the morning until well after midnight for from three to seven days in a row. Where houses were walled with planks or woven bamboo there was no escape from the heavy throbbing rhythms of the lûk thung ("children of the fields") songs preferred in the area. As the tempo of festivals increased, recorded songs were replaced by local youngsters singing the same songs over the microphones using the words cut from Bangkok magazines.

Two songs will suffice to demonstrate the sadness and loneliness of the songs. The first was made popular by Suraphon Sombat Jaroen, a singer shot dead during a concert, whose wife then committed suicide in front of his photograph.

Khon Hu Bau

(A gullible girl, sung by Suraphon Sombat Jaroen)

> Why is it that she is so gullible? He only had to say a very little and she believed him! Why are you such a dreamer? You think so lightly! (ngâi) You think so briefly! (san san) And how can you decide so easily? You let yourself be deceived and go away with a stranger. You are just a tool in his hands. You thought you would get some good from it. You believed him when he lied. What made you agree to go with him when you knew your understanding was not too strong?
>
> Why are you so gullible? Whatever he said you believed! You thought you wanted to be rich? You thought you wanted to be a great lady? You wanted to dress prettily and have a big car and have time to listen to songs at your pleasure? You wanted to live in a room with air conditioning and lie watching the T.V.? Listen, young lady: your dreams and the reality are not the same at all. When everything else fails, there is only one thing to do: sit and cry.

> What kind of person are you, gullible one? How can you believe so easily what is said to you? It won't be long before you have a child and then you'll have to come back to our village. Do you see: you have your profit already! Your father and mother will ask you: where is your husband? You're a Thai girl, how is it that your child has fair hair? (phom dèng) Your grandfather (mother's father) will say: 'Ah, I-Noi here is very clever: she mixes the breeds well!'
>
> What kind of a girl is this who is so easily taken in? Then, when you come home to the village, you haven't been here long before you feel ill. It's because you have to eat our village food - the meat of the albino buffalo and rotted crab jice - and these don't mix with the disease you already carry in your body. So, you lie sick. You take many kinds of medicine, but it won't go. Then you have to go to the doctor and he says that it's a disease your husband gave you.

The second song is also a lament for a northern girl by the companions of her early village life. There was a lively belief among the more sophisticated as well as the farming people in the north that there was a flourishing traffic in a form of slavery. Northern girls had a reputation for being beautiful and 'unspoilt'. The current horror story (which might have been true) was that smooth, handsome men arrived from Bangkok and offered presents and marriage to unsuspecting girls. As soon as they had lured them into a coffee shop or hotel, they slipped a drug concealed in a long little-finger nail into the girl's orange juice. By pre-arrangement with the management, the 'ladies room' to which he helped the girl was a back room from which it was easy to arrange to transport the girl to the bars and massage parlours of Bangkok. Such stories were heard repeatedly during fieldwork. Fa Muie, the name of an orchid often given to Chiengmai girls, tells what happens when the warnings are ignored.

Fa Muie

(Orchid recorded originally by Suriya Yothawon)

> Fa Muie ęęi (a sound linking the song back into the rhythm of traditional teaching songs) - before this you lived in the forest. But you were infatuated with the big city so that you forgot your forest home. You forgot the village where you were born. You forgot the place where you used to eat and sleep and live. You forgot even the sucking bees of your youth (the young friends she played and flirted with). You denied your passions for your own home town and went into the big city.
>
> You had high ambitions, like the crow who wanted to join the swans. You went and lived in Bangkok and spurned the city of the Ping (Chiengmai). And you forgot the love we used to know together. Now you are a big star - like a flickering star competing in the heavens. Now your rays flicker on anyone who wants to share your light. But when that light is spent, only sadness and poverty will remain to you. Just like an orchid: it withers and the flower drops. It all dries up, the flower, the leaves, the stem, and then a strong wind blows and the plant falls.
>
> Go then. Go. Don't bother to come back. Let the waters of the Jau Phraya be your grave instead! (This repeated as a chorus.)

Sadness, deception and death

Sadness was a popular sentiment in traditional poetry, classical songs and stories. A leading lady in like drama was judged on whether her 'crying song', sung at some separation, with lover, child or parent, could actually bring tears to the eyes of the audience. At Fairs, the sad highlights on film drew the crowds to the cinema screens and it was the moments of pathos that were recalled with relish in discussions of films, like and even local tragedies. But the sadness in modern songs had a bleak quality: those they lamented had been deceived into making the wrong choice and the inevitable result was rejection and death.

The stories warned that decisions made only on the basis of

personal experience and understanding would lead to disaster, and the songs confirmed the prediction but offered no alternative. The Gullible Girl was admonished because she trusted her judgment when she should have known she was weak. She disappointed her family and fell prey to a killer disease. The other girl, the orchid, had ambitions beyond her station, summarised in a phrase used often in traditional oral literature, in sǫ, like and as a figure of colloquial speech: she was a crow who wanted to join the swans. She was expected to be taken by another "disease" (called such in sermons and sǫ and by the older people who dreaded it): suicide.

Suicide was a romantic ideal among younger people in Kuang Pau and a fitting solution to the problem of 'disappointed hopes' phit wang. Frustrated dreams, disappointments in love and slight, fancied or serious breaches of trust brought the threat of suicide: a youngster would kin yā tāi, take medicine and die. The threat was put into practice often enough for it to prove an effective blackmail against the older people. Films glorified suicide as a solution. A particular Romeo and Juliet film, so popular that new versions had to be made each year as old copies wore out, showed the couple frustrated by parental opposition leaping into the Hui Kẻo waterfall at Chiengmai. Railings had to be erected, but still couples managed to throw themselves over in romantic emulation. During the period of research, a local Christian youth, married for one month took poison and died because he had been in disagreement with his father about the duties of his new wife. Even in the researcher's household, an assistant from Juang Pau bought insecticide and threatened to swallow it if her hopes of a trip to England were frustrated.

The price of 'progress'

The young were dislocated in the process of education, though obviously some more than others. Men traditionally could accept a certain amount of dislocation: they were encouraged to break links with their immediate family to go into the monkhood, and then they often left their village for a period of years to go visiting, thio, to go to war, to go to find work or to find themselves a bride. The girls were the ones who stayed at home, inherited the land and brought up their children near their grandparents. When the women broke the link with the land, the whole system was endangered. This would perhaps account for the load of blame placed on the unfortunate girls in the songs who were deceived into leaving their homes.

Dislocation was necessary for the government if its propaganda towards 'progress' was to make a useful impact. Future workers in an industrial society had to be weaned from reliance on and loyalty to their locality of birth. Local customs had to give way to national imperatives, and workers were most valuable if they could be moved to suit an industry, were free of any personal ties that could encourage them to seek preferment for their relatives and were free of loyalties that would persuade them to take time off to attend ceremonies or meet social obligations. A commitment to industry would be most reliable and manipulatable if the incentive for work could be narrowed simply to monetary return.

It was inevitable that in the process of dislocation, the young should in important ways become dispossessed. In being given their 'national' stories as of right, they lost the obligations that had traditionally accompanied them. And they lost their place in a

scheme of duties and rewards so that they were shut out of their place in the community that had nourished their grandparents and parents. Their lonely world had no older people, no figures to lead the way except the heros of the pop songs and films who avoided age by death. The songs themselves were suitable for the circumstances of youngsters at school and beginning their working life: they were in a direct language they understood with none of the riddles and archaic words of traditional song, and they lasted a short time instead of many valuable hours. Their message also was clear and they seemed to have advice for individuals. But that advice was negative. Instead of teaching the best way to live in harmony with the environment like the stories (or even advocating escape into drugs like Western pop current at that period) the songs jeered at those who had made mistakes and warned others by saying 'stay at home'. The warning was too late to be useful because the young had already lost their 'home' in its fullest sense even if they were never tempted to leave their village. The songs said very clearly: 'You can't come back so you might as well die'.

Summary

Stories and songs supported the notion that in harmony was strength but in unsuitable ambition, tragedy. While stories were still universally respected in Kuang Pau, the occasions of their telling strengthened the hierarchy of respect and provided a 'market place' type of opportunity for neighbours to meet frequently with leisure to make arrangements for interaction to their mutual economic benefit.

The stories can be treated as 'currency', bought with tokens of respect from old people whose store of stories was part of their

'capital'. Before money became important in Kuang Pau, the local economy to a certain extent received stimulation and direction from the respect system and stories: surplus production was converted into presents for superiors and for the wat. (In the year stories were recorded from Pho Luang Tôn, he had already given three 'emerald Buddhas' to the wat, small images in green glass, expensive according to the quality of the blessing they carried from some well-known holy man.)

Parents of those still at school could read stories from printed editions and chant them in proper rhythms, stumbling over only a few of the older words. Their children, more fluent in Bangkok Thai because of easier access to a flood of printed matter, song, film and broadcast stories in the central language, no longer had time or patience for the stories of the old. They forfeited their place in the complex world of their grandparents to become part of a progressive Thailand.

CHAPTER 5

Sermons

The most popular entertainment event of the research period was a sermon. It was the New Rice Sermon given by a visiting monk of Mahā rank in January 1971 at the inauguration of the Kuang Pau Young Buddhist Association. While he gave the sermon, the monk was both cleric and entertainer. Although these two roles are apparently contradictory, it emerges in this chapter that in fact the roles were not in opposition but complementary, being two extremes of a continuum that had to do with regulating moral attitudes.

The monk was of higher grade than any in Kuang Pau and his artistry surpassed that of any locally available entertainers. This was thought by local informants to be connected with the fact that Kuang Pau was an area of high population density and low average income close to the mountains where Communist insurgents could propagate unsettling stories about the Thai government. Church and state were organised separately, but it was in the interests of both hierarchies to counter Communist pressures threatening communities outside the direct influence of Bangkok.[1] Every community was served by a wat and these wat were linked into a network by a tradition of visiting between

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1 J.A. Niels Mulder, in Monks, Merit and Motivation, 'An Exploratory Study of the Social Function of Buddhism in Thailand in Processes of Guided Social Change' 1969, documents the beginning of agreement between the sangha and government on policies of "national integration" and "community development programmes" in 1960. He notes that by 1967 there were 47 graduate Bangkok monks, "morally rearmed" and trained with assistance from the Asia Foundation to fight communism. Eleven were sent to the Northern Region.

members of the monkhood (sangha). Every monk had access to any wat even across national boundaries into Burma and Laos. Thus the members of the sangha, already held in respect by the people and acknowledged as teachers, were ideally placed to assist in anti-insurgency programmes. The church and state together operated schools in Bangkok to train monks in giving special sermons. The entertainment that proved so popular in Kuang Pau was given by one of these 'missionary' monks who could reassure the laity that the church was flexible enough to understand and care about their everyday well-being in a changing world as well as being a symbol of an ideal unchanging Thailand.

In a number of ways, monks and professional entertainers were related. Both, ideally and often in fact, were wanderers who had left their homes to live on charity in the best sense. They repaid their benefactors who gave them food and shelter with knowledge transmitted through their special skills. Besides public accomplishments in giving sermons, singing, storytelling, performing ritual actions, dancing and acting, monks and entertainers were expecte to have private spiritual powers. Every traditional entertainer paid homage to his special spirit teacher or teachers as well as those living who had taught him, and monks of particular holiness were thought to have access to powerful spirit advisors. Their intercession was sought on different matters by the villagers according to the various reputations of individual monks and entertainers.

Even in the formal conduct of their business there were similarities between the duties of monks and of entertainers. Much of what each learned in study was transmitted to the uninitiated at a performance where there was an opposition between active performers

and more passive audience. In both cases there were ritual responses from the audience although in the case of some entertainments, the responses were less carefully structured than the formal exchanges at religious services. Whether formal or informal, the religious or entertainment specialists introduced ideas that were not already totally accepted in the local community they were addressing in a way that was challenging and provocative. They were instrumental in manipulating moral attitudes.

The Sermon

At designated festivals through the year, special very popular sermons were allowed where material from everyday life could be used as a gloss to interpret and bring alive the portions set in the Scriptures (thâm) that described the exemplary lives of the Buddha in his various incarnations. The New Rice Sermon was of this sort and the monk used it as a tool with which to effect adjustment to moral attitudes practised by sections of his audience. 'Morals' in this exposition refer simply to those patterns of behaviour and attitude acceptable to the majority of people in any given area or group so that it would be possible to behave in a way considered within the boundaries of morality in one area or group which would be a transgression of morality in an adjacent area or with another group. Described in this way, 'morals' merely define the boundaries of social norms.

It was along these boundaries that the monk directed his sermon, honing his cutting edge on one side against the rigid requirements of thâm, the Law (Scriptures) that set his unalterable text for the sermon, and on the other, against the private fears, disappointments, guilts

and fantasies of local domestic patterns.

The sermon set for the festival was a popular section of the Thet Maha Chat, the Great Lives, which told the story of the Buddha demonstrating the virtue of generosity during his incarnation as Prince Wesandǫm. The Prince's pure nature was contrasted with that of Chuchok, an old, dirty, ugly and greedy Brahmin. Chuchok was a study in environmental pollution: his lusts tainted and perverted all with which he came into contact. He courted and married a beautiful girl whose character then changed so that she demanded the two children of Prince Wesandǫn as slaves. The text was recited accurately in its appropriate chanted rhythms, and even the treatment of the story with its mundane glosses was traditional, but it was the artistry of the monk at Kuang Pau that kept 2,500 people keyed to the brim of laughter for three hours. Parts of his sermon were remembered and quoted in the village throughout the ensuing year and on every occasion that there was a gathering in the researcher's house, tapes made at the sermon were requested. (A sermon on the same text the following year, heard in Cholburi Province, failed to make a similar impression. There were few additions to the normal sermon audience of old men and old women, and these wandered away during the recital.)

Phya Anuman Rajadhon explained the general appeal of the sermon in his booklet on the Thet Maha Chat in Thai Culture New Series 21. He reported that there was a Pali version of 1,000 stanzas that could be recited, but that the people preferred the version they could understand. "For the contents in the version (vernacular) are of a more secular nature, and in fact in some parts of the story, the reciter has to display his wit and additions of his are thrown into

the recitation which sometimes border on drollery and vulgarity. The orthodox people frown." He picked out the Chuchok story as a particular favourite. "There will gradually be more people in the congregation in the succeeding kan (episodes) until the fifth kan describing the scene of Chuchok, the aged Brahmin Mendicant and his shrew, the young and beautiful wife. (sic) There is much drollery and humour which naturally attracts the people. If the reciting monk is well known for his wit and humour, the place is packed to the utmost for people from far and near come to hear the recitation ... In former days such recitations with additions of drollery and humour in some cases overstepped the limits of modesty and were distasteful to cultured minds. Through the progress of time such things are now seldom to be found, for moral ideas have changed, but the need of humour is still there with the folk." The 'progress of time' which had changed moral ideas in Bangkok, had not yet in 1971 lowered the tolerance among Kuang Pau villagers to witty vulgarity.

The material of the sermon allowed a balance between the heavenly and the earthly. Apart from linking sequences and preliminary greetings and blessings, half the sermon expounded on the golden age of the Buddha when there was a mingling between a purer earth and heaven, and half on the follies of this life which Chuchok represented. Through his artistry, the monk involved the community of Kuang Pau in Chuchok's undistinguished career, his unromantic courtship and his orthodox wedding so thoroughly that he was naming local celebrities as guests at the wedding celebrations and mimicking their particular quirks and pomposities in reporting speeches and songs. In this way he closed the time gap between the pre-Buddha times of Prince Wesandon and modern times of upheaval. By a similar

alternation between the then and the now and by crashing the barriers with jokes, he made accessible the remote heavens of Indra and presented the Buddha's times as if just a slight effort on the part of his audience would be enough to close the distances of both time and virtue that separated them.

The congregation had certain expectations as to the conduct of a sermon. They expected serious blessings during which they listened with hands folded in the lotus 'praying' position. Then came thanks to organisers and introduction of dignitaries. The sermon proper began with an announcement of the story: "This sermon is the story of Phra Wed. In one of his earliest incarnations the Buddha was born as Prince Wesandǫn. At this period in the cycle of his lives, he gave away alms to everybody who asked of him, and he gave of all he had, even his children whom he loved most of all. He was willing to give away everything and make himself into a man with no possessions." Then there was an illustration of the Buddha's mercy in another life, his miracles and trials during his incarnation as the Buddha, and the introduction to the Phra Wed story with an account of his mother, Indra's wife, preparing to descend from the heavens for an incarnation. The life and exile of Prince Wesandǫn and his family followed to the point where Chuchok would beg the children, then the scene switched to the bizarre life of old Chuchok. The audience expected fun to be poked at Chuchok who embodied the negative aspects of all Wesandǫn's virtues: he was acquisitive (of food, gold, and an unsuitable wife and the Prince's children), he was greedy, he forced his own way to the discomfort of others, and he was dirty both physically (there is a reference to filthy pillows in his house) and ritually (during his courtship he sat under the house hugging foot-washing water and he sat in the dog's place).

These expectations the audience entertained as to the proper formula for the New Rice sermon were constantly upset by the monk's seeming levity. Two illustrations will suffice: the introductory blessings and part of the description of heaven. (A full translation of the sermon text in (in) Appendix A). In the blessings, the list of 'diseases' from which the monk asked protection showed the anxious mothers and grandmothers of Kuang Pau that their worries about their children threatening suicide and being spoiled by foreign manners and machines were universal and recognised by the Church rather than just private fears.

Illustration A

> Welcome all my grandfathers and grandmothers, fathers, mothers, older and younger brothers and sisters, relatives, friends and faithful supporters of this Wat who come to make merit. This is a New Year Blessing. The year 2513 has already passed, and taken away with it all its sorrows for everyone. Now 2514 is with us and I ask blessings for you all. I ask for the three jewels to guard you and keep you from all ills. I ask particularly for the four blessings:
>
> 1 May you have long life.
>
> 2 May you all have smooth and pretty skins with none of the cares and wrinkles of old age.
>
> 3 May you have happiness in body and spirit.
>
> 4 May you have strength and good health and energy.
>
> I ask for you all that you have the kind of freedom from all ills that is advertised on the radio (for such medications as Tiger Balm); that all ills be cured with a single application and that you be protected from all new ills that might be invented. (Here he made a rapid list of diseases subject to the advertised cure, such as was given on the radio by programme sponsors, but he mixed real diseases, pseudo diseases and nonsense words that sounded like diseases.) I hope too that you won't get the disease of sponging off others (rôk biethien). And there's another disease I would have disappear: the Communist Disease. And another that likes to take money out of the pocket, namely the Lucky Ring disease. (Lucky rings were sold in every market. They had flashy, expensive looking stones and were said to protect the

wearer on the road, bring good fortune in lotteries, etc.). There's another disease I ask to have stopped: the Dancing Western-style disease. (Dances where male and female touched each other offended against Thai manners and morals.) There's a disease also of driving vehicles too fast - Yamaha, Honda and Toyota varieties. We ask that to go too. And there is a modern disease that old people fear - let's ask for protection from it: the disease of their children eating poison to die (rôk lûk kin yâ tai).

Heaven the monk turned into a homely place where any Kuang Pau villager would feel comfortable.

Illustration B

In heaven it is great fun: if you don't believe me then you can ask anyone and they will tell you what fun it is in heaven. But personally, I've never seen it.

In heaven, it's fun because it is a land of wishes: whatever you want you wish for. For example, if you want to have a big tall house, all you have to do is think of it and there it is. If you want a Honda - all you have to do is to sit down and think for five minutes and there you have a Honda 295 cc (not as yet invented). This world of ours is very hard. If you want something, you can't have it. If you want some money you have to ask Mum and Dad. Then Mum and Dad are upset because they haven't any money to give you and so the child says: 'Oh, if you won't give me any money, then I'll take medicine and die' (kin yâ tai). In heaven, even food is there for the wishing. You think of it and there it is. If you think of a dish of noodles (kuei tio, the normal mid-day and snack fare) then there it is front of you. If a chap thinks of meat balls (lûk cin - small round slippery balls scattered among the noodles) the size of Pomolo (som ô, the size of a treble grapefruit) - Phuthothammasanko! So big! (expletive from Khonmuang slang: mother of the Buddha!) Don't think that this old monk is kidding you - those lûk cin the size of Pomolo - think about eating those! But there's no problem in heaven about getting them down. All you have to do is to think about eating them - and that plate of kuei tio (noodles) disappears, all of it, inside!

These two examples demonstrate the monk's technique in removing the elements of remoteness which normally kept heaven, the age of the Buddha and the monks at a distance from ordinary village life in Kuang Pau. For a while, the monk closed the distance with laughter. His style and timing as well as a mimic's flexibility of voice and an

extensive knowledge of all traditional poetry rhythms and modern popular songs gave him total mastery over his congregation's reactions so that for minutes at a time the tape recording was buried under helpless laughter. This laughter was courted by the conjunction of the incongruous. When the monk used the language of the market, the result had to be funny or offensive. When the monk of the highest Maha grade sang part of a pop song banned from the radio for its erotic innuendo, the reaction to such a shock had to be either anger or laughter.[1] Fortunately the monk's talent was abundant and his personality so attractive that he kept control despite dangerous brinkmanship.

Since there was in Kuang Pau such a strong emphasis on the matching of only those things that were fitting (mot som), the reaction to mis-matches was an explosion either of anger or of laughter. Anger kept the mis-matched parties firmly apart. Laughter began a process of fusion. The second incident of the same mis-match provoked less violent laughter until the laughter weakened to a tolerant smile. Hence the incidence of laughter through the sermon would seem to be a useful indicator of the places where the monk introduced elements that ran counter to extant moral attitudes in Kuang Pau.

It is simpler perhaps to begin with those areas free from the challenge of the monk's jokes. Passages about Prince Wesandǫn's virtuous actions were never interrupted, neither were the opening

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1 One of the Ten Precepts avowed by a Novice at his ordination ceremony was that he would avoid witnessing displays of music, songs and dance.

stories about the Buddha's wisdom in dealing with the murderer Ongkulimân, his own disapproving father and a hostile populace. Formal Blessings were treated seriously but were vulnerable to additions of the monk's own devising. The monk's thanks to his Kuang Pau sponsors were serious. Surprisingly, his treatment of proper domestic arrangements was serious as were his descriptions of the evils that attended the birth of Chuchok and the disruption he caused in a village when he and his new wife moved in there. Thus generosity and wisdom were still honoured and among human family arrangements there was still seen to be a proper way of conducting affairs and inevitable uncomfortable results when this proper order was breached. There was still an ideal pattern.

By contrast, Chuchok's whole greedy life was a mockery. There was hardly a pause in the jokes and laughter for a complete third of the sermon that described Chuchok's youth, schooling, career, courtship and wedding. Despite this, he seemed to come off well. If his situation by the end of the sermon were measured against that of Prince Wesandǫn using a Levi-Strauss system of oppositions, Chuchok not Wesandǫn would be in the most desirable position. He was living in a village (though in danger of expulsion) while Wesandǫn lived alone in the forest in the way of witches and brigands (though invited to live at Siiwalât). The Prince should have taken his place at the top of the social hierarchy but he was living at the lower extreme. The beggar Brahmin, despite the system, had achieved a comfortable village home. And the food, if Lévi-Strauss is to be followed, indicated that Chuchok was the more civilised and the Prince more bestial. The berries and uncooked food of the Royal hermit represented nature and savagery, but the food Chuchok scavenged, despite his animal nature,

was good village curry and rice.

It could be argued that the monk was restricted to a set passage of scripture which could have no bearing on contemporary events, but since he had licence to present any part of a long story and choose to condense or elaborate as he felt fit, the argument of this chapter assumes that his emphases were not accidental. The point could well have been that although Chuchok was a totally unattractive figure, he exhibited some of the qualities needed in a land where 'progress' was an ideal. He was independent of local opinion; he was a resourceful entrepreneur and single-minded in the pursuit of his objectives. This interpretation is born out when it is seen that the other areas that came under attack from jokes contained attitudes unsuitable for the ideal of progress.

The new philosophy the monk was encouraging, with great subtlety, was revolutionary. His jokes suggested that: a) the patterns for behaviour offered by the Buddhist religion were not remote but concerned everyday life; b) that individuals were not victims of an impersonal system but had considerable control; c) that if this were the case they must accept responsibility for their own achievements; d) and that compliance with the letter of external forms was not enough, for the attitudes of individuals mattered as much as their deeds.

a) the patterns for behaviour offered by the Buddhist religion were not remote but concerned everyday life.

Each of the Three Jewels of Buddhism were treated in a different way to bring them nearer to the audience. i) The Monk, by insisting

that he and his fellows were subject to human temptations and interests, made the Sangha more approachable. ii) Scriptures thåm, he was already using as an instrument so that the story he told through a sermon was intimately connected with the minutiae of daily life. iii) The Buddha, though no joke sought to tarnish his virtue, he brought nearer by a normal literary device. He commuted the time distance that separated the Buddha's life from that of his own.

i) To reveal the Sangha as composed of approachable men, the monk did violence to his vows of austerity. In the quoted passage A, he implied that he listened to the radio (which was forbidden) and that he took an interest in modern problems connected with Western dancing, fast vehicles, suicide and Communism, from all of which he should have held aloof. In passage B he showed, for a monk, far too much interest in the subject of food and in other parts of the sermon he delighted in fun at the expense of sex, mini-skirts, child-rearing and varieties of domestic and market-place slang that a monk should never have heard and certainly not repeated. It was even a shock to hear a monk complaining about the quality of food and other offerings taken to the wat: a monk should have been a passive recipient accepting offerings in order to make it possible for the congregation to make Merit, not actively passing judgment and reminding the people that their offering was his breakfast.

ii) Thåm, the Scriptures, were brought into a more intimate relationship with the people partly through exploitation of different language styles. In quoted passage B, the monk used a Khonmuang expletive in the middle of a description of heaven. Normally different language styles were strictly occasion specific so that using the

correct form of language mattered on many occasions more than what was being said. The monk muddled this idea. He took great pains to muddle it. When the congregation was being lulled by an expected form of words, the monk inevitably threw in nonsense words or made a sudden switch of style. All the time he called attention to the substance of the sermon rather than its form. Often he focussed attention by an allusion to modern popular songs (the researcher noticed parts of fifteen songs but there were probably more) or sang lines from sǫ or khâu courting poetry or like. His fluency and erudition in every type of oral literature seemed to show that each was as valid as any other and the sermon was one form among many. The content not the form was paramount.

This stark recital of a subtle process over-emphasises the message, but so closely did a particular form usually represent an occasion in Kuang Pau that a mixing of forms had to be connected with an important message. This was particularly true in a sermon. Sermons were usually in Pali and unintelligible to the laity. Congregations, usually of old people, were cued in by formulae to the correct moment for joining the hands in respect and making responses. At the beginning of the blessings quoted in passage A, the congregation joined their palms in respect, but during the list of fake diseases where the monk was provoking laughs, younger people were confused, some letting their hands drop, some joining them again when they noted the example of the older people. The monk was forcing people to listen to what he said as well as the way in which he said it.

iii) The Buddha's life time was made into an almost contemporary event by joking allusions to some parallel events in Kuang Pau. There was a miracle performed by the Buddha when he made red rain pour from the skies

but only on the good. The monk's comment brought into the same context a flood in Kuang Pau the previous month that had spoiled the rice harvest and was in no way a blessing. He contrasted favourably the fairly modest wat at Kuang Pau with a less grand and spacious wat that had sheltered the Buddha, and he spanned the time barrier with a modern song recently banned from the radio which in its new context seemed to be part of the Buddha's reflection on the characters of different people.

b) individuals were not victims of an impersonal system but had considerable control.

There was a tendency among villagers in Kuang Pau towards a fatalistic interpretation of the Buddhist system. If they were poor or things went wrong, it was because their fate had been designed that way. (If on the other hand a villager achieved some measure of success, he was inclined to believe that it was through his own efforts although his neighbours knew better.) In the interests of 'progress' it was necessary that potential workers in an industrialising society should feel enough personal freedom and incentive to want to 'better' their standard of living. The monk in his treatment of heaven, of besetting ills and of doctrine used a light touch to suggest that people not events were in control.

In his introductory sentence to his description of Heaven in quote B, the monk stressed his deliberately non-authoritarian approach to the business of sermonising. Although he was authorised, as a monk, to discourse on heavenly things, he reminded his audience that he really knew no more than they did because neither had he visited

heaven. In other places he played down his authority by offering a choice: after talking about the selfishness of Communists who stir up war then sleep comfortably in their beds, he said: "I don't know much about it - you don't have to listen to what I say. If you believe me, then you believe me. If not, never mind". He followed that in the next paragraph with: "Are you listening? If you can listen, then listen. If you can't listen - then listen!" His gentle mocking of authority was taken to its limits in a comment about the Scriptures (thåm) which he was not permitted to alter. He said the following passage very quickly, sandwiched in the middle of a hilarious interlude about a woman breast-feeding a fractious child at the same time as trying to prepare the dinner: "It's not that I'm saying all this to make it sound funny, but the holy law (thåm) is like that. If these things are in the thåm then one must say them and if they're not in the thåm then one must put them in oneself". The monk's own infectious giggles erupted after this bold statement.

The rest of passage B described the complete control each person would have in heaven over food,housing, transport, and in the continuation of the passage, over clothing, age and sexual potency. Even in passage A, although it is meant to be asking for blessings only bestowed by heaven, the monk poked fun at similar 'cure all' claims made in radio advertisements, as if an application of Tiger Balm could as easily cure Dancing Western-style as suicide.

c) that individuals must accept responsibility for their own achievements.

This is a corollary of point b). The monk nagged on seemingly small points where there was irresponsibility. He complained about

lads who drove their fast motorbikes so that even the monks were pushed into the ditch, and he teased the old people who scolded their children for using bad language but used exactly the same language themselves when they yelled at them. His lecture on 'fair speaking' which usually meant speaking in a way that was suitable for the occasion, had a slightly new slant. He advocated kindly words giving the point of view of the person receiving those words:

> For example, when people bring rice to make merit at the wat, maybe it isn't any special kind of day, but the Phra will say: 'Oh, today is a good day!' If the Phra happened to say that it was a bad day, then the people bringing the food might be unhappy and gather up his breakfast and run away with it home. If he doesn't speak well then he is likely to have no food. This kind of good speaking, everybody likes. Again, for example, you see many old people complaining about themselves and saying: 'It won't be long before I'm dead', and then the children have to say: 'Oh, you're strong yet. You're nowhere near dying. Many people will have to die before you. You have more strength than any of us.' Then the old person will be so happy he'll get strong again and not die. But some people speak unkindly and if the old person says: 'I'll be dead soon', then the youngster agrees and says: 'Oh yes, probably, because you look old already'. Say that and the old man dies. A person with a bad mouth is no good.

d) compliance with the letter of external forms was not enough, but the attitude of the individual mattered as much as his deeds.

In the same way that the monk forced attention onto what was being said rather than just the form in which it was being said, so he attempted to bring into focus right attitudes. Those who took regular offerings to the wat, attended festivals and listened to sermons would expect to be accumulating Merit bun. The monk had a warning for them. Perhaps they were not really making merit. Just before passage B, the monk paid the people of Kuang Pau a compliment in comparing the women in their offerings with Nang Phussati, mother of the Buddha. But, he went on to say that in those days, 'they really

made merit (tham bun). That was because they had real belief'. He said: "When people made merit in former times, they made it for real, because they really appreciated the merit they would gain from offerings. These days they make merit and complain at the same time, for instance: when the phra goes to give a sermon, the people see his little sermon book and say 'Oh, we had a sermon yesterday. Have we got to have another again today already?' So things are getting worse. People like that don't really make merit."

This would have been a disquieting piece of news for most of the congregation. There was no habit established of questioning motives. (During village interviews and in soliciting answers for questionnaires, the researcher had the utmost difficulty with the question "why?". If a question using "why?" were posed, the answer was usually "yes".) The monk went on to make fun of offerings made to the wat that were really a way of dumping rubbish. He teased and complained about the deformed chickens and pigs taken to the wat, and the bitches liberated in the wat compounds just as they began to come on heat and run in packs. He also discoursed at length on the food offerings, how in the lettuce season the monks were offered the equivalent of lettuce salad, lettuce soup, lettuce curry, boiled lettuce, fried lettuce and lettuce chops, and then at New Year they were given everyone's leftovers in a 'scrambled soup'. He laughed at those who tried to cheat in their offerings by cooking up meat in differently marked leaf packets and giving the inferior ones to the monks. This kind of criticism was probably not justly made at Kuang Pau where people were poor but often more generous to the wat than they could afford, and in the researcher's experience the monks were always taken the best. His humorous complaints did however emphasise the lesson that an insensitive

adherence to the outward show of making offerings could cover a barren heart and that neither the recipient nor the giver would benefit.

All the jokes in the sermon related to at least one of these four points (a) to (d). It is the contention of this chapter that the Church and State realised a need to re-align attitudes in country districts and that the monk's joking was a result of deliberate policy. Communists were mentioned three times in the sermon: in the context of a disease; as chopping up people to make fertiliser; and as stirring up division and strife for their own selfish ends. The monk, himself a contradictory figure, was in a pivotal position from which he could initiate the redirection of attitudes. Being of the Priestly order he represented the most conservative morals of the community, while as an artist he could take advantage of the licence extended to entertainers. Part of his contribution was to present in a challenging and forceful way those aspects of worship that involved active participation and individual responsibility, as well as the more passive virtues already accepted in Kuang Pau of renunciation, self-transcendence and interdependence.

The monk as cleric

In his capacity as cleric, the monk was bound by the expectations of his congregation. In their experience the concern of the phra was with the hereafter. They were seen as public figures acting as guardians of the proper channels for communication with the hereafter which could only be effected through the intermediacy of the wat. But the monk wished to make statements which would affect not only the hereafter but also the present. Part of his task was to break through the barriers which separated the present and the hereafter in

the minds of his Kuang Pau congregation. In this respect, the monk was attempting, from his privileged position as an entertainer, to invade the territory of a different hierarchy of specialists, that of the mǫ and phrâm. It was from the mǫ and phrâm that the Kuang Pau villagers asked help when there was a need for urgent interference in the present course of things. Their skills were in ritual practices involving spirits (phi).

Some mǫ in Kuang Pau were highly respected, some feared and others despised even while their proficiency was still acknowledged. They usually charged a modest amount for their services and specialised in many branches of healing, astrology, divination and protection. There were mǫ dû, Seeing Doctors, who were astrologers and soothsayers: they computed birth charts and examined for compatibility the charts of those wanting to get married, and they performed the locally important task of defining auspicious days for every kind of household and farm chore, whether for gathering wood or building a house, and for all celebrations, whether moving house or ordination. Mǫ pau were Blowing Doctors who could heal by blowing away the sickness with appropriate charms. Mǫ phi was a general title for those who had a measure of control over spirits (phi) either as mediums or through having access to the proper charms for blessing an amulet or potion that would give protection against harmful influence, spiritual or physical.

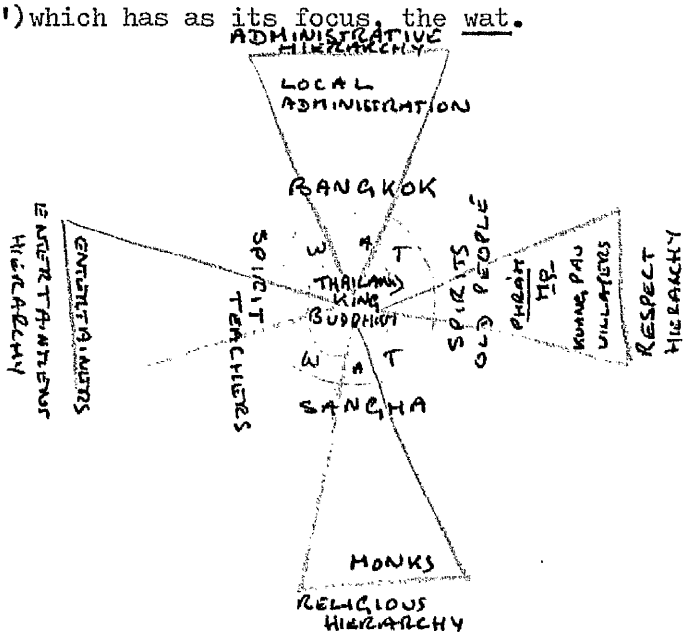
Some mǫ were also called phrâm if they had learnt to read the Lanna Thai northern script and could officiate at cremations, public offerings to the phi or such ceremonies as ordinations, weddings and exorcism of harmful influences. There was an overlap of skills and

some phrâm were also mǫ, but phrâm, because their main duties were at public functions for the good of the whole community rather than with individuals, tended to be more respected. Usually both mǫ and phrâm became interested in acquiring their special skills during their time at the wat where they had access to books and to teachers. Some professional monks who stayed in the wat practised (unofficially) as mǫ but they could not practise as phrâm because the phra and phrâm had complementary duties on many public occasions. For instance, at ordination ceremonies, the monks were invited to breakfast and to chant, and then it was the turn of the phrâm and entertainers to perform certain ritual, to please the spiritual beings, both thewadâ and phî, and to prepare the candidate by calling together all the spiritual influences of his body (khwan), before presenting him again to the monks at the wat for his initiation. On these occasions it was demonstrated that at least on the lower levels of their pyramid structures, the hierarchies were distinct: the same man would not perform both types of ritual. Entertainers could be both mǫ and phrâm.

Both hierarchies, that to which the monk belonged and that of which the local mǫ and phrâm were part, were related at their highest points. They derived ultimate authority from the same source which was also recognised by Kuang Pau villagers: the example and continued spiritual vigilance of those in the community who had been its leaders and had died. These forefathers had bequeathed to their successors the traditions of the community so that by definition they were the most wise, the oldest and the most worthy of respect. Beyond this point the logic of informants became confused: because they were the oldest and wisest and most respected, then those forefathers must have

lived exemplary lives and been on familiar terms with the thewadå (minor gods and angels) which also meant that they were good Buddhists and that their accumulated merit (bun) gave them a status near that of the Buddha. Their authority was therefore endorsed by that of the Buddha and the Buddha's authority by their support.

Diagramatically, the hierarchies can be visualised as having a radial arrangement (similar to that of the northern Thai 'entertainment daisy') which has as its focus, the wat.



The wat seemed to serve as a clearing house through which related hierarchies derived their authority. The phrâm and mǫ as well as the monks took as their point of reference the wat. What was represented to each hierarchy was compatible but not the same. Members of Kuang Pau community, when they appealed to either the monks or the mǫ and phrâm were reassured that each hierarchy found a temporal resolution in the wat. This position was never explained in so many words to the researcher, but evidence for the assumptions was offered by the wat itself.

The wat at Kuang Pau was a complex of buildings surrounded by a wall on which were statues of the thewadå. The complex was divided by an internal wall between the living quarters for the monks (kuti) and the devotional buildings which comprised a chapel (bột) where there were statues of the Buddha and paintings from the story of his incarnation as Prince Wesandọn around the walls, a public meeting room (sålå), a library for devotional books and a block of utility rooms. Also within the devotional section, there was a shrine propped against the outer wall where offerings were made daily and at special festivals to the Lord of the Place (cau thi) and the spirits of the six directions (north, south, west, east, up and down); there was a permanent shrine in front of the main entrance where the spirits were tended (phi); flowers and candles were offered to the principal pillar supporting the chapel; there was a place where regular offerings of water and white flags were made to the dead; and a tree representing that under which the Buddha received enlightenment was propped up with wooden pillars that had been decorated at ceremonies to which the spirits were invited to help enjoy often excessive quantities of alcohol.

From the researcher's point of view, it seemed that there could be contradictions in these arrangements, but Kuang Pau informants in answer to questions aimed at clarifying the position simply reassured the researcher that the arrangements were thus and that they were correct. It was the custom in Kuang Pau to look to the wat for guidance in things temporal as well as spiritual so that the villagers expected teaching, healing and protection to emanate from the wat as naturally as the concern with their eternal salvation. The monks at Wat Kuang Pau who were all local men, and the Abbot who was born in Kuang Pau and had been a monk there for 21 years, shared this view.

The Abbot had no hesitation in praising those of his monks who were able to help the community with their knowledge of astrology and skills in divination. The Abbot of the more sophisticated Wat Phra That in Chom Thong was more circumspect and attempted to support the official position. Initially, in an interview, he said that there were no mǫ at Wat Phra That, and he recited the general rule that it was forbidden to monks to practise astrology and the other occult arts leading to healing and divination. He said that any monks wishing to practise would have to leave the wat, but then he modified his statement by saying that the rule was not strongly enforced because the people came to the wat expecting this kind of help. He said a phra could also be a mǫ but that he should not use his authority as a monk, as a member of the sangha to give strength to his words. And he added that there were in fact monks at Wat Phra That famous for their special powers.

Informants in Kuang Pau never confused the two hierarchies of duties attended to on the one hand by the monks and on the other by mǫ and phrâm but they were content that the same personnel should in some cases attend to both kinds of duties. There were mǫ who were not monks (although most had been ordained) and there were monks who were not mǫ. The choice was seen as a personal matter. So long as the wat remained central, apparent contradictions were felt to be satisfactorily resolved.

The wat was a focus of cultural activity. Wat Kuang Pau had never been a teaching wat, but before Kuang Pau school was built the only suitable place for public gatherings was in the wat compound. Local pride was concerned to make Kuang Pau wat the biggest, richest and most attractive in the District (apart from Wat Phra That which

was a centre for pilgrimage because of its relic, a piece of the Buddha's bone that could fly, and because the King was its Patron). There was a committee of twenty people to oversee the upkeep of the wat and it was at the wat that the Young Buddhist Association and the Young Farmers' Club had their headquarters. All the communally owned accoutrements for feasts and festivals (mats, bowls, water pots, plates, spoons, etc.) were stored at the wat and requests to make use of them had to be accompanied by offerings of food to the monks, and usually an invitation to them to attend the celebration. Every day food was taken to the wat (the Kuang Pau monks did not walk round the village) and on the weekly wan phra festival days. At special festivals offerings were so generous that after meals for the three monks and nine novices had been set aside, heaps of food were made on the ground from the excess.

In the sense that the wat was built, supported and used by the people of Kuang Pau, it was owned by them and represented the village past and present. Its custodians too in some respects were felt to be a special kind of public property. When local men and boys were ordained and entered wat Kuang Pau, they shed their personal characteristics and even if they had been well known as slow students or lazy farmers, that was (in most contexts) forgotten and they were expected to put on the authority of the sangha. Their words were immediately invested with more wisdom and it was their duty to present themselves as teachers, not only of the Buddhist religion but in all matters of importance. They were expected to represent to the people the wonder and example of the golden age of the Buddha and also the accumulated wisdom of their own forefathers. The wisdom of the mo and phrâm was inherited from the forefathers. One of the points at

which the two hierarchies of 'respect' and religion came into closest contact was when the village ordained its men and sent them into the monkhood at the local wat. Through the ceremony there was a counterpoint of ritual between the monks and the phrâm, which then became reconciled in the wat, focus of both the religious and social 'respect' hierarchies.

The monk preaching the New Rice sermon at Kuang Pau used the local wat with all its associations to focus upon himself the double authority of the sangha expressed through the wat and of Kuang Pau's forefathers embodied in the wat. His power was augmented by his skill as a performer which allowed him the additional licence appropriate to his role as an entertainer.

The monk as entertainer

In Kuang Pau, there were areas of overlap between the duties of monks and phrâm and entertainers. They were in professional attendance on many similar occasions, some of their story and rhythm repertoire was shared and sometimes the one professional could be substituted for the other. For instance, a like performance of the maha chat could substitute for a sermon at the New Rice festival (although the merit for attendance would be considered less than for attending the sermon). The tham khwan ceremony of calling together the body spirits at an ordination could be performed either by a white-robed phrâm supported or not by an orchestra, or by a team of sǫ singers and pipers. Actors were often invited to the same functions as were the monks and many of them could perform the ritual duties of phrâm. Conversely, phrâm usually had melodious voices, good memories and could compete for the attention usually given to entertainers.

Entertainers as well as monks and phrâm were often powerful mǫdù and mǫphi.

All three kinds of specialist, phrâm, monk and entertainer, were representatives of worlds other than the mundane. Their special knowledge and power made the benefits of these worlds temporarily available to the rest of the community so that in their official capacity they were admired. Phrâm and mǫ had access to knowledge that had protected the forefathers of the community and controlling powers over spirits, ghosts and deities. Monks, through their special position as intermediaries were a pathway for merit to make its way to the people. The worlds of make-believe revealed by the entertainers brought stories, music and dance from the past and provided pleasure for the deities they invited to attend performances as well as their human audiences. Access to other worlds also made these specialists potentially dangerous. Their degree of integration within the community reflected the private embarrassment that accompanied the public admiration.

Phrâm were the most fully integrated in the Kuang Pau community. Those who could read the Lanna Thai script and who could officiate at funerals, ordinations and tham bun ceremonies were known by titles of respect that recalled their days in the wat, nân and noi and as headmen pho luang. Normally they were conservative figures whose duty it was to guard against change and innovation that might cause sudden disruption in the community. The mǫ were treated with respect on a diminishing scale which had at its other extreme the fear and isolation surrounding witches and sorcerers. They were kept at a distance because their dealings with unpredictable phi gave them potentially disruptive powers.

Entertainers had a glamour but they were a private embarrassment. They were admired for their fine clothes, the money they were thought to earn and for their skill but they were distrusted as unsteady people. In response to a questionnaire, several Kuang Pau parents said they would be glad if their children became entertainers, but none wanted their children to marry entertainers. When so singers were being given lunch during a housewarming celebration at the researcher's house, village girls expressed horror when a singer was invited to use the mirror in the researcher's bedroom to arrange her hair. Although the singers were being honoured and applauded publicly, the girls prevented her using a private room in the house on the grounds that "she was only a singer". Ironically, the artists interviewed during fieldwork were among the most conservative of citizens, more than usually conscious of their traditional artistic and cultural heritage and also of the threats to it.

Social strategies were sufficient to ward off the potentially disruptive influences of entertainers and mo so that they could live within the community. Monks were physically segregated and further cut off by rules relating to sex, eating and all other social intercourse. They represented a moral hierarchy incompatible with that against which those in the community usually matched their actions. There was some private muttering about the greed or laxity of particular monks and Abbots, but publicly the image of Buddhism was of unapproachable purity. Vices despised in monks were projected on to the phrâm. Local informants made a point of protecting the reputation of monks to the researcher. If a figure of fun on the like stage wore the saffron robe of a monk and carried a begging bowl, it was often explained spontaneously to the researcher that: "He is not

really a monk. It's a Brahmin". If in a story a joke was going against a monk, informants would explain: "He was a monk before the Lord Buddha came" - which turned the figure into a Brahmin. Monks were kept pure at the cost of obvious self-deception, but in that way they were made into representatives of an ideal totally unattainable by ordinary people. Since that world was out of reach there was no sense in trying to achieve the Buddhist ideal. To respect and pay tribute was the best that could be expected.

By isolating and encapsulating in extreme respect Buddhist functionaries and teachings, Kuang Pau villagers succeeded in making Buddhism irrelevant to their everyday lives. The monk giving the New Rice sermon had to break through this effective barrier. Buddhism was a symbol of Thailand. At every public gathering, the King or his representative opened proceedings by lighting a candle to the Buddha and making obeisance on behalf of the people. If the people did not relate directly to Buddhism, there was the danger that they would feel as little involvement with the ideal of "Thailand".

The tool with which the monk attacked the barrier was a paradox of social structure built into the scriptures set for the occasion. He emphasised his point with beautiful economy when he first introduced the name of the greedy Brahmin beggar, Chuchok. His pronunciation of the name made it sound similar to his own title of Tu Jau, a title given to monks of the highest grade. The trick created an explosion of laughter but the statement was serious. He was in effect saying that he, and with him the Buddhist order, identified not only with the pure Royal Buddha and the pure Prince Wesandǫn but with the beggar the Buddha chose to become and the penniless hermit that Prince Wesandǫn became. The godlike aspects of the Buddha normally stressed were

being played down to give expression to the aspects of the Buddha as the sacrificial lamb. Since the lamb and the Brahmin were representatives of the people, the monk was making an identification with his congregation. In that identification they became as much part of the Royal Buddha as he became greedy Brahmin.

The monk was making an unusual marriage between sets of ideas. There was a normal overlap in function between phrâm and entertainers because they appealed to the same selection of deities, spirits and teachers to aid them in their work and they were given attention because they represented to the community continuity with their illustrious dead at the apex of the respect hierarchy. The Buddhist church being a different hierarchy was usually content to remain isolated, simply extending the Five Precepts of required clean living as a ladder to the Holy life. The monk was prepared, temporarily and using the protection of special license extended to artists, with special space, time and status, to descend the ladder into an arena which would without those protections have contaminated him and been contaminated by him.

The same paradox the monk exploited to involve his congregation in the Buddhist hierarchy, the paradox in social ranking that one figure could be both highest and lowest, king and beggar, he used to extend his own temporary status. He was Tu Jau and Chuchok. Like actors, he was a trickster figure, free from all social restraints because he could not be fitted into a particular scheme. Actors could be king for a day and wear a crown on the stage but pedal a hired tricycle for a precarious living the next day. The Buddha could be a beggar. The respected monk could claim the license of

an artist and be privy to the most embarrassing domestic secrets. A monk, if he knew of them, should never mention the earthy badinage of the market place, cunning trade practices, explosions of frustration in training children, rows between husband and wife, problems of toiletry in child nursing: these were aspects of life from which the male world of Buddhism claimed to isolate itself. The monk protected by special license revealed a familiarity with the domestic situation which would normally have appalled the popular sense of decency. The extraordinary amount of laughter provoked by the New Rice sermon showed that something unusual was happening.

The monk established his claim to the special license of the actor by using as well as special status, special space and special time. When phrâm were performing rituals, a space was cleared for them around a house or around a corpse so that they could pace out the area and place appropriate offerings. Their space needed no clear or permanent markings because they operated with and on behalf of the community. Actors were built a temporary stage, a special area under their complete control where they revealed the worlds of make-believe to which they had access. When they came down off the stage they re-entered the mundane world. A monk giving a sermon was usually doubly insulated. The holiest building in the wat had a permanent and even more holy area set apart where women were never allowed to tread, from which sermons were given and the scriptures read. The monk giving the New Rice sermon came out of the holiest building into the public meeting hall of the wat, but he still sat in the special sermon chair with an image of the Buddha behind him and gifts piled around him. Even while he identified with the people he still firmly represented the Buddhist hierarchy. (Like the actors and the

phrâm, he accepted a fee for his services, but he handed it back to the Young Buddhist Association to buy blankets for the poor in the following month's annual distribution.)

Special time was regularly marked off for Buddhist affairs. Ordinary sermons were preached on wan phra at 6, 7 and 8 day intervals and special sermons on holy days marked on the calendar. There was a rhythm in the year that indicated the most likely and appropriate times for the community to suspend its preoccupation with basic survival to support celebrations for opening a road or a building or for sending a candidate for ordination. These were the times put aside for entertainers. Least predictable were occasions when a phrâm was needed: for a death; to exorcise harmful influences after a tragedy; or to propitiate troublesome spirits. The pattern noted for social distance and special place was repeated with special time. Time for Buddhist affairs was most clearly marked off, actors and musicians were invited at predictable times and phrâm, most close to the community, could operate at any time but within the context of a ceremony with witnesses from the rest of the community.

Time within the subject matter of each specialist also took on gradations of distance. The phrâm appealed to deities, spirits, influences and the recently dead to behave immediately in certain ways. Actors and entertainers operated in a world of indeterminate "sometime". Monks usually preached the ways of a world in past time. The golden age of the Buddha was unapproachably far away. The monk preaching the New Rice sermon contravened this convention to bring the age of the Buddha into the present time and place so that Kuang Pau people would appreciate the relevance of what he was teaching. He made fun of

Kuang Pau celebrities attending Chuchok's wedding and he described contemporaries of the Buddha as using the same slang, having the same family rows and problems and eating the same food as modern villagers. The monk's calculated disregard of the normal gradations of convention made the more dramatic the temporary confusion he engineered in the minds of his hearers when he made the identification between Tu Jau and Chuchok.

"Special licence" related in effect to an agreement between specialist and community that whatever was performed need have no relevance to everyday life and therefore need not be seen as threatening. The immunity to censure safeguarded the specialist, so that for instance a so singer who indulged in a saucy vocabulary and pretended to loose principles in the action of her song should have reasonable respect in her capacity as private citizen. The safeguards also operated in the reverse direction. They protected the community from contamination by alien attitudes. In Kuang Pau, the precautions to keep phrâm removed from contact with the rest of the community were the least elaborate because phrâm were within the bounds of the respect hierarchy. Entertainers drew their authority through the same 'respect hierarchy, but because of their contacts with their worlds of make-believe, their influence with special deities and their relationships with other, different thinking, communities they were potentially more dangerous than phrâm and were confined more clearly to special space, time and status. Monks were the most dangerous because they belonged to a different hierarchy which practised a different system of morals from those handed down through the 'respect hierarchy'.

Regulating morals

The monk was properly hedged about with full protective license. He also spoke with the full authority of the Buddhist church. As far as the congregation was aware he was preaching a traditional sermon in the proper time and place but simply exercised more artistry than usual. This was a true impression in form but not in detail. The monk had a purpose which was political. To make country people into "good Thais", willing to participate in the modernisation and industrialisation of their country, the monk had to break the power of the 'respect hierarchy' where the prime allegiance of the people lay, supplant the phrâm, and incorporate the people into a system where individuals were actively responsible for their own states of mind and behaviour rather than passively following socially prescribed ritual behaviour. His attack had a logical progression which can be more clearly plotted having considered the monk's role beside that of the mǫ and phrâm in Kuang Pau and in the context of local entertainment conventions.

The monk represented a system of behaviour and attitudes, a moral system, alien to that against which the community matched itself. Buddhism was an elitist religion suitable only for monks. Those who could not be monks, which included all women and children, could not begin to practise the ideal path advocated by the Buddha. Monks could neither support themselves physically nor replenish their numbers except with the co-operation of a parallel system. The Five Precepts sil hâ which offered a nominally Buddhist moral framework to the laity were concerned only with basic social harmony forbidding murder, theft, adultery, cheating and drunkenness. The Precepts could be administered to the people by a respected layman and by entertainers

who could make jokes about the more regularly disregarded aspects of the axioms. Sanctions for the more extreme infringements of the Precepts were social rather than of a religious nature, and resulting confusion was wiped clean with ritual administered by phrâm rather than by interference from the Buddhist monkhood.

There were enough safeguards to keep the two systems, that of the Buddhist monkhood and that of the Kuang Pau respect hierarchy apart so that they would exist in parallel supporting each other but without undue interference from either side. It was in the interests of both systems to maintain those safeguards. The link between the two systems was a flow of tribute from the Kuang Pau community towards the idea of Buddhism which was directed through the monks and expressed in gifts and services, and was rewarded with an equivalent quantity of intangible 'merit' bun.

The monk began to demand a different quality of tribute. In his sermon he was stressing the need for a pure heart to accompany the gifts and services. Since there was no way one could calculate purity of heart, either one's own or one's neighbour's, there would be no way to calculate the amount of merit due or the amount that could be relied on in capital reserves of merit. It was no longer enough to rise on wan phra at four in the morning, cook food for the monks, put on neat clothes and walk with a stream of neighbours up to the wat to present the food and receive a blessing. There had also to be a personal commitment, a caring, in order to receive the reward of merit that had formerly been due for the act alone. Teaching people to question their own motives and the apparent virtue of others was one way to lead individuals to independence of the respect hierarchy.

If wealth and status were no longer a sure sign of accumulated merit, an individual might as well trust his own judgment. If purity of heart were a criterion of virtue, then not even the forefathers of his community could give a layman reliable guidance.

It was the ritualistic approach that the monk was attacking. Ritual kept the community rigid because, of its nature, it could not vary. While the community looked to the teachings of their dead for leadership there could be no significant change of direction because the dead could not change. While each member of the community was assigned his place by the date and household of his birth, and personal endeavour was discouraged except within the limits set by that place, there were strong sanctions against innovation. Modification of ethics was a continuing process, but the monk needed to speed the process of change so that Kuang Pau community could participate in a modernising Thailand instead of being left in an agricultural backwater where it would be more vulnerable to communist infiltration.

In Chapter 3, it was shown that young people were becoming more closely integrated in the Thai system through their education and the use of the central language, but in consequence were losing their place in their local respect hierarchy and forfeiting its protective benefits. The monk, while he further destroyed the conservative power of the respect hierarchy, offered the renewed image of the Buddhist church as a supra-social, supra-local alternative to protect the individual. If a pure heart were the most important attribute of an offering, then a child or a woman or a young man had as much opportunity to claim the protection of merit as had a male elder. Even the ritual cleanliness

of monkhood seemed to become less important. A renewed affiliation with a more vital and flexible Church could provide a viable alternative for those alienated by education and ambition from the local community of their birth.

Summary

Since there is no way of being sure of the precise nature of the monk's brief, but assuming that his general instructions were to engage the loyalty of outlying regions in order to protect them against the infiltration of communist propaganda, this chapter has argued that although the subtleties in the monk's effective sermon might not have been consciously engineered, they were deliberate and in line with his overall intentions.

The monk giving the New Rice sermon was a pivotal figure. He represented the most conservative aspects of two different moral systems. He was a Priest of the highest grade in the Buddhist church and when visiting Kuang Pau wat he borrowed the authority of the local 'respect hierarchy'. He also had the skill and the licence of the entertainer to step temporarily out of his role of Priest to revitalise an aspect of the Buddhist church previously left dormant in the Kuang Pau area. His aggressive, challenging humour and invasion of private, mundane, domestic territory opened a way to a personalised religion that by-passed the experts and out-dated the 'respect hierarchy'.

There were normally effective safeguards keeping apart those two systems temporarily represented by the monk giving the sermon. Monks were kept from interference with the community by strict rules relating to all forms of social intercourse which could pervert either

the respect system of the Kuang Pau community or the discipline of the local representatives of Buddhism. While he was giving the sermon, the monk was still kept isolated in a special sermon chair although he was in a public building of the wat, and placed below an image of the Buddha. Both systems seemed to be properly protected from moral contamination by the other and the problems of dealing with contradictory attitudes and which might lead to disintegration. The attack came along the one channel left open for communication between the two systems.

The monks provided a necessary service for Kuang Pau in accepting tribute for the Buddhist church and thus being a channel through which merit could be acquired. While the amount of merit acquired could be related to the amount of tribute offered, the Kuang Pau community had control of the state of their own ritual purity with respect to the Buddhist church. When the monk introduced the factor of motives in giving and the need for purity of heart, the rewards in merit for tribute rendered became impossible to calculate and control went from the community. Responsibility for his own salvation devolved into the hands of the individual. Every passage in the monk's sermon that made the congregation respond with laughter had some connection with the transition situations they would face where there was a collision between old morals suitable for a world where prime loyalty was to a community holding ultimate responsibility for its individuals, and new morals that demanded personal integrity with respect to ideas, where the ultimate responsibility for an individual rested with himself.

This change of attitude that was needed for members of an efficient industrial State was violent. If country districts were

given no stronger system with which to replace their local respect systems they would have disintegrated. The Buddhist church from the point of view of the country communities was remote and set apart to the point of being irrelevant except in its usefulness for transmitting merit. The monk's sermon had that necessary two way thrust, towards bringing the people under the control of the church and towards offering the people a church as vital and relevant to their everyday lives as it was in the golden age of the Buddha himself.

CHAPTER 6

Sǫ and like

Some assumptions have been made throughout this presentation about conditions in Kuang Pau before the research period and before the introduction of a money economy, of universal primary education and before the development of efficient physical communications. These assumptions contributed to a picture of 'traditional' agricultural life against which has been documented in the foregoing chapters an emergence of attitudes that favoured the growth of goal-oriented individuals rather than of an increasingly complex community. These assumptions were built up during fieldwork through conversations with older people in Kuang Pau and through reading the literature, but most particularly they are endorsed by a growing familiarity with the two forms of entertainment that seemed most concerned with the social health and education of the community. The form of reciprocal singing called sǫ guided members of the community into proper action and the operetta form, like, worked out through dramatic representation the suitable way for its audience to feel.

These two entertainment forms offered detailed instructions for harmonious social interaction and provided safe channels for fears and anxieties provoked by ambiguities. They endorsed the 'respect hierarchy' which was the basis for the traditional order. Before proceeding in the next chapter to an analysis of the way in which sǫ and like were undergoing transformation in sympathy with the changing parameters of the social system, it is convenient to pause for a discussion of these two drama forms that give a picture of ideal

traditional agricultural life. All the forms of entertainment, including sǫ and like were changing continuously but traditionally the changes had been less violent and less noticeable than they were becoming during the period of research.

Sǫ and like were preferred by the old and the conservative. They, more nearly than other forms of entertainment, could be described as rituals of incorporation. A part of their mandate was to minimise shocks and surprises and to resist sudden change. They reassured their audiences that it was possible to tame the exuberance of the natural world, to triumph over the underworld, to placate the higher worlds, and to incorporate the personal safely within the established social order.

Sǫ concentrated on the minutiae of domestic interaction. Traditional sǫ was built on a question and answer routine where the woman singer prompted the male to give her detailed explanations of the way houses were built; of the proper procedures at ceremonies; of the way courting was conducted; of the way to bring up obedient sons; of the way to recognise the flowers, the beasts, the timbers and the uses of the forest. Nature was brought into the context of social rules. Creatures of the wilderness were shown to be useful rather than menacing and the beasts and secret terrors of the forest were listed and classified and subdued.

Like acted out feelings that were pertinent to social harmony. Where loyalties were divided between family and his duty, a soldier had to sacrifice his family. Where love was misplaced, that love had to die. Sadness at parting most deeply affected the audience.

Loneliness was the greatest fear. Grief had to be avenged. The love of a son for his mother was the strongest bond. Romance was an excuse for the clowns to mock. Passions that were overwhelming when they remained private were exposed and shared and slotted into their appropriate rank. Tragedy was not allowed because it was personal.

Sǫ

Sǫ was the appropriate entertainment to celebrate an inauguration. To a certain extent, sǫ kept pace with the physical growth of Kuang Pau. If a citizen prospered enough to build a grand new house, he hired sǫ singers for a day to bless and make public his achievement. For new bridges and roads, school buildings, public resting places (sālā) and dormitories for the monks (kuti), sǫ was a fitting way of thanking the workers at the opening. Sǫ could prepare a young man for his new life as a Novice in the monkhood, teach a newly-married couple about their new life, or welcome the monks back into the world with the offerings of new robes after the rainy season retreat at Kathin. Even the New Year was appropriately greeted with sǫ.

Each kind of event was intimately associated with a different sǫ style. Voice pitch, and squeezed or soft tones as well as rhythm patterns and tunes distinguished a proliferation of varieties. Manee Payomyong in his book on Northern Thai literature listed eleven different styles, but each sǫ specialist had his own set of variations. A 53 year old sǫ singer, Jan Thip, sang examples of seven different styles during an interview. He discussed and taught particular sǫ for use on every kind of occasion. If sǫ opened a road, his singers enumerated the difficulties of travel before the road was built,

congratulated the builders, and commented that in these days of progress it was easier to travel to see friends and to make a living. If the sǫ was to open a new kuti (dormitory for the monks), the singers described how the water used to pour through the roof when it rained and commended the villagers for giving money and making merit. For kathin and pha ba ceremonies (giving clothes and money to the monks) the singers rehearsed the story of the first man who had compassion for the Buddha when he was wearing burial clothes from corpses and gave him a blanket for a new robe. (In a way typical of sǫ's dealings with merit, Jan Thip said: "He went home and worked and found that his position improved immediately".) New Year sǫ described all the activities and customs associated with the festival, and there were appropriate sǫ for opening a rest house, paying respects to teachers and ordination. There were also regional variations, in all of which Jan Thip's pupils had to be proficient before he would allow them to sǫ on their own.

Whatever the style, a sǫ performance always began with offerings to the teachers - teachers alive and dead, specified and in general (phithi wai khrù). An opening session brought the present occasion into the context of similar occasions by naming the sponsors and commenting on the achievements of all present. The singers blessed and encouraged, invited good influences and banished hindrances. Their sessions after lunch took the present into its history, linking up with descriptions of traditional practices, but at the same time often penetrating into more dangerous territory. Customs and personal relationships were exposed to closer examination than was normally encouraged, and delicate border areas along the society's moral boundaries were probed more energetically as a successful sǫ developed.

Each of the three so periods was carefully formulated and the skill of the artists was in keeping up the pace of questions and answers with appropriately varied language while ornamenting the established pattern. The so pair was a man and a girl, and it was part of the game of so for the girl to catch out the man in his detailed knowledge of proper procedure. He was expected to answer all her questions because he had been ordained (at least theoretically and usually in practice) so he should have access to wisdom. The pattern was set against an uninterrupted patter of three or four pipes (pi) played by musicians who had learnt to breathe without pausing in their playing so that the effect was like the rolling of bagpipes. The tunes were repeated and the rhythms of singing were repeated. The format, the quest of a disciple or student for an answer from his teacher, was familiar to the people of Kuang Pau. In sermons at the wat they heard how the Buddha revealed the steps on the Path in his response to questions, and in many old stories as well as everyday gossip the question and answer formula brought a vividness to instruction. The pulse of expectancy built up through the day as the more trivial questions were answered and the pair approached more profound and risky questions. The older people and so specialists complained that so fifteen years before had been more instructive and elegant and that now all the young people wanted to hear about was flirting and sex - but the dynamic of so remained the same.

The peak season for so was between January and July, the busy time for building houses and roads, for fairs around New Year in April and for ordinations before the rainy season retreat. That was the period when so artists could find work most weeks and demand their highest fees. Fees were based on negotiation that took into

consideration a number of factors including the time of the year, the distance to the place of performance, whether the sǫ team would be fed, the relationship between the parties, the estimated fortune of the patron, the number of pairs of singers required and the particular sǫ sequences to be performed. There were as many variables affecting all aspects of sǫ: a description of one particular sǫ will serve better than further generalisation to give a picture of the context of a performance.

The researcher had a small cheap house built in Kuang Pau but it was felt that its Housewarming should be a grand occasion. The landlady, one of a dozen Christians in Kuang Pau and half Chinese, decided that it was not necessary for a 'farang' (white foreigner) to go to the mǫ dù to work out an auspicious date: it was enough to ensure that there was no moving on an inauspicious Wednesday or Friday. A date was set three weeks in advance and advertised by word of mouth through sellers in the market, through children and their teachers, through the Chom Thong to Chiengmai taxi system for which the landlady's daughter was a driver, at the landlady's shop, and through loud-speakers at a neighbouring Housewarming, before a sermon at Wat Kuang Pau, at a Merit Making for a dead parent, and at the funeral for the Kemnan's father.

One week before the date set, the next door neighbour Lung Thâ took the researcher and her landlady by taxi to his cousins in a neighbouring hamlet of Sâm Lang. It was the home of Jan Thip. He had been a singer of sǫ for 32 years, and he ran a school training, at that time, 20 young performers. (He retired the next year and died the year after.) His wife, formerly a singer but then his

business manager, brought out water and cigarettes onto the platform that also served as part of a daily market in front of their house. Because they were relatives of Lung Thâ she proposed a 'good' price of 600 bàht (£10) which was accepted, despite a spirited attempt by the landlady to bring it down to 500 bàht on the grounds that the researcher was a poor student rather than a rich 'farang'!

Preparations for the sǫ involved the entire hamlet. On the day the price was agreed, men from about twenty nearby houses brought wood and tools to begin building a raised platform for the players, and their wives and children came to sit on the grass and smoke and joke. Unfortunately they built it too narrow and the day before the sǫ the pû yai bân told them to rebuild it. They borrowed a tarpaulin to keep the sun off the players and on the day, it was decorated with carvings, pictures, leaves and paper streamers. Visitors came in a steady stream to inspect the house to be warmed. Teachers, local officials, two classes of school children, old people and representatives of associations arrived to welcome, congratulate and offer to share in the merit making. The phu yai bân and police were visited to warn of crowds at a public assembly, the Young Buddhist Association agreed to lend loud-speakers, the kamnan registered the house and agreed to recruit special peace-keeping lieutenants, and the landlady organised lists of food to be bought and offerings to be taken to the monks.

Two days before the sǫ, the house was scrubbed and the garden tidied, and the neighbours who had built the house arrived to strengthen the floors in case guests fell through and to nail temporary planks along the balcony railings as flower-pot stands. The flowers in flower-pots arrived from more neighbours making merit.

In the evening, about 20 neighbours arrived to help make Thai flags from tissue paper, to roll the tobacco into cheroots tied with cotton and to wrap mieng (a chew of lime and fermented tobacco) in palm fronds. They listened to tapes of the Phra Wed New Rice sermon while they worked.

The day before the sǫ, after an early rise to cook rice and go to market, the landlady led the researcher and two girls in the house to be Warmed to Wat Kuang Pau to offer food to two monks and ask for permission to borrow chairs, tables, water-pots and equipment for the feast. During that day, about 50 school children helped to bring furniture from the wat and fill the water-pots. And visitors kept arriving, including a procession of gift-givers who brought wood-carvings, necklaces and four pictures of the King and Queen. In the evening about 25 grandmothers arrived to fill the two wai khrù baskets (Honouring the Teachers) with cummin, betel leaves, bananas, flowers, garlic, shrimp paste, lemon grass, salt, peppers, tobacco, wine and 16 bàht each to wave like a flag in a split stick. At least fifty more visitors looked through windows, stood under the house, crowded up the stairs and peered through the split bamboo walls to watch in silence. After most of them had gone, towards midnight, the kamnan and his lieutenant arrived to discuss safety arrangements.

The fuss and crowds and weariness and worrying about whether things were being done properly was as much a part of sǫ as the performance itself. In the words of their verses during the early part of the morning, the sǫ singers described just that kind of activity, naming the people who had built the platform (sàlá), praising those who had come to help, talking about the delicious food

they expected to be fed and enumerating all the items that were meant to be in the baskets for wai khrû. In the garden around the sâlâ, food and drink stalls were set up, Lung Thâ had his illegal wine stall open and was selling to the kamnan, the landlady had opened a stall in front of her shop, and Lung Thâ's wife had let off plots around her house for cigarette, sweet and trinket sellers. The Young Buddhists set up amplifiers facing in every direction and turned to full volume.

The sǫ artists began on time with the wai khrû, their mandatory offering to their special spirit teachers, to their teachers in general and to spirits and thewadâ whom they invited to come and enjoy the celebration. They asked for the names of all those who had taken part in building the house and in the preparations to be written down so that they could weave the information into the songs, and they took details about the cost of the house and its construction as well as asking questions about the researcher. Some of the details of the house and occasion came out rather strangely when they were turned into the appropriate verse. The cheap bamboo house became a grand mansion with many pillars and roofs, made of fine teak gathered in the forest with much difficulty on the auspicious day. The occasion was described as a time for everyone to enjoy the feast - although in fact they knew that only about 30 of the players and dignitaries were to be fed while the rest of about 1,500 standing in the sun should picnic as well as they could from the snacks on stalls along the road.

Jan Thip brought a big team with him to sing sǫ. He and Jan Fong were the principal pair. She was a tall girl, older than most female chang sǫ at about 25 and she wore the appropriate pink dress and

ribbons in her hair. They were supported by four musicians blowing pi of various lengths between nine inches and three feet. The singing pair sat on each side of a hanging microphone and the pipers sat around them. Crowded around the edges of the small sâlâ were relief pipers, another singing pair who sang for an hour to gain experience and six students who had come to play other musical instruments during the lunch break and sing pop songs. They were frequently crowded even further by small boys who escaped the vigilance of Lung Thâ and his friends to shin up the poles of the sâlâ and squeeze in amongst the players until they were chased off.

The highlight of the performance was reserved until the sun had lost a little of its fierceness - and until the principals had drunk enough wine. The kep nok (Catching Birds) sequence for which an extra fee had been charged was very popular and very vulgar. Two 'foresters', older chang sǫ in 'disguise' (their eyebrows blacked in with burnt cork to suit the popular image of interfering official, bandit or communist) came out of Lung Thâ's house where they had been hiding and drinking all day. The crowds were at their thickest for this section of the sǫ - but it was the most difficult to translate from the northern dialect into the central language or English because there were not enough words in the more formal languages to render the earthiness and flavour of titillating vulgarity without jarring into downright crudity.

As the day had progressed, the only 'plot' woven into the sǫ along with descriptions of flowers and forest, accounts of proper courting procedure, details of meals and comments on changing custom, had been a flirtation between Jan Thip and Jan Fong. Her coyness had

turned to sauciness as he made increasingly bold proposals to her and there was an amusing tension generated as she tried to parry his suggestions with an inuendo without either agreeing or seeming rude. The audience cheered their remarks and offered their own versions. Finally she gave up her pretended modesty and countered Jan Thip's suggestions with bolder ones of her own. After his capitulation (followed by an apology in the usual formula to any who might be offended), and another break for modern songs, the Foresters arrived to follow Jan Fong and Jan Thip into the woods where they were going to collect wood to build a house. The ambition of the Foresters was to separate the couple and exact, in kind, the fine from Jan Fong for having entered the woods without the proper passports, licences, government stamps and bribes. The Foresters too were clever chang sǫ artists. While their verses alternated with those of Jan Thip and Jan Fong, the pipers stopped playing so that their clear, very fast tongue twisters could be heard. They punned, mutilated popular songs to their purpose and darted sharp inuendo after nonsense in the traditions of good farce. There was no time to stay shocked between the laughs. The chang sǫ volunteered to go on for an extra two hours for just a bottle of wine - but an adventitious power failure made the decision to curtail the bawdiness. The chang sǫ made their final apologies and delivered their last blessing without the benefit of the amplifiers while the stall holders packed up and the audience trickled away, some with as much as eight hours of walking ahead of them.

There was a concensus of opinion that the House had been well Warmed. The old ladies left saying that the researcher was a good Buddhist and had made a great deal of merit. They had also made merit

by attending. The community of helpers shared the merit. If the definition of 'merit' offered by J.A. Niels Mulder in Monks, Merit and Motivation (page 1) is accurate, then the entertainment offered by this particular sǫ was also an important contribution to the ritual life of the community. He said: "Merit is a way of behaviour and an abstract good that can be acquired by appropriate action, resulting in a feeling of cultural and psychological well-being". The community had made considerable efforts to work together for the common good, the sǫ had confirmed that everything had been done properly, and they had enjoyed themselves. In one important detail, the ritual practised on an occasion for sǫ differed from the ritual practised by phrâm and mǫ and even monks. The ritual learnt and recited by phrâm, mǫ and monks was inviolable: not a word could be changed. The words of sǫ changed slightly all the time. Sǫ had so nearly the status of ritual and such unquestioned acceptance in Kuang Pau that the audience was particularly vulnerable if, instead of providing a bulwark against change, sǫ should become a vehicle for innovation.

There is difficulty in isolating parts of sǫ to present as texts because there is no strong story line and because much of the singing was padding while the singers took time to frame an appropriate reply to their partner's verses. Excerpts from two Housewarming sǫ will serve to give an impression of the style and scope of the form.

Sǫ A: to celebrate moving into a new house built by Phǫ Ben, a sǫ pipe player, January 16 1971, Kuang Pau. Singers: Rien Thong and Noi Kham Pan.

(After the wai khrû and a long musical introduction)

man: 1 Now it is the fifth and sixth month and no rain falls. The leaves are falling and people are disappearing into their rice fields. The Mango trees are beginning to put out flowers. In the fifth and sixth months the sun is very hot.

I've been out in the fields in the sun and my skin has burnt to a dark brown as if I had been in a fire, and hot winds blow strongly. Little birds are resting in the trees and they are lonely because there is no water for them to drink in the canals, only pebbles and sand. The animals, the monkeys and langur (khảng) are coming down to find water and food. Now saliem (vegetable) is beginning to come out, nice and sharp and tasty. And pak wản is coming up invitingly. It is the most delicious kind of vegetable. Yà (lizard), ihie (iguana) - we can catch them for our soup. Red ants are being sold and mảngman (bigger, brown flying insects, very expensive delicacies). As I sit and watch the leaves falling in this season, it makes me feel sad and lonely (ngau). In the hills, I see the smoke curling up from the fields being fired. Along the roadside all is dried up and dead. The children taking care of the buffalo in the fields, they have put their rice in a bag on their shoulders and gone off to chase birds. But here, in this modern time and at this time, the rice plants in the fields are turning yellow. (Chom Thong was one of the few areas to have adequate irrigation for double rice cropping.) So anyone who is thinking of turning Communist should think well beforehand because our city is prospering already.

girl: 2 In these days we are prospering, but it is difficult enough to get money. (Previously it had sufficed to grow rice and vegetables and there had been no need to earn money as well.) It's a modern time when America is sending men to the moon already and they are walking on the moon right now. In this period though, if you want to eat miemo you have to buy it at a bảht a time. Before you could buy it for three satang (smallest unit now 25 satang, 1¼ cents US). When I went to a fair (boi luang) and I came home again in the evening, my mother asked me: 'How much have you spent?' I replied: 'I've spent five satang'. My mother was fierce and asked me why I'd spent so much, why I had eaten so much. Now I'll tell you about young men and women in olden times. Young men put on sụ̀ mọ họm (Chinese tie-up shirts dipped in grey-brown dye) when they went to visit the girls. They put cloths around their shoulders patterned with attractive big flowers and carried red umbrellas and took their rice towers with them. They went walking by all the fields and came back in the evening, the sun already down. Some people wore gold necklaces and others wore armlets. See how attractive, how lovely to look at! In the evening, the girls were fetching water and making the supper, ready and waiting. Both girls and boys of 14 and 15 are all married. The farm youngsters, it doesn't matter whether it is in the North or the middle of Thailand, they are all married already by then.

man: 3 In the evening when the sun is already down, I hear the calls of birds searching for each other. In the evening a gentle breeze is blowing. The dew has already fallen and the air is cool. In the compound the fire is alight and people are sitting round chatting. The young men are feeling out of it and miserable. They don't know whether they should speak with the girls or what they should say.

girl: 4 If Phi Noi (elder brother Noi) were a bird, I would keep you on my shoulder. Wherever I went, then I could take you too, just like a Meo mother takes her baby on her back. If you were an animal, a duang grub or a palm civet (ihem - edible) then I wouldn't eat you, I would keep you and look after you.

man: 5 If you were water, I'd be a fish. If you were a cigarette paper (dried banana leaf) then I'd be the tobacco. If you were a rice field, I'd be a rice plant. If you loved me truly, you would come and live with me. I'm very happy to have Rien Thong come and sit beside me and talk with me when there's a festival like this. If I could, I would make packages of my love. If I could tie it up like a bunch of flowers; there would have to be many many packages.

girl: 6 We two are very suitable, just like tau (edible green water plant, also part of a pun with erotic overtones) and water. If the water dries, then the plant dies. Just like a girl and a man who make a pair. Please, let me be with my big brother now - don't make me sad. We're suited like fish and bamboo shoots (nọ mai) for a curry.

... ...

man: 12 Some people might deceive you and want to take you off to sell you - and you would say never mind, go ahead! Some people might escape off to Bangkok because they want to go and work there. What would a girl do who doesn't know her way about? She only studied to bọ 4. She couldn't stay there long and soon she'd have to come home bringing her baby with her (song: khon hủ bau) and her disease too. Then she eats country foods, making the disease worse.

girl: 13 But me, I'm a single girl still, old already and I've never had a boy friend. I have never had an affair because I am of little account. (wảsanả nọi: song: khon lai jau). Like boiled rice and plảtủ (fish) which has been thrown away the night before, no-one wants to eat it the next day.

man: 14 Not so! Don't give me that stuff! I'm so happy. If there had been no ceremony for a new house (khửn bản mai) I would not have met my little sister. I'm a stupid chap aren't I? When I'm as happy as this, I don't know how to express it. You're fine. You're not like those girls who want to go and live in Bangkok, like those who want to sit prettily in cars and go to restaurants where they can listen to singers - but come back bringing their babies with them. Their fathers ask them: Where's your husband then? Why has your child fair hair? (dẻng) Oh I'm so very happy to rear a bastard grandchild! (song: Hủ bau to sọ tune.)

girl: 15 Now we've been sitting together until late in the morning. I'd like to ask you a few questions if I may. What festival are we attending? Is it an ordination for a lủk kẻo or not? May I ask Phi Noi Kham Pan?

... ...

man: 43 Nọng asks: when the house is to be built, what does he take up first? If you don't know, then I'll tell you! Just stay and listen a while won't you? He brings up the earth first and digs a hole for the first pillar. He takes a lamp and hangs it on the cross beam - or maybe there is the light of the moon and stars. And then he invites all the Nản and Noi to come to his ceremony in the night. Those of the Nản and Noi who came, especially the old ones who knew that Phọ Ban and Mẻ Ban were building a new house - they would show their happiness and they would come and help to find an auspicious day to begin the building of the house. And they would arrange it according to the plan that they had made.

So B: also to celebrate moving into a new house, built by the researcher, January 30 1971, Kuang Pau. Singers: Jan Fong and Jan Thip.

man: 103 Sometimes people have as many as 20 steps to make their houses pretty, but of good clean steps, there are only five. In the old days, there were only five steps and that's the proper number though people build more today. I would like to let the English people know that the proper number is five.

girl: 104 Oh - the stairs with five steps are called huajai steps (head and heart). Of what wood are they made? That is what I would like to know. Khun Diana has come and built a house here. That's very good. But what has she built her house from?

man: 105 Now Jan Fong, you have asked me something important and I will tell you correctly. It's not something to be passed over lightly. The first step represents the first of the Precepts: that we should not kill. We must not catch fish or chop up animals. That is to tham bảp (sin).

... ...

girl: 127 The fifth step, the fifth Precept, forbids drinking intoxicants. But if drinking wine breaks a Precept, why is it that Jan Thip got two bottles of wine to wai khrủ last night? No, really, it wasn't the phi (spirits) drinking the wine, it was you Jan Thip. I saw you myself.

... ...

girl: 129 Oh - I want to know: if you drink alcohol or drugs, how much do you have to drink before you break the Precept?

man: 130 Drink one glass to make you kind. A second makes your face red and sweaty. The third one you're drunk. And the fourth and fifth - those are the ones that start the fights. On the sixth glass, watch out for the knives because he who drinks six glasses will hit anything - hit his wife, hit his children and kick all the pots and pans around and break them.

girl: 131 The first glass makes you smile happily. The second makes you tell off your wife's father. The third gives you a bad character. And the fourth makes you weave along the road gesticulating and saying stupid things. And on the fifth you fight. Before, my father used to drink two glasses every morning and two every evening, but then he went and heard a sermon (fang ácàn) and he doesn't drink any more. Jan Thip has taken over from him.

... ...

man: 156 I wasn't saying that just to please you, but I love you truly. If you were a little bird I'd like to take you everywhere on my shoulder. I'm a man: I must speak the truth. I'm not one to see a lot of pretty women and tell each one that I love her! I see you, and I see that you have every good characteristic of a woman: your shape is pretty whether you sit down or stand up. Very pretty. There's none prettier than this, big breasts like this. If they were any bigger they would have to belong to the mother of the gods. They make me want to squeeze them.

girl: 157 You are only looking at the front: sure there's plenty there. But you've not looked behind: there's nothing there at all! I've got big breasts, but behind instead of coming out, it goes in! With a shape like this, I went to ask Nai Kèo to be my husband, but he shook his head. I went and asked Nai Tâ (both local men) but he howled and cried and would not have me. These men didn't want me because they have already peeped at me and know I'm not pretty. Look at my figure - like a cedi upside down! Like a Chinese Buddha. My skin is black like a burnt mountainside.

... ...

girl: 179 That's enough - you don't have to say any more. There are lots of people here and you make me embarrassed. I'm sorry all my brothers and sisters if we've said anything to offend, anything inelegant. Would you forget anything that offends? If there's anything not proper, please forget it and don't repeat it to others because it embarrasses me and them. We ask pardon of everyone.

man: 180 The lotus bud as it comes through the water makes reverence (like the hands in wai shape) and then it opens into a blossom and is very beautiful. After it has shown its beauty for a while, its head disappears under the water and only the fak bua seed pod is left. You can eat that and it is delicious. (From a song: when only the seeds of their sọ are left in people's minds after the day of festivity, people can take them away and feed on them.)

girl: 181 Both of us are chang sọ. If we speak anything that is improper, then it's wrong of us (bạ̀) and we ask you to forgive us. Dear brothers and sisters, don't hate us if any part is bad or not fun. Please forgive us.

Like

Like was an extravaganza compared with the sober decorum of so. As such it earned a reputation for being low class so that lapses of "good taste" into gaudy clothes or expressions of strong passions were sneered at by city Thais for being "like like". In Kuang Pau, like was a treat, but more expensive and therefore rarer than so. Like was played at Fairs, at Wat Phra That for the opening of a new kuti and for the opening of a new market, but during the fieldwork period, no private householders could afford to be sponsors. Many of the troupe leaders, including one still living in Kuang Pau, recalled the times when they had been invited regularly to engagements in the area.

Transportation and accommodation had become major problems for a like troupe. Traditionally they had piled themselves into ox carts and taken several days to plod down to Chom Thong, collecting gossip and giving news along the way. They had stayed a few weeks as the guests of their sponsors and performed at a series of fairs around the area. Modern roads had made transport faster and more expensive, and as more people bought food rather than making do with simple fare they could grow they became less inclined to be generous in their hospitality. It became a major effort to move a team of up to 20 actors and musicians with their bulky instruments, costumes, ornaments, backcloths, props, sets and portable shrine so that it was not worth accepting a booking for less than three days.

On the other hand, a troupe leader had to find work for his players in order to keep the team together. There was a tendency to solve the problem, especially in the 'off' season, by going on tour

along good roads to the main towns where they hired a cinema and charged for entrance. To attract an audience, the troupe needed to be known and the best advertising was over the radio. During the fieldwork period, of eighteen like presentations attended by the researcher, only five were full scale productions lasting several days and the rest were condensed into one hour each for a competition being run by WBT2 radio, Chiengmai.

There was like for the five nights of the Chom Thong Winter Fair in 1970. It was performed in the proper context of competing attractions so that sometimes there was a full audience of all ages crushing around the temporary stage and at other times there were mainly old women and small boys waiting for the next highlight while the young and middle aged swarmed to the other end of the showground for big band music or a boxing match. The stage was as high off the ground as an adult's chin. It was roofed with leaf thatch but the sides were open. Tied bamboo poles made most of the supports except at the corners where there were stout wooden posts. The platform was planks. Behind the stage, in full view, the actors were changing, and small boys climbed up the bamboos to get tangled in the pulleys that operated the backdrops from the wings. There were five backdrops painted with the standard scenes for most plays: there was the inside of a sumptuous palace, the road outside its gates, a picture of a wayside resting place (sàlâ), a forest road, and possibly a hermitage, or simple country house. In the wings to the right of the actors but still in full view, was the traditional orchestra, and to the left were stored a modern shiny drumset and piano accordion in case the play was too short for the time allowed or the audience got bored.

The most important piece of the like orchestra was the ranat. The leader of the like company, Nai Chun, played this himself. It was a wooden xylophone that could be heard a mile away as groups of women wrapped in shawls and groups of men warmed with rice wine made their way from Kuang Pau two hours before the curtain rose. Another musician sat cross-legged in a circle of gongs of diminishing sizes, kuang wong, a drummer sat with a double-ended drum horizontal on its stand between his knees, and an actor dressed and made up for the stage operated a pair of ching, miniature cymbals. The like show was controlled by the ranat. It drew the audience and then when the time was ripe, its quickening rhythms told the stage manager to draw back the curtains. Nai Chun's actors always played the same parts, as leading lady, leading man, clown or villain and it was enough to tell them briefly what fortunes they should expect to meet at the beginning of the evening and whether they were soldiers, kings or simple peasants. Then the ranat cued them in to the highlights of the performance: to the sad song of the heroine when she is being parted from her true love; to the scene in which the hero and his faithful companion fight against terrible odds; to the scene of reconciliation between old mother and lost son; and to the scenes where the clowns spin out their mockery of misplaced passion or pomposity or officialdom until the audience is ready again for serious emotion. In between these highlights, Nai Chun held whispered conferences with his actors while he went on playing.

Nai Chun's grandfather and his father's grandfather had been palace musicians in Ayuthaya, pupils of great teachers. His father was the leader of an orchestra in Phitsanuloke where Nai Chun was born, his brother led an orchestra and all three of them could make

their own instruments. Their family had always married into other musical families and their brothers and sisters and cousins were leaders of bands cau khong ranât and of like, in Phitsanuloke. Nai Chun had lived in Kuang Pau for five years and married a local girl but left her when they had no children. With his present wife in Chiengmai, he had five children all of whom played like and could play each instrument in the orchestra. They all practised together each day before school or work. Nai Chun himself had learnt percussion instruments from the age of 8 and begun to play like at 15. Nai Chun, his wife, his oldest son and daughter and his leading man all sold from stalls in the market on days when they were not playing like. It was a cherished ambition that his second daughter should gain admission to the government Fine Arts College, Natasin, and bring back to teach her brothers and sisters all that she could learn there of music, dance and acting.

The audience at Chom Thong was unsophisticated. The curtains opened onto a palace scene. The first actors made their entrance in a court uniform with tightly stockinged legs. In a group from Kuang Pau, teenage girls and the Chinese landlady covered their mouths with their handkerchieves and giggled saying that the men were dressed like girls. The soldiers and courtiers addressed a hanging microphone covered in red crepe paper which crackled and shrieked and distorted their words in an effort to drown out the opposition from a nearby cartoon film, the boxing music and two 'pop' bands all at full amplification. When the Prince entered, he made a few dancing steps and balanced a glittering crown. The ranât accompanied the song with which he introduced himself, telling of the wars that troubled his kingdom, and then the tempo changed and he began to sing

about a beautiful girl he loved but could not find. The Prince, dressed in Royal yellow and with long painted fingernails, danced his exit while a different backdrop wound down from the ceiling and the scene changed to the forest. A villain with heavy black eyebrows was plotting with a lively young clown to steal away the beautiful lady and win the Prince's reward. The clown made jokes about the blond in the audience. When the Prince's lady appeared, she was wearing a tight red satin dress that barely reached her knees. The giggles began again and the men pushed nearer to the platform.

Like was a mixture. The second evening of the fair, there was a serious story involving the muddles of war during the Burmese sack of Ayuthaya. In the end, the Burmese king was forced to execute his Thai foster son because he had committed mild treason to help the innocent of his own people. But the story was not a tragedy. A sense of rightness was restored with the sad explanation from the king that: "it accords with custom" - and the hero was reborn as the child of the innocent Thai girl he had rescued. During its highlights, the action captured the attention of about 1,000 people in the fairground, but sometimes there were only a dozen grandmothers with babies grateful for a place to sit on the ground. Always there was a swarm of small boys pushing onto the stage from the wings and periodically being shooed away. They were like moths attracted to the brightest lights and colours.

Each actor before he or she came out onto the stage made a wai, a gesture of respect with the palms of the hands together and lifted to the forehead, to the shrine carried by the company to every engagement. On this occasion, a dent had been punched upwards in the

leaf of the roof so that the little box could be installed which had inside it the modelled head of a teacher. So much gold leaf had been applied to the head that the once gaunt features were rounded almost out of existence. In more formal days, the crowns and ornaments and royal costumes to be used in a show were all presented before the shrine in a wai khrù ceremony before the curtains opened. The special spirit teachers of each actor as well as all the spirits of great actors, musicians and teachers who had gone before were asked to bless the equipment, the actors and the show.

Every year, Nai Chun held a big wai khrù ceremony for the twelve members of his company and all those who had ever worked with him. It had to be on a Thursday which was the best day for the khrù, and if possible on the eighth day of the growing moon in the sixth month. For the ceremony, Nai Chun needed two pigs' heads (one cooked for the living teachers he invited and one raw for the yak and phi who were dead teachers), two chickens, two ducks, two duck eggs, two chicken eggs, cakes of boiled rice, one red and one white, two bottles of wine and two bai sri, arrangements woven from banana leaves and flowers. At that ceremony he also gave honour to the books, candles, white thread and amulets that he used as a mo dù (although he admitted that he had little time to practise and had forgotten how to interpret much of the ancient script) and he honoured the father of his elder brother's wife from whom the books came, as a khrù.

The ceremony of wai khrù, a variation of the ceremony performed every year by school children and university students, was central to the entertainment profession. No-one could be a professional performer without going through a ceremony of khun khrù at which they

achieved a special relationship with a spirit teacher and gave him honour for the rest of their career. Jan Thip was a self-taught chang sǫ who had no education except what he learned in the wat when he was ordained as a novice at the age of 11. He left the wat at 19 and went visiting the ladies using courting sǫ that he picked up. He was doing well as a chang sǫ by the age of 21 but he felt that if he did not go through the proper khụn khrù ceremony, he would forget his verses after two or three performances and his good voice would falter. He found an old retired sǫ player who helped him through the ceremony and then he went to a Chom Thong wat where he ate a soft centred, tall grass dipped in honey so that his voice would be soft, sweet and flexible. The Abbot conducted the ceremony and the monks recited sacred words. He said that his voice improved greatly after the ceremony. All his pupils, when he felt they were proficient enough to begin their careers, offered themselves at a phiti khụn khrù. The spirits were invited to take the pork, chicken and wine and enjoy the candles and incense while the new chang sǫ repeated the tham buchá (offering) words after a living teacher. The initiates then had to drink the wine and sing sǫ for the first time.

When the five days of the Winter Fair were over, the same men and boys who had put up the like stage and watched the performances took it down again and helped the actors stow their equipment into buses and taxis for the journey back to Chiengmai. They had no more bookings for the next month. Each actor had earned 20 bàht a day (33p) and the troupe had cost the fairgivers about 600 bàht (£10) for each evening performance as well as the cost of transport and feeding the company. Nai Chụn said that most actors were people who liked to hà kin pèp ngai, 'find their food the easy way'. If they

had amassed some capital, they could buy things to sell in the market, but more often they like to spend their money in thiɔ̀, 'visiting' and then live from hand to mouth. When they ran out of money, many of them borrowed a three-wheeled cycle (sâm lɔ̌) and made themselves into taxis for the day to earn, perhaps, 10 hâht, 5 bâht of which had to be handed back with the sâm lɔ̌. Many of the like leaders interviewed had trained their children to be their leading ladies and leading men (nang ɛ̀k and phra ɛ̀k) so that they would have continuity. The rest of their troupe tended to be young single men from Phitsanuloke, Uttaradit and Sukhothai, the fertile crescent of like, who sought out their older relatives in Chiengmai when their money was spent in 'visiting' thiɔ̀, and they stayed until they were bored or married or successful enough to set up their own companies. They were direct heirs to the traditions of the wandering minstrels. Often they were flashy, irresponsible characters whose looks and voices won the hearts of their mainly female audiences before they were off again to make new conquests. From the evidence of those interviewed in middle age as like leaders, when they settled down they often turned into conservative, decent citizens, ready to give honour to ancient customs and ready with an earthy story but not with a dirty trick.

Like performances could be founded on stories from the lives of the Buddha, on a long history of raids and wars in the area, on folk tales, on events from the lives of the troupe leaders, on imagination, on stories read in magazines or taken from the radio or plagiarized from any other source. In practise during fieldwork, it was more usual to find that a leader of a troupe would direct his actors to play their roles scene by scene rather than begin with the idea for a complete plot. Scenes, particularly the sad and the funny, played

for as long as the audience was enjoying them. The story of Tiger Bang which has been chosen to show the pattern of performances, was condensed into one hour for broadcasting over radio. It was performed in full costume but without a backdrop to an audience of nearly 1,000, at least 90 per cent of them children and the rest, older women and taxi drivers with their taxis and sǎm lo parked all round the doors of the studio.

Khâ nam nom (The Price/Value of a Mother's Milk)

Like presented by the company Lûk Sabai Thong on WBT2 radio Chiengmai February 6 1972.

> Sabai Thong introduced the story, written by Mai Muang Doem. He said that it was to teach young people to value the kindness of their mothers. He named the actors, all his own children: Kiribun (lark) leading lady, nang ek; Surabin (Lord of Dreams) leading man, phra ek; and Thibet (highest) the villain.
>
> The whole company, all nephews and nieces and children of Sabai Thong, made obeisance to a portable shrine with a gold covered head representing their teachers and assembled on stage for the wai khrû song (honouring the teachers) and the ʄk khaek (Indian chorus). They sang, shouted and clapped to give honour to Ganesha (Phra Phikhanesuan), the clever fathers of knowledge, magical power and mystical wisdom and to those gods and teachers who invented their musical instruments and inspired the songs and tunes. They acknowledged that like came from India, saying that Thailand was a country that was prospering, progressing and going ahead and that it had all good things including like. "This kind of playing, our like, came from India and we have brought it to Thailand and changed it. Now it is an art of our own muang Thai."
>
> Tiger Bang: (song) "I don't like to do good! I like being a baddie and terrifying the villagers. I love a little girl called I-Waen. Before this I lived with my mother. My father has died already. I became a Tiger (a name for bandits and soldiers half-feared, half-admired for their fierceness) one day when a band of men arrived, poor people too, and grabbed my land and killed my father. I killed every one of them and made their wives widows! My mother's name is Nang Phap and we lived in a house at Phai Phân Lû. I love my little I-Waen very much. We have already made promises at the shrine of the jau phʄ in the rice fields that we will marry each other. But that was before I became a Tiger, before the time when the people came and forced us to give them my land and house and killed my father. That was when I became very angry and decided to become a Tiger."

Foi (clown, companion to Tiger Bang): "Last night we staged a hold-up, but before we went, we made obeisance at the shrine of the jau phǫ. We went and asked to be protected during the raid - and we were, so now we have to go and kå bon, redeem our vows, are you coming with us?"

Scenery was minimal, seldom more than two backdrops, one representing the forest and the other the palace. Scene changes were indicated by phrases in entry and exit lines and by changes in the paces of the music.

Pin, son of the kamnan (village officer) has fallen in love with I-Waen but she is true to Tiger Bang and refuses to marry him. The kamnan Klieng, tells I-Waen that there is a big price on the head of Tiger Bang. I-Waen is sad and sings a weeping song (a highlight of the performance. Good nang ek could produce real tears). I-Waen thinks about the shrine of the jau phǫ just as Tiger Bang and Foi are on their way there.

At the shrine jau phǫ: Tiger Bang sings to I-Waen that she must no longer think of him but consider her own well-being. They offer vows and prayers at the shrine - but Foi behind the shrine is listening and mocks them. He mimics the voice of the jau phǫ and finally says: "Stop messing around with all your pretty words. Go to it! Get on with it!"

Tiger Bang leaves I-Waen and sees a poster advertising the price on his own head. That makes him more angry so that he sings a fierce song, rips down kamnan Klieng's poster, slashes his arm with his knife and writes in blood that he challenges his enemy the kamnan to a fight.

I-Waen's father is called Nai Tawan. He joins the kamnan and promises to help kill Tiger Bang. They fight. Tiger Bang's younger brother shoots I-Waen's father and kills him. I-Waen has no brothers and sisters or relatives so she asks to go and live with Mè Phap, Tiger Bang's mother.

Mè Phap sings a song complaining about her misfortunes: other people can have good children, good sons, why should she have such a bad son? Kamnan Klieng goes to visit Mè Phap and speaks nicely to her to get I-Waen. Mè Phap is pleased and promises Klieng that I-Waen shall marry his son Pin.

There is a meeting between Pin and I-Waen where Mè Phap urges I-Waen to forget Tiger Bang and take Pin. "You like Pin don't you? He's come to ask for your hand. He is a good chap, very suitable and his father is the kamnan. Don'tthink about Bang. He is no good." I-Waen is very sad torn between her love for Tiger Bang and her duty to please Mè Phap.

There is a family with a son called Ning Nong (fat chap). His parents were sitting talking together. "Our son is the age now for ordination. We shall have a ceremony. We must find somebody to riek khwan nåk (call together the spiritual elements of the initiate's body)." (The song calling together

the khwan describes the love and sacrifices offered to the child by its parents as they fed and nourished and educated him. Sabai Thong was hired to call the khwan at ordination ceremonies when he was not busy with like or tending his orchard and rice fields.)

Tiger Bang had decided to rob the house where Ning Nong was being ordained, but when he arrived at the house and saw the preparations for the ordination he was smitten. He sang: "This chap is going to be ordained- just as I should like to be. But I am bad." The thought made him sad so that he decided not to raid the house but stayed instead to watch the ceremony. When they were calling the khwan, he thought about his mother. From that day on, he stopped his raiding.

Then Tiger Bang heard that I-Waen was about to get married and he sang a sad song. "How can she do this to me? We have already promised. I-Waen has a wavering heart." He decides to go on a raid and kill I-Waen.

Pin and I-Waen are already married. I-Waen sings in a sweet high voice and cries telling Pin that she only married him to please Mè Phap.

Tiger Bang arrives to find his mother, but she is displeased and refuses to receive him. She is afraid he will kill I-Waen and Pin. She says: "It is better that you should kill me: it was I who made them get married. I arranged it all." While Tiger Bang is talking with his mother, he hears in his head the sound of someone calling the khwan. Sabai Thong sings a famous song called Kha Nam Nom about a mother who had the most loving kindness and who was willing to undergo any kind of hardship for the sake of her child. "There is no substitute for the loving heart of a mother. Think well- all you children! The child has to consider the value of his mother's milk that came from her own blood. The kind heart of his mother was wider than the heavens and deeper than the earth. They say that the ceremony of ordination supercedes the value of the mother's milk, but in fact there is nothing that can have value about that." (Sabai Thong was clapped for his singing.)

Tiger Bang is overcome with sadness because he has not repaid his mother by his ordination for the value of her care for him. He shoots himself and dies in front of his mother so that she can claim the price on his head.

Mè Phap sings a sad song as Tiger Bang dies. Pin and I-Waen arrive in time for him to tell them that he is not angry and that he entrusts his mother and I-Waen to Pin's care. He tells them to get the reward from the Amphoe of five chang and he dies. (One chang was 80 bàht. Five chang was a fortune in the days the play was written. In a film made of the play, Tiger Bang forces his mother to shoot him by pretending to shoot I-Waen and Pin with a gun without bullets.)

CHAPTER 7

Transformations - in Society and Entertainment

Sǫ and like have been described in some detail in order to show that in their traditional forms these entertainments were rituals of incorporation. They seemed ill fitted to carry the kind of propaganda that would promote progressive industrial attitudes. Sǫ singers were called in to absorb each new development into the community and install it in a proper place. Like ethics reinforced community values and endorsed some obligations against others so that even emotions were arranged in a hierarchy and nothing need be left to individual decision. The noblest duty of all, even for the super-hero who could overcome all human and immortal enemies, was his willing submission to the customs of his own community.

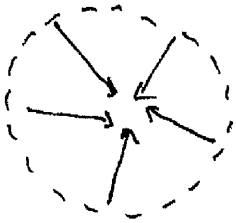
The firm, tidy ordering recognised by sǫ and like, and by the conservative element in Kuang Pau, rested on careful observance of the 'respect hierarchy'. It was imperative that if any deviant should think of asking: "Why must it be done this way?" then the answer: "Because it always has been" should be totally acceptable. It was safer if no-one should think of asking any questions. When the questions did begin, the effect on the 'respect hierarchy' was profound. If the interdependence postulated by this thesis obtained between the social system and the entertainment system, then the effects on sǫ and like should have been equally profound.

Three earlier chapters traced three particular social developments: the chapter on the Fair showed the emergence of a new kind of leader without the qualifications of status or age, and the beginning of a

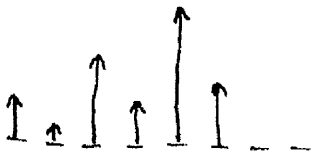
personality cult; the chapter contrasting old stories and modern songs noted a breaking loose from community interdependence, made possible by free primary education, a common language and money, and the beginning of a phase in which personal integrity was superseding a convention of situational integrity; and in the sermon was seen a clever re-emphasis in religious philosophy that told members of the community that they must accept responsibility for their own actions and motives and find their way along a unique path to an unknown goal rather than be content simply to find their alotted place in the 'respect hierarchy' and to operate according to the dictates of the role. This chapter uses sǫ and like as a convenient 'inspection chamber' to trace similar developments in entertainments which were to aggravate and then accelerate the changes so that even sǫ and like were transformed from community rites into charters for individualism.

While Kuang Pau was still an agricultural community relatively undisturbed by the need for 'progress', the common good as defined by the elders had been the greatest good. Government policy for reasons of defence and to promote industrial expansion was attempting to substitute a greater good, a good to be defined by each individual as he related to the Thai nation and the Buddhist faith. But there remained the problem of how individuals in the community should interact with each other. The process of turning an agricultural community that was in the broadest sense self-supporting into a unit among many dependent units constituting an idea of "nationhood" can be represented in diagrammatic form.

The in-facing agricultural community can be represented as a circle in which each element is facing a common centre but is limited by the circle. For 'progress' the circle has to unfold to a straight line of elements facing 'forward' and growing at different rates.



agricultural community



progressive industrial community

The diagram helps to illustrate the ultimate solution to the problem of interaction between members of a 'progressing' community. They cease to interact.

When the highest achievement for the agricultural community was still understood to be a weaving of harmony from the complex and competitive influences that surrounded their endeavours, entertainment events ideally provided a space to pause and reflect. A tableau arresting time at the point when conflict and all the normally uncontrollable forces were absorbed into a pattern of human construction could give the most satisfaction to its audience. When individuals were being persuaded to cut loose and face outwards from their community, entertainment was required to map possible routes through which individuals might travel and to indicate directions and goals along a time axis related to human biology rather than to the agricultural cycle.

In the process of meeting its new set of instructions, the character of entertainment was changing so that a service was becoming a commodity. (We became absolved of the sacred duty bidding us give hospitality to the wayfarer when it became more convenient for him

to put a coin in a slot-machine and take out a pre-warmed pie.)
The personality cult, encouraging star performers rather than a complement of roles, the trend to interpretation of roles that trivialised their content from the general to the personal, and a demand for plots that unfolded before the audience rather than enfolding the audience temporarily into a created world: these tendencies contributed towards making entertainment events trans-cultural. With efficient and attractive packaging they could take their place in the market, just like those members of Kuang Pau community, who, responsible only to themselves and freed from those characteristics that would have labelled them as parts of an interdependent community, were being made ready to compete on the labour market.

Personality cult

In discouraging individualism, like presented a pattern of relationships where the villains and demons were as necessary as, and sometimes preferred to, the more refined roles for hero and heroine. Vigour and rebellion were associated with the roles that challenged the orthodox pattern. In each production they were only temporarily subdued by the hero who in his turn had to submit to the rules of the group. Sǫ gathered under the control of its verbal formulae all those tendencies that might disturb the social order: nature's exuberance was broken down into categories of flora and fauna, lists of useful timbers and descriptions of edible vegetables and animals; religion was tamed so that Merit approximated 'togetherness' and the gods were invited to share the performance and a snack; and individual achievements were shown to belong to the efforts of the whole community which had invested its support and was enriched by the results. Even as the names of individuals were mentioned, sǫ took away the sting of

difference their achievement had created and gave them back a shared glory.

'Progress' needed individualism so that people could be arranged as separate, mobile and interchangeable working units. Traditionally the emphasis of so and like was on the smooth integration of permissible variation within predictable roles. A catalysis was needed to remodel the like shape from a puzzle into which variously designed pieces could be fitted, into a contest between 'them' and 'us' so that roles were polarised into winners and losers, imitable and despised. So already had the seeds of contest; it was only a slight shift in emphasis from descriptions of courting and marriage procedures to prolonged flirting sequences where sex was a battleground.

In chapter 3 it was shown that at the level of Kuang Pau and Chom Thong fairs, younger businessmen with financial liquidity and a control of scarce resources were able to influence entertainment choices. They were taking over leadership in that field from those with the traditional authority granted through age and status. Fairs were beginning to reflect their personal preferences. The same kind of development was altering the shape of the entertainments themselves. Nine leaders of like and so troupes were interviewed. All of them were between 45 and 60 and had been operating for upwards of 20 years. They were unanimous in complaints against modern audiences and in looking back with nostalgia to the discerning audiences of ten years before when the more elaborate detail of their art forms was most appreciated. It was evident that their influence was conservative. But their influence was being by-passed by new leaders so that the former leaders were relegated to the position of troupe managers.

The new leadership elite that was altering the shape of all northern entertainment was the broadcasting promoters. They had control over scarce resources, radio and television time, and they also had access to government and advertising funds. It was their decisions that governed selections of entertainment to reach and attract the widest possible audience.

Each of the three broadcasters interviewed offered the motives of an idealist: they were concerned that northern art forms should be preserved and presented in a way acceptable to the more sophisticated Thais of the cities and other regions. They were all convinced that northern music, song and drama was as good as or better than the Bangkok versions that filled radio and television broadcasting time. It occurred to none of them that they were transforming almost beyond recognition the art forms they sought to promote. The distortions were inevitable. Since the programme sponsors and advertisers were Bangkok companies and government agencies, the broadcasters were committed to using the funds entrusted to them to buy attention from the largest available market by selling the most popular attraction. Entertainments became commodities and their most important attribute became the packaging.

While sǫ and like were 'part of the family' in the villages to which they were invited there was a relaxed informal attitude between players and audiences. Jokes and interjections moved both ways across the stage and children clambered up the poles supporting the sǫ platform and filtered from the wings through the like orchestra and onto centre stage before they were shooed away from blocking entrances. If the audience enjoyed a character, he stayed on stage. If they applauded

a song, it was sung again. If the comedians were having fun, there was no question of their holding up the action of the plot: they were the action and they carried on their sport until they ran out of breath. Sǫ singers watched their sponsors for cues to move from one sequence to the next. If they saw a local celebrity in the audience, they brought him into their verses. If the audience responded well to a little sauciness, they edged closer to earthy vulgarity ready always to withdraw and apologise and smooth over the breach with soothing euphony.

The tight packages the broadcasters were marketing fitted neatly into a timeslot; they were self-sufficient making timing decisions without audience feed-back; and they were trans-cultural, shorn of details that could link them with the idiosyncrasies of particular communities. They were tied together with an attractive ribbon of 'stars'.

Some of these readjustments can be traced in the examples given in chapter 6, since the like was packaged for radio and the sǫ recordings were made in the village context.

Sabai Thong, leader of the troupe that broadcast The Value of a Mother's Milk, came from a family of actors. His parents and the parents of his father were all actors and so were the parents, brothers and sisters and relatives of his wife. Their children were given the extravagant names of stars and led his present troupe, the members of which were all his students and related to him. He was educated at a wat and joined an acting company at 18. His first tutor was a prince at the palace, Khru Niem, who was sponsor to all

the Bangkok drama troupes in the 1950s. Training concentrated on the more classical forms of Thai drama, particularly the athletic Khôn, and Sabai Thong ran away to Sukhothai. He explained: "Good actors must have something special. They must have a good figure; they must have a good voice; they must have a good brain; and they must have plenty of experience of the world, more than ordinary people because drama is a way of showing real life and helping people to see how things really are." He set up his own like company in the 1960s.

Sabai Thong was a little scornful of audiences in the north where many villagers preferred shorter stories in the northern language instead of the stories of fighting and heroes properly laced with elaborate court language, but he conceded with other leaders interviewed that he must please his audience. He took with him, to the villages, under protest, the floorshows and modern music expected by a modern like audience. He was aware of the advantages of radio advertising for winning a wider audience. His was the first company to broadcast, and he worked in conjunction with Khun Sawang Singhakrailât, the WBT2 Chiengmai radio promoter, to package three different kinds of story for its competition on three successive Sundays. The first was Mother's Milk, a popular story with a known author, the second was a section from the folk epic Khun Chân Khun Phân and the third, The Punishment of Heaven, Sabai Thong claimed to have made up himself although its echo was in the repertoire of most troupes. In his version a humble young couple was separated forcibly by the lust of a Prince for the wife and the evil intentions of his soldiers who wanted a reward. Their separate adventures brought the couple together again finally at a wat to which the husband, after a spell of madness had retired and where the wife went to make merit for the soul of the

husband she thought was dead. Time ran out on that story before the wise king, father of the erring Prince, could restore the couple, find excuses for the Prince and execute the soldier.

Because the last story ran out of time, it was less polished and "professional" than the previous two, but these stories were presented tidily, complete in themselves and with a structure rarely met in live presentations. Where the audience was still part of the _like_ productions, time often ran out before the main story line had been broached. It was not unusual for actors standing in the wings ready dressed to go on stage to have no idea of the story being played. Their leader had briefed them for only one scene ahead, telling them to sing a sad song of separation or to become angry and swear vengeance. The leader adjusted his story as it progressed to suit his audience. Often the leader played the clown, in which case he included local names in his jokes and used the village ideolect. (Chom Thong was distinguished from its near neighbours by an 'Australian' twang: the greeting _pai nai_ became 'poi noi'.)

As the audience was polished out of the radio package, the product changed. _Like_ as it was played in Chom Thong and the surrounding villages had presented a flexible framework through which the audience could see and partly direct a work-out of their own emotions and problems. All the permissible roles were assembled on stage with their often conflicting attendant duties. If a duty to one's mother should take precedence over a duty to one's love, then there was sadness over the loss of the love. The audience could listen to the song of mourning, request it again, sympathise with a temporary madness but see the dangerous aloneness as being a passing emotion that could

be socialised along with other threatening behaviour. If there were injustice because of social inequalities, the rage felt by those lacking privilege could be vented loudly in a vengeance song. The like might progress to find a mediator who could redress the wrongs - or time, like a single life, might run out - but the private woes were already made public and shared by the group audience.

As the professional broadcasters tailored the package for its trans-cultural market using only the common denominators of language and experience so that the appeal could be wide, they began catering to an audience that was no longer a group but a series of individuals. Instead of actors being amongst their audience, shooing children off the stage and exchanging banter across makeshift footlights, they were suddenly distant and beyond influence. For village like, local men built the stage and welcomed the players. They discussed technicalities, food and money and saw the actors as ordinary people earning a living. They saw them before the greasepaint and gaudy clothes and again when they were stripped of finery. They knew the beautiful young heroine was a business-woman into her 40s and the princely hero was a taxi-driver. They knew they were playing roles on the stage and the audience could identify with the situations of the make-believe characters. When radio put distance between the player and his audience of one, the audience could begin to identify not with the situation but with the actor, seeing him as a unique fellow sufferer experiencing private, not public, woes. "Fans" began to adore pop singers, film stars and radio stars as if through devotion they could take on the attributes of their idol. Teenage girls in Kuang Pau were more likely to name a 'star' as a 'fan' than a more accessible local man. (The same word 'fan' was used to describe boy and girlfriends, lovers

and young husbands and wives.)

Like, as it became useful to radio promoters, did a complete about-face. Instead of making an implicit endorsement of the respect hierarchy by incorporating private emotions and conflicts into the framework of the public roles it presented, like on radio appealed to individuals. It gave them models for behaviour outside the traditional ones of their own society. Despite the good intentions of northern broadcasters, the fact of feeding like through the media created distortions beneficial to the principal sponsors: the government and military, industry and USIS.

Role Integrity

Provided that the various roles in a community were adequately defined and people were careful to act according to those roles in any given situation, then the philosophy of sọ and like held that the community would have stability and flourish. There was no insistance that any individual should seek to fill any particular role consistently; it was the occasion that set up the configuration of roles to be filled. This ethic of situational integrity was confirmed frequently during fieldwork when a villager would give one reply to a question from someone he placed in a high status and called acản (professor), and immediately reverse the information in answer to a questioner with status equal to his own. Each was being given an answer that the interviewee considered the questioner wished to hear and the harmony of the situation was preserved. No deceit or falsehood was intended. The behaviour was correct. Personal integrity or 'credibility' was not an issue.

In Kuang Pau, before roads, radio and money made pathways out of the area, the way each member of the community conducted his life affected the rest. People lived close together and were forced to rely on each other's good will. Houses along the cart track that defined the surveyed research area were built mainly of wood and bamboo, a few with shops underneath having concrete basements instead of resting on the wooden pillars four to ten feet above the ground. There was very little privacy within the thin walls through which neighbours could both hear and see. Most of the houses were gathered into bamboo fenced compounds of three to six houses, made secure with gates that were chained every night and guarded by mangey dogs. About half the houses had a pig tethered underneath (37 pigs for 78 houses), most had chickens, one house was guarded by a pair of geese, four herded ducks and at the time of survey there were 46 oxen in the village and 17 buffalo. The livestock often represented a large proportion of a family's capital and they relied on the goodwill of neighbours for fodder and for the security and well-being of the animals that often went wandering.

Neighbours also relied on each other for protection. Security was a preoccupation with all the local women who carried bunches of keys around their waists weighing up to 2 lbs. The area was relatively free from terrorists, but there was a traditional respect for 'bandits' and 'Tigers' who might be attracted if a family was seen to prosper. And there were frequent stories of local robbers, rape, shootings and drunken violence. During a period of more than usual violent activity, two police officers were stationed every night at the cross roads in the survey area to frisk the young men as they came back from film shows and courting. Normally, little co-operation was given to police

- and sǫ helped to mock authority and legislation above the village level as being interfering and ineffectual. One troublemaker, recently out of jail for rape and murder, stole from local compounds but was never reported to the police because he was the Kamnan's brother and his victims feared reprisals. Even when the problem was with strangers, the instinct was to 'avoid trouble' and rely on support from neighbours for protection. When on two consecutive days there was fighting on the Kuang Pau cart track between local girls and a group of women attached to a foreigner who was assumed to be involved in illegal opium trading through the village, representatives from most of the households in the hamlet were there to watch. When the police arrived to make enquiries, nobody had seen anything and even the children melted away in uncharacteristic silence.

This kind of group loyalty and self-sufficiency sǫ supported, ascribing to it almost a religious dignity. Sǫ singers told their audiences that when they sponsored a sǫ or helped or listened, then they were gaining Merit (bun). Rien Thong in Sǫ A of the illustrations sang: "I'm so happy that Phǫ Ban is having a khun bân mai (moving into a new house) and invited us here to make merit with him. I like to make merit too. Thank you for asking me." The concept of merit (bun) was turned by sǫ into an automatic emanation from 'togetherness' and voluntary communal effort. The most important concern of sǫ was that every element contributing to the community, whether natural, personal or immortal, should keep to an assigned role to support the social whole. Sǫ used language as its instrument of socialisation.

The way sǫ used language to keep in control proper categories,

to incorporate and to classify, was parallel with the way traditional like used ornament in costume, elaborate set dance steps and invariable formulae for certain important sequences. So that the community should not be intimidated by untamed natural life, the language of sǫ caged its abundance into lists of species and categories of usefulness, rewarding the more socially useful items, such as the lotus, with a multitude of different synonyms to give it entry into different contexts. Personal involvements and potentially disruptive relationships were clothed in comparisons with relationships that had a neutral emotional charge, such as the various vegetables, meats and sauces that complemented each other in Thai food. Jokes surrounded the starkness of religious teachings so that even while the Five Precepts of Buddhism were being explained, sǫ gave permission for socially acceptable divergence. Even when the subject matter of sǫ itself seemed to be getting beyond the boundaries of acceptable decency, the singers were quick to demonstrate the power of approved phrases, apology formulas, and skilful manipulation of the rich traditional imagery and vocabulary to still any uneasiness in their audience. In fact, this tension between the elegant integrated style of sǫ, expressing the refinement and control of society, and the obstinate personal desires that tried to resist, constituted the excitement of sǫ.

A common complaint among the middle-aged leaders of sǫ and like troupes was that younger people had no patience with the traditional ornament and complexity which to them was the beauty and appeal of their art form. Nang Lo Ong who lived at the commercial cross-roads in Kuang Pau and sold iced drinks in the market had been performing in like from the age of seven until she retired at 42, and for the last 20 years she had run her own troupe with her 47 year old husband, her phra ek, who hired out his tri-cycle to make a living. She recalled

her strict training in dance. She had to begin practice at six on winter mornings, barefoot in the garden, and then she was trained to sit straight with a needle between her chest and chin to make sure her head never drooped so that the heavy crowns and face frames they wore were kept perfectly level.

"Now it is much easier to play _like_", she said. "Those who can just sing a little are pushed onto the stage - and they are _like_ players. Before, there had to be teachers to teach each kind of showing and every part of it." Language was very important. The modern trend was to use the same kind of language for everyone, even ignoring the different dialect used to address Royalty and the monks. "In the old days, if a man played a Prince, then he was really a Prince and had to be addressed as one and he had to have the manners of a Prince and had to adopt the elegant, aristocratic ways of Royalty."

"_Like_ in the past was not the same as it is today. Before, each time a character came in front of the backdrop, he had to come on dancing. He had to describe the character he was playing, his mood and his feelings, in the dance movements of the entrance and exit. Now they just walk on and sit down. The action too used to be conveyed in dance. There were gestures, just a movement of the wrist, to say: 'I have arrived', 'I am going now'. If there were any special action to be performed, if someone died or recovered, then there was a special dance movement to show it. The focus of interest has switched around now and _like_ is becoming more like _lakhon_, like a film. The sequence of roles is no longer important now, with the singing, dancing and speaking helping the audience to understand the sentiments of a particular character. Instead, people prefer just to follow a story

that has an occasional song." The change in emphasis, from the roles to story had, she said, made the status of actors and actresses fall. Formerly they had needed the support of relatives to study in the palace or to live with a teacher who could train them to play instruments, sing and dance. Modern like required only that an actress had boldness and a knowledge of popular songs.

Nang Lo Ong described the kind of like she grew up with as like khongkêrien (learned like, like following custom) and the modern development as like bukkhalik (personalised, individual like). The switch in interest from role integration to story development she saw as diminishing like. For her "roles" were larger than individuals. They were multi-stranded models held up for an inspiration. If all the 'roles' on stage could achieve an interdependence, a working out of a harmonious pattern where each was displayed to greatest advantage like flowers in a perfect arrangement, then it was an illustration of an ideal moment in the community. Individuals could strive to relate to the model. When the role was subordinated to the individual player, it became trivial, invested only with personal understandings and sentiments, and related on only a few levels with other roles being played on the stage. There was no striving for beauty.

Instead there was a change of pace. Where harmony and slow moving, considered interdependence had paid tribute to the maturity of those at the top of the respect hierarchy, the new insistance on activity brought the emphasis on to youth. Instead of a reflective attitude complementing the recurring cycle of crops and seasons there was a switch to a biological time that had the urgency of individual

life rhythms and saw achievement to lie in action. Complexity and ornament gave way to bold action and single-stranded relationships. Where the virile bandit had been the complement in old like of the refined hero, and the giant demon with her lust and energies the other aspect of a pale, obedient and sad heroine, the audience began to be content with an unlikely paragon who could take on an evil world and defeat it through his own strength and virtue.

With the demise of careful ornament in language, music and dance, sǫ and like lost their instruments for socialising the unsocial: the natural, the personal and the spiritual. When death could be summed up in a formal dance sequence, it was seen as part of an ordered whole. When it became something that happened only to the 'bad guys' it became threatening, lonely and a punishment. When all the aspects of a character could be shown to be in balance, then there need be no shame in recognising the wilder, darker passions in each member of the community or in one's self. The sǫ and like productions showed how these potentially disruptive forces were held in check: they could seem to triumph, but ultimately the experience and wisdom transmitted from those who had gone before would be made available to the hero. He, because of his respect for his teachers and his diligence, would temporarily subdue the wayward forces and the happy ending was that society was again serene.

But society was not serene. The generations in Kuang Pau were being torn apart. To keep its audience, sǫ had to consent to undergo the same ravages. If the young were bored by special language and lack of action then there had to be a compromise. Jan Thip, like his contemporaries leading other sǫ and like troupes bent to the pressures

he had bemoaned for years. He simplified language, he streamlined the complicated procedures of visiting, flirting, courting, wooing, asking for permission, exchanging presents, becoming a pair and revising the parents so that the movement progressed quickly from flirting to sex. He replaced the traditional ornament of sǫ, its vocabulary, set phrases, formal lists and careful progressions, with external ornament: he taught his chang sǫ to sing pop and play modern instruments. He did not go so far as to incorporate a strip show in his programme though other sǫ and like leaders did.

"Fifteen years ago, people liked sǫ more than anything," Jan Thip said. "Sǫ khun bân mai (moving into a new house) spoke about all the things needed in the building of a house and the way it was built - how the builder was good and industrious and had raised his status and how they had slowly amassed money, made plans, taken their money to buy wood, brought the workmen together and started with the ceremony for putting up the pillars so that the builders would have skill. Then the sǫ turned to blessings for the owner of the house, telling all bad influences to go away. After that came the part where the two chang sǫ flirted together and finally got around to deciding to be husband and wife. When the man was flirting with the girl and offering himself, she asked what he had to offer, what work, what fortune, and what he brought with him to ask for her hand. "Where are the fields you own? How much do you have? Whom did you buy them from?" The girl asked after his parents: who they were; where the boy was born; where they lived; how old they were; and on what month and day the boy was born. If there was a long time to play sǫ, the singers won each other's consent, became a pair and, still in sǫ, made their first visit to the house of the boy's mother. They listed

the good things they were taking to show her respect (to wai her). But now, sǫ has changed. It is not like that any more. There are not the inevitable lists of things to be talked about as there were in the old days. In these days chang sǫ are not so good at keeping the questions and answers going backwards and forwards. Usually they just talk about things that are going on in the world - just about girls and men and sex. That is what the villagers like."

Although the compromise of part streamlined sǫ and part modern music fully satisfied neither half of his divided audience, a sǫ leader with good judgment could adjust his timing so that neither section was bored to the point of leaving. Sometimes there were errors of judgment. At one ordination in Kuang Pau for which formal silver-printed invitations had been sent to guests, a sǫ leader, for a small extra fee, offered a 'strip-tease'. However, his timing of the presentation misfired. Instead of waiting until the young men came in from the fields or the older women went home to cook the evening meal, the modest and unsophisticated strip was played by a girl of about 12 when the audience was mainly composed of women. To begin with, they thought it was funny, but when the child's bikini top fell off, their reaction was a mass exodus.

The inept strip-tease had brought sǫ into an extreme position directly opposed to its starting point. Symbolically and in fact, sǫ and like had become personalised, trivialised and finally stripped down to nothing. The supra-personal roles of like that had traditionally been acted out through an elaborate ritual using dance, costume, ornament and refinements of language once supported and instructed the community. They had given way to young semi-trained

actors in modern clothes speaking from their own small experience. But at least the younger people found it easier to identify with the new 'stars' than with the old impersonal 'roles'. They were hungry for the reassurance that each of them had identity beyond the closed supportive circle of his community and that he had power to influence the action like the heros in modern like and films. They 'bought' the idea as long as the packaging was convincing. The strip-tease had failed, not because it was innappropriate per se at an ordination, but because the packaging of the merchandise was inexpert and the child was seen to be pathetic.

Plot evolution

It was evident that 'packaged' so and like was not a sudden development but that it had been evolving for ten to fifteen years. Most of the like leaders of Sabai Thong's vintage made concessions to the new demands, because, as each of them stated during interview, an actor had to please his audience. A general concession was in the shorter length of time given to each presentation and that in turn limited the stories that could be played. Khun Chalêm, who had been taking his troupe to Chom Thong for 20 years, said that even the shortest of the older stories from thâm and puak jau (the scriptures, stories of the Buddha in former lives, and stories of battle and valour with Princes and Kings as heros) could hardly be condensed into two full days. Modern stories were usually divided into two episodes, enough to capture (tit) and audience for a second evening but not enough to bore them. Most troupes divided the periods of the day, playing cut-down versions of old northern and scriptural stories in the daytime then changing to modern stories for the evening episodes when the young people were free to attend after work.

Nai Thong Chaiyantho who was formerly a soldier and then leader of a like company in Doi Saket for 20 years attributed his popularity to the way he could change with the times. "People like my company because it is quick and they can get the story. There is just speaking and then the actors go off. I don't use dancers much because they are slow and people don't like them; and the villagers prefer speaking to singing. I have modern music and floor show. I have to try to please my audience. To arrange a like, you have to go and watch films and see how they show stories. If stories are slow, then people get irritated and bored and go off to see the boxing or a film. The best stories have a lot of action (to su mak, struggling, fighting) like Cowboy films where there is a lot of shooting and loud noise. When there are fights on stage we use Chinese firecrackers. Sometimes we have to stop the like for a while, then let the musicians out to play a bit and sing and the girls dance. Sometimes the story is short and we have been booked to play till midnight, so I put on the musicians to use up the time that's been paid for."

Chaiyantho, like the rest of the like and so leaders had to make a choice between antithetical sets of alternatives. Like was finely tuned to relatively isolated communities where there were patterns relating its audience into groups. The audience groups could respond to a number of different simultaneous stimuli so long as they enriched the categories represented in the overall pattern. As was described in chapter 3 on the Fair, audiences were capable of and enjoyed aesthetic stimulation in finding parallel ornamentation, songs for comparison, and refinements of details in familiar situations. The emphasis was on simultaneity and complementarity, such that more depth was gained by every element in the total pattern that included

the society and its entertainment. The set of alternatives more useful to an industrialising nation included the concept of the limited good, so that there was striving to reach a limited prize, competitiveness rather than complementarity, and a recognition of sequence of progression rather than the wasteful feast spread to satisfy the habit of simultaneous appreciation.

Chaiyantho chose the approach of an industrialist. There was no tradition of show business in his family (his father was kamnan in the village where he still lived) and the audience he wanted to please was the soldiers in army camps where he played and teenagers as well as older people in the villages that were cut off from the city much of the time by the bad state of their roads. His consumer orientation led him to sum up the market for his product with less ambivalence than those leaders with a show business background who tried to preserve the essentials of their drama form and consequently kept their attention on their product instead of its market. Although other specialists could complain that Chaiyantho's presentations were "not real like", his industrialist's approach to his market gave his audiences new maps by which to orientate themselves and to compensate for the signposting they had lost with the old people's stories.

In the sermon discussed in chapter 4, the monk stressed to his congregation that each should take responsibility not only for his own actions but also for his motives. He made it clear that in general motives should be aimed towards the greatest good of the Buddhist church and Thailand. Left in abeyance however was the problem of how to make choices concerning interaction with other members of the same

community, those interactions that had been controlled formerly by the respect system. Old style like could not help, but Thai films, radio soap opera and Chaiyantho's like offered starting points.

Since roles based on the respect system were no longer available as a blue-print for choices about an individual's place in the community, there had to be some alternative system. 'Radio' drama and modern like offered a solution by making a 'them' and 'us' division in their presentations so that the audience could identify with the 'good' side and find a 'team' with which to align motives and actions. Traditional like, in presenting all the elements contributing to social interaction, had shown only more wild, more virile, more vulgar and powerful characters in a relationship with the more refined, more orderly, more obedient and often more effete. Often the counter-hero was admired more by the audience than the refined character called the Phra ek (hero). Neither a total triumph for the civilising elements nor annihilation of the intrusive, disruptive but energetic anti-civilising forces made good like. In the Rama epic, the demon Ravana was never allowed to die on stage. Neither of two competing armies could be destroyed because even in dramatic presentations of historic battles, it was the balance and pattern that had to be preserved, not any particular personnel. Films and modern like allowed a polarisation so that there were winners and losers. The winners had in their teams the attractive men and women with whom the audience could identify, and they were inspired by motives with which the audience could sympathise.

Instead of stories that enfolded the group audiences with all its roles, the new stories unfolded showing a simple line of progression

from a problem to its resolution. The scenarios of the most popular films shown in Kuang Pau during the research period illustrated the favourite types of themes. For instance: the poor people of a country district unite against the city rich who conspire to take away their land, and when the case seems hopeless, a local girl made good with connections and fortune becomes the saviour of her erstwhile neighbours. And: a poor crippled girl, jeered at by her schoolmates, finds a magic jewel and is given powers to free and enrich herself so that she can reward those who were kind and take revenge on the unkind. The polarisation of good and bad gave individuals in an audience a starting point for choices. Were they, like Tiger Bang (also the subject of a popular film) on the side of the disorderly, or did their sympathies lie with the heroine who sacrificed her personal happiness for riches and respectability? There was still no guarantee that either side would eventually receive all the rewards but there was a polarisation to show available choices.

The structure of Chaiyantho's company reflected his different approach to stories. Unlike Sabai Thong who had his three lead roles, Phra Ek, Nang Ek and Villain permanently filled by Surabin, Kiribun and Thibet, any one of Chaiyantho's company of 20 musicians, singers and dancers might be chosen for a lead or special role, depending on whether the heroine of the story needed to produce real tears or the hero had to be shorter or taller. It was the story not the roles that dictated the personnel. Actors were interchangeable components of the presentation in the same way as were the 'extras', the modern music and song that took the place of traditional ornament in Chaiyantho's productions.

Ornament in traditional like was integrated with the story to the extent that it had become the essence of a presentation. The ornament defined the roles. When the difference in execution between two similar dance gestures could inspire the critical appreciation of the audience, and when the excitement of the show came from a careful tension between expected structure and the expertise of improvised ornament, then to strip away the ornament was to vandalise the production. Chaiyantho closed up the wounds in his like by increasing the pace of the story, and he fitted 'extras' to take the place of ornament. The 'floor show' and music which he offered as extras bore no relationship to the basic unit which was becoming increasingly standardised. The audience was buying the production and could slot in extras on a 'chooser pays' basis. Just as members of the Kuang Pau community were being encouraged to break out of the complex pattern of interrelatedness that had grown up around the agricultural cycle, and develop instead the multiple single-stranded relationships more useful to industry, so drama was breaking down into modules. Both drama elements and social elements were becoming interchangeable components. There was evidence that the choice escalation syndrome described in Alvin Toffler's Future Shock was beginning.

The transition was uneven. While audiences still involved in the agricultural way of life were becoming aware of the attractions and demands of the new 'progressive' attitudes, their needs in entertainment were mixed. The older people in their groups sought reassurance that the world was still as they knew it and at the same time they appreciated help in understanding the hurtful behaviour of their children and grandchildren. Those already exposed by their age or circumstances to the advantages of a more industrialised country

were more ready to sacrifice the reassurances from the past for a guide into the future. In Kuang Pau, a survey of entertainment preferences revealed a clear zoning of interests that correlated with the agricultural, the professional and the commercial sectors of the research area. (See Maps V and VII.)

Chaiyantho, with his mixed music and _like_ shows had stumbled on a winning formula to please most of his audience most of the time. Like the other eight _sǫ_ and _like_ leaders interviewed, Chaiyantho was unsophisticated and had completed only the minimum four years of schooling required by law. There was a more highly educated genre of entertainers who were studying the market closely and whose influence on the shape of the future would be decisive. Three specialists interviewed saw themselves as missionaries for northern performing art forms. Two broadcasters who also operated their own drama companies, and one was the head of a new government drama school that opened in Chiengmai in 1971.

Chiengmai was the first of the five major areas designated by the government Fine Arts Department to receive funds for a school of dramatic art. The head mistress of Natasin School of Dramatic Art, Nang Pranong Thongsombon, was instructed to accept children under 15 from the north with seven years of schooling and train them for professional showbusiness, to dance and act in the bigger restaurants and show places of the north in order to encourage the tourist industry and to promote northern attractions to compete with those of Bangkok. _Like_ was not taught because it was 'low class', but several of the _like_ leaders interviewed were keeping their children at school with the hope that they might be accepted in the new technical college.

Staff were mainly graduates of the Bangkok Fine Arts University and the range of performing arts on the curriculum were those of central Thailand traditionally taught in the palaces, with a sprinkling of the more sedate 'classical' northern art forms including so whenever local specialists could be found to teach them. Nang Pranong hoped to raise the status of the performing arts in the north by encouraging her students to become teachers, thus spreading an appreciation of the art forms through schools and colleges.

The founding of Natasin school was too recent for its impact on northern drama to be measured, but in its founding was set a standard for 'good' or 'real' performing art. Chaiyantho's like was not 'real' theatre. A different way had to be found to please audiences. Two broadcasters, Amnuay Kalaphat and Bua Kham, both with ambitions to win recognition for northern performing arts and to prove themselves the equal of performers from the central plain and Bangkok, had been experimenting with combinations of music and drama forms on radio for more than fifteen years.

Chaiyantho had to please his audience, and in pleasing his audience he pleased his sponsors because they were the same people. Amnuay and Bua Kham had the double problem of pleasing an audience and also their sponsors. The military government kept complete control of radio and television stations by using army and airforce personnel in all administrative positions and limiting licences both to broadcasters and to their direct sponsors who were mainly Bangkok companies. Legislation for the media was erratic: in periods of relative calm in the political situation advertising was permitted, but without notice the permission could be withdrawn so that sponsors

who had invested money in more elaborate programmes could lose the advertising they had paid for. Even regulations controlling record request programmes varied according to the balance between the strength of Thai forces on the borders and the successes of insurgents. At periods of greater national vulnerability, requests were banned in case they were a means of passing information to communist infiltrators and there were lists issued of songs said to be 'unsuitable' on the grounds that people were using them to advertise for 'fans'. At other times no words at all were allowed in record programmes. Those broadcasters who wished to renew their licences supported the government policy in their programmes both by insinuation and direct propaganda to demonstrate that Thai institutions were superior, that local variations had a respected place in the richness of 'Thai culture' and that communists were foreign (it was never suggested that Thai nationals could be communist), that they were dark coloured with shaggy eyebrows and that they were liars, deceivers and cunning blackguards.

Both Amnuay and Bua Kham encountered problems with the military controlling radio stations at the beginnings of their careers. Amnuay began broadcasting live for WBT2 Chïengmai, reading northern poetry, (khâu) and then mixing his stories with so rhythms in the styles of various northern provinces. He made the same eclectic arrangements for music and set up an orchestra with musicians from different provinces of the north playing their local instruments and melodies. He also insisted, against the preferences of his local sponsors when touring, that his girls wear traditional northern long skirts instead of the 'mini' expected as the uniform of modern style singers. He struggled to promote the idea that 'northern is beautiful', and to reverse the trend seen in Bangkok drama, of demoting northerners to

the status of servants, second wives, villains and stupid peasants. When Amnuay applied for a job as programme controller for the newly founded Air Force radio station in Chiengmai, he was turned down. He asked help from the United States Information Service base in Chiengmai and was given access to the national wavelengths for his northern programmes. Amnuay remained out of favour with city people but his popularity increased with country audiences and with more sophisticated and tourist audiences who valued the 'original' northern flavour of his presentations. He made tapes for Lampang, Chiengmai, and Phrae and continued to broadcast for WBT2 Chiengmai, the station that specialised in broadcasts to minority groups.

Bua Kham also began her broadcasting career by reading northern poetry sent to her from listeners in the country districts. She was a programme supervisor, the equivalent of a disc jockey, and also set up a lakhon (drama) company in 1963. Her break with the radio station made banner headlines in the Chiengmai newspapers. She was accused by the station head, a soldier and also a popular broadcaster, of using obscene language on the air. The problem had arisen through differences in dialect between city and country populations. Bua Kham's popularity rested with people in the country areas who sent in their poetry compositions using earthy language perfectly fitting for the kind of live entertainment they enjoyed. City language, considerably modified even in Chiengmai by the Bangkok dialect, rejected much of the country vocabulary as crude. Bua Kham left the radio station, but her popularity with the country people increased so that she extended her company of players and made tapes for radio in Lampang, Chiengmai, Phrae, Tak and Phitsanulok.

Both broadcasters in interviews stated that their aim was to 'raise the status' of northern performing arts. Both experienced the problems of compromise when they attempted to convert for the media entertainment forms suitable for live performance. Both formed companies to perform sǫ, adapted the sǫ so that it told a story, and finally added more sǫ couples so that, still within the context of the familiar rhythms, there was the 'realism' of dramatic presentation with 'noises off' and singers taking character parts. Bua Kham in December 1971 had a regular one hour programme of lûk thûn country songs for an audience aged between 11 and 25, many of them soldiers. When she had attempted to introduce the more sophisticated phlêng sakon city songs she received 300 letters in three nights requesting that she continue with lûk thûn songs. Two years before she had first experimentally mixed her lakhon company with the sǫ company she ran and the new lakhon sǫ had attracted 50 letters of approval a day. For a programme of records, 30 minutes a day, Bua Kham was paid 1,000 bâht a month. For lakhon sǫ, she was paid 120 bâht for a half hour show (to be shared with her players) and for straight lakhon she earned 200 bâht.

Amnuay was experiencing the same progression of interest and expansion of the market away from sǫ towards the straight part sung, part spoken dialogue of lakhon. He still read over the air poetry sent in by country listeners (khâu), but the sǫ company through which he had integrated regional variations of sǫ and added stories and his own touches of 'realism' was becoming less popular than his lakhon company which specialised in nivai (soap operas) with a northern flavour. Amnuay took comfort from the fact that Chiengmai University was also beginning to take Lanna Thai (northern) culture seriously and to

promote discussion on northern art forms. That, he said, would persuade city people and central plains Thais to 'give honour' to the north.

The process of splintering an intricate form of entertainment into independent fragments was being accelerated by those who most cared to preserve the character of northern performing arts. Tourists (Thai and foreign) at the expensive restaurants were being offered 'genuine' northern medleys of mixed regional styles while those in the regions enjoyed pop songs and mini skirts. The University and Fine Arts School promoted interest in Thai classical drama never normally played in the villages and in slow, beautiful dance and song taught to children in schools for 'speech day' performances and some wat festivals but never part of the 'fun' at fairs or ceremonies. Radio broadcast khâu (similar to central klŏn) composed by villagers usually in their fifties and sixties in a language despised by city people and gradually dying because young people were being educated in the central language. The only strong and growing component of the entertainment system was the formerly relatively unimportant story.

The emergence of the story was an example of radio's standardising influence. Three broadcasters, each attracted initially by the rich variety of northern entertainment forms and styles found that his options were limited by the medium. Bua Kham was limited in language she could use because the radio audience was spread through a wide area of different dialects and varying degrees of sophistication. Amnuay attempted to display the divergent musical and dramatic styles of different northern regions but ended up with a hotchpotch alien to all the regions and still uninteresting to the city Thais he was trying to

win. Sawang aimed to encourage *like* but since radio could not accommodate the colour, lights and visual appeal of costume, make-up masks, ornament and physical beauty nor capture the excitement of movement, the euphoria of belonging to a group or the interchange between players and their audience, he was forced to reduce *like* to a story with incidental music.

The strength of the traditional northern entertainment system had been in the mutual support between closely interrelated entertainment forms. Instead of arranging variety as part of a simultaneous display radio had to fit variety into a sequence of pre-determined time slots, and instead of concentrating on particular groups on particular occasions radio had to appeal to all ages, areas and levels of cultural sophistication. To accommodate the limitations of radio broadcasting, it was more convenient for broadcasters to break the links integrating the traditional pattern and to juggle with its component parts as if they were interchangeable instead of inter-dependent. The entertainments system was flexible and changed with the social system of the groups it served so that it could perhaps have supported the introduction by Chaiyantho and his fellow *like* and *so* leaders of such far-reaching changes of pattern, but it was the use of radio as a medium which was shattering the entire system.

It was not so much the standardising influence on entertainment material and forms that was decisive, but the capacity of radio to re-educate and standardise its listeners. When groups attended traditional entertainments, they responded in a number of different ways. If members of a group were asked about a *like* performance, the comments reflected whether the occasion had been fun (*sanuk*), whether there had been a large crowd, whether the *phra ek* and *nang ek*

had been handsome and pretty, whether the nang ek had cried real tears, whether the clown had made comments about someone in their group in the audience, whether the costumes had been colourful or the skirts too short. If there had been disappointment in any particulars then there were still compensations so that a like show that lacked professional polish could still provide entertainment. On radio, there was only one standard of excellence and that was the degree of professsionalism in presenting words and music. The difference was in direct contradiction to the teaching that supported the respect system, quoted in the story in chapter 4 about every creature having some weakness but each having his proper place in the whole pattern.

Radio standards had to meet a judgment of 'good' or 'bad' which introduced a dichotomy alien to the parameter for critical appreciation traditionally exercised by Kuang Pau people. Good and bad referred to absolutes at different ends of a linear scale whereas the more familiar 'suitable' and 'not suitable' referred to standards variable according to a situation and with reference to patterns established by respected forebears. To establish a habit of 'good/bad' judgments was in the interests of industrial progress. If people were to be efficient interchangeable components in the workforce, they needed the kind of personal integration that marked them as being either useful (good) or not useful (bad) whatever the situation. Qualities which contributed to predictability in a character were valued more than the traditionally encouraged adaptability to meet changing situational requirements. An extension of this training was reflected in the popular simple 'cowboy' type of stories (nivai). The good (winners) were easily distinguished from the bad (losers) and their triumph was seen as a moral victory rather than as in the nithân (stories of the old people) as a confirmation of the temporary dominance of a superior

knowledge pattern.

Summary

Sǫ and like were the preferred forms of entertainment for those still living within rhythms of agricultural life in Kuang Pau. Their exposure had been less than that of city people or even of those in the commercial zone of Kuang Pau to government pressures towards progress and industrialisation. But even those entertainment forms they had traditionally relied on to strengthen their community bonds were themselves disintegrating. Sǫ had described proper action and like had explored suitable emotions. Both were moving towards stories presenting only 'good' and 'bad', and offering alternatives for individual choices but no longer patterns for group interaction.

The three parts of this chapter follow a progression charted in three previous chapters. Sǫ and like supported the respect hierarchy and traditional leaders were conservative. When entrepreneurs from outside the acting profession began to exercise their influence, they manufactured new sǫ and like styles to suit their own personal preferences and those of their audiences instead of referring back to the authority of the past for proper methods of presentation. From a supportive role in the community, passing on the lore of earlier generations, sǫ and like became products packaged to appeal to the widest markets. Whereas it had been the responsibility of the professional to make himself understood to his audience, it now became the responsibility of the audience to accept or reject the product. Communication between entertainers and audience had become a one-way contact.

As individuals were freed by education, language and money from the enclosed patterns of mutual support efficient in the agricultural situation there was a shift in emphasis towards personal instead of situational integrity. Actors in so and like brought their personal interpretation to roles that were formerly elaborately ritualised in gesture, language and ornament. Instead of a gradually acquired understanding of significant details building a critical appreciation from which the older and more experienced audiences would draw the richest enjoyment, value was attributed to the person playing the characters and to their personal style. As a result, the standard role interaction of a like performance was trivialised. Roles were subordinated to the needs of particular characters so that a specific story line became paramount. Like no longer offered the re-presentation of an acceptable pattern of social interaction which had characterised the performances as rites of incorporation.

Western-style stories that spanned relatively short periods in the lives of individuals or groups had been growing in popularity with the foreign educated Bangkok elite since the turn of the century. Romantic novels had appeared in the 1930s and modern Bangkok magazines carried up to 15 episodes in each issue of different serialised stories about disappointed love, family squabbles, violence and struggles against evil Tiger-men, witch women and insatiable flesh devouring ghouls. These modern stories differed from those told by the old people of Kuang Pau in that they answered the question "what next?" rather than "what now?". The old people, even when they used histories traced through generations of incarnations, offered a signposting to the present pattern for harmonious living while the more condensed modern stories documented possible future results of available choices.

Making choices was the most urgent problem facing those liberated from the controls of the respect system. There seemed to be unlimited options, but part of the impact of radio was to make clear that in fact available options had been severely reduced, at least during a transition period while radio had more power than its audience, now splintered into isolated listening units. Radio demanded commitment of attention to a single source of stimulus. There was only a single choice: either switch on or off. The respect system that had taught adaptability had practised a more complex embracing of options with an inclusive "both/and" response. The monk, in his sermon in chapter 5 had implied that the guide to even this remaining choice of 'either/or' could be made on the grounds of positive or negative motivation. When each choice could be seen in terms of acceptance or rejection of component parts instead of as an adaptation to a relationship, options were reduced. The government's propaganda for a progressive Thailand was effective, but the price to be paid for simpler industrial book-keeping was an impoverishment in cultural flexibility. So and like were keeping pace with their audience in unravelling from a complex rite of incorporation to become a charter for individualism.

CHAPTER 8

Conclusion

The preceding chapters have set out to offer proof for the thesis that the social system and entertainment system in Kuang Pau were intimately related. It has been shown that each changed in sympathy with the other and that those changes gathered momentum with each sympathetic response until the two systems seemed to be victims rather than the originators of the change. Having argued the proof in detail there remain the more speculative issues about the kind of relationship between the two systems.

The analysis has highlighted two seemingly contradictory aspects of entertainment in relation to the specific society: the entertainment confirms the traditional form of the society from which it springs and at the same time it challenges that form by offering alternatives. I submit that the relationship has a parallel in that obtaining between the 'heads' and 'tails' sides of the same coin: the issuing authority is advertised on the 'head' side and on the reverse side is shown the value of the coin with some symbol drawing attention to an aspect under the jurisdiction of the authority which is deemed significant. Entertainment is a 'reverse' aspect of the social structure, concerned with values and commenting through symbols.

In this context, the 'issuing authority' of a society is represented by those institutions through which control is exercised, whether they be legal, political, religious, economic or a manipulation

of kinship ties. Since the concerns of entertainment are other than those of exercising control, it is freed from many practical constraints. Its comments can be provocative but not destructive since to destroy the society would be to destroy itself.

These 'comments' which entertainment can offer through symbolism often complement the positives or negatives of the 'control' aspect of the social system. Where the social norms say 'no', entertainment can say 'yes'. Fairs, for example, are a waste of time and money from the point of view of most responsible adults in an English community and yet they flourish. Fairs come alive at night and their attractions reverse rules for normal comfortable living: fair-goers pay to be frightened by high speeds and spooks, sickened on whirling machines and bumped in cars; they eat sticky, greasy foods without nutritional value; they seek the crowds and noise they usually avoid, and they pay to see headless ladies and five-legged cows. The aimless wandering around the fairground and the transience of the homes on wheels augment the pleasure felt in the reversals. The flamboyant waste contradicts the rules of ordinary thrifty morality. On the other hand, the 'waste' offered by entertainment complements the 'thrift' encouraged by the social system so that the pattern is whole and all options along the continuum of extravagance and frugality are kept available.

There is pleasure in the potential offered by entertainment. If the contrary to each moral choice made in a particular society can be expressed safely in symbolic form in its entertainment, then members of that society can derive double satisfaction, each one enjoying the possibilities of creativity as well as the forbidden

thrills of voyeurism. An obvious demonstration of the close relationship between particular moralities and their contraries is offered by the attraction ribaldry and solemnity exercise on each other. The bawdiest jokes seem to come from Masonic Lodges. In the Kuang Pau context, the Housewarming sq after its ritual blessings ploughed through earthiness to explicit vulgarity and the monk's sermon triggered an extravagance of naughty associations. Laughter erupted from the incongruities as if polite society were a plaster over a fault in an earthquake zone. The jokes that border the areas where morality meets its contrary and the laughter the jokes provoke strongly suggest that there is a releasing of pressure. Pressure builds up where the control institutions of the social system restrict choices to a particular morality. Entertainment offers an arena for releasing that pressure. At the same time it reassures its audience of present rules and reminds them of other options that could be open to the society. There seems to be a parallel between the function of dreams and of entertainment in a society. They contribute towards the health of the social and human bodies. Without dreams or without entertainment the bodies sicken.

The pressures of conforming to a particular morality become most acute when the morality becomes most oppressive. History offers examples of the release of that pressure in the blossoming of the pornography industry as propriety enveloped middle class Victorians, and in the songs and dances created during the concentration of national efforts during the World Wars. More recently, when the New Zealand government announced new measures of economic stringency, statistics showed an immediate increase in spending on gambling, betting and alcohol. 'Entertainment' can almost takes its definition

in relation to any particular society according to what is currently considered least "useful" to that society.

Because entertainment has no practical uses it is limited by no practical constraints. It is free to offer a society a vision of its own potential. It provides an ideal arena for experimentation. Alternative morals and 'anti-social behaviour' can be tried out on a stage, in a film, in poetry or song and even in the reversal behaviour of some communities where ordinary citizens can exercise the licence of 'entertainers' to experiment with their surroundings for the limited period of a festival. The verdict of the 'control' aspects of social institutions directing current morality, that entertainment is 'useless' and 'does not count' in 'real' practical life, gives the community freedom to experiment within its own vision of itself. This way it can retain the necessary flexibility to incorporate compatible innovations or to test and reject those that are in appropriate. Entertainment forms can sometimes be used as vehicles for models of the society. In the same way that a computer can be fed a model of a society and predict the result if some variable should be altered so a play or a story can experiment with variables in the safety of entertainment symbolism.

There is a tension generated between a social system and its entertainment which becomes evident during the entertainment events. This tension is also a bond: it is the understanding between entertainers and audience that there is a framework of current morality which although it must be respected needs to be challenged. This is the point at which innovations are filtered into a society often accompanied by the laughter that expresses the release of tensions.

In the Kuang Pau context the contrary pressures that built the tension were expressed in the terms suphâp, already referred to as describing the old morality and usually translated as 'elegant' or 'appropriate', and sanuk (muan in the northern language) often describing the challenge to that morality and translated as 'fun'.

The Kuang Pau experience of tracing the relationship between a community and its entertainment during a time when both were undergoing rapid change was particularly instructive. As the society developed from a closed, independent agricultural community into just one part of the larger 'Thai' society, the most significant change was noticeable at the point of filtering in the relationship between entertainment and audience. Traditionally the local audience retained strong control over the presentation of their entertainment but by the time they were part of the larger community, their control was dissipated. They could turn their radios on or off and their influence became indirect to the point of being insignificant.

In Kuang Pau in the traditional phase, the audience chose those they wanted to entertain them and offered them hospitality. During shows, it was the wishes of their hosts that were respected by the performers: there was banter across the front of the stage, local characters were named and local idiosyncracies teased. The audience controlled the show with their comments, laughter and applause. The audience were able to control the action because they knew what to expect: there was a standard of accuracy in the presentation of certain entertainment forms and the performers were expected to be craftsmen lending their own expertise to their role but not transgressing its limits. Each performance was custom made to fit its particular audience.

By the time fieldwork ended, it was clear that entertainment was becoming an industry. Broadcasts of northern like began in 1972 and the 'modifications' necessary to put northern so and poetry on the air had already been forced on their promoters. Kuang Pau children were paying as much as 10 bàht (equal to an adult's daily wage) to go to a pop concert given by Bangkok musicians and there were regular weekly pay films as well as free advertising film shows. As entertainment became an industry, its audience became a market. Promoters manufactured a product which they sold to consumers. Professionalism took over from craftsmanship as the packaging of the entertainment merchandise became more important than its content and the content was generalised to the point of acceptability by the greatest number. The craftsmen of entertainment found that instead of working anonymously to reproduce the traditional themes in song, music and drama, they had to make themselves attractive to the promoters and backers who had access to time on the media. 'Star names' began to be used as part of the packaging. Artisans turned into artistes as they focussed more attention on themselves and interpretation of material began to take precedence over accuracy. Stories where the interest was on characterisation and plot development were suitable vehicles for the display of these new acting talents, and in songs, clarity of words took precedence over old fashioned delight in rhythm where even sense had been sacrificed to an ebullience of pleasing sounds.

A major conservative section in Kuang Pau was disgruntled with the new entertainment but the need for entertainment remained and the radios were turned on. In terms of the social system they preferred, the entertainment was 'bad' entertainment. 'Bad' entertainment was still better than no entertainment.

From the point of view of Kuang Pau, the modern radio entertainment was 'bad' entertainment because it failed to acknowledge and thus to reaffirm the current local morality at the same time as it presented alternatives. That part of entertainment which confirmed the local morality was the ritual content. This could account for the initially puzzling fact that personnel specialising in ritual in Kuang Pau were often also entertainers and that traditionally entertainers were often ritual experts. So long as a community's entertainers acknowledged the same morality as their audience there was no threat to the social system. When entertainment began to grow into an industry so that promoters from outside the community rather than audiences exercised direct control over entertainment, a threat became apparent.

That same freedom from practical constraints which enables entertainment to present alternatives to the morality which is endorsed by the current social system also allows access to the society of values which can prove damaging. By introducing elements into the entertainment of Kuang Pau which supported the morality of a wider 'Thai' society, by repeating and confirming these and giving them the status of ritual, those who controlled Thai broadcasting had the power to rob the Kuang Pau people of their own social system. It is a corollary of this thesis that the power to manipulate any community lies, in part, with the agencies that control its entertainment and choose the alternatives that can be presented.

Appendix 1

Note on system of transliteration of Thai words

Where place names have a traditional spelling in the Roman alphabet, these spellings have been retained, as for instance in Chom Thong. Otherwise, a system of notation proposed by Professor E.H.S. Simmonds and adapted for the typewriter has been used. It is as follows:

c	จ	ia	เอีย
ch	ฉ	ṷa	เอือ
ng	ง	ṷ	อื
w/u	ว	oe	เ-อ
		iu	อิว
ǫ	อ	ǫ́	โอ
ǫ́	ออ	am	อำ
u	อุ	ái	ไย
u̇	อู	ai	ไอ or ใอ
a	อั	áu	อาว
á	อา	au	เ-า
i	อิ		
í	อี		
e	เอ		
é	แอ		

Appendix 2

Questionnaire administered to 74 households in Kuang Pau

(written in Thai)

1 What is the address of the house? (Give tambon, mùbân, number)

2 What is the name of the householder? Names of resident household members - with ages and relationship to head of household?

3 What is the occupation of the householder? Occupations of other members of the household?

4 How many years of education has each member of the household?

5 How long has the house been built? When did the family begin to live there? From where did they come? Why did they come? (i.e. was it the possibility of work that brought them or relatives living in the area?)

6 Are all members of the family at the house? Are there any, normally resident who are away? (for example, working.) Do they send money back? Do they come home for special occasions? (If so, which occasions?)

7 Where do any married children live? From which districts did spouses come to Kuang Pau?

8 Are there relatives living in nearby houses? Are there others in nearby villages? How are the families within the same compound related to each other?

9 How much land (rice fields and market garden) does the family own? Where is it? Who works it? Are more fields hired or borrowed? How did the family get the land?

10 Does the household own oxen or buffalo? Does it hire them?

11 Does the household keep pigs, chickens, ducks or geese?

12 Does the household own any vehicles? (e.g. bus, van, sâmlo or oxcart). What transport do they normally use for themselves and their goods?

13 What is an estimation of expected income from rice, fruit, vegetables, trading and rents?

14 Which religion is respected in the household? Which wat is normally attended? How often are visits made to the wat? How often are ceremonies attended at neighbouring households? Within what range would the household offer its help for a ceremony sponsored by another family?

15 Have there been any ceremonies in the house in the past year or recently? (e.g. wedding, ordination, cremation, tham bun, memorial for the dead, khuan ban mai?)

16 Who are considered neighbours? If someone died, from how many houses distant would people come to visit and help?

17 Is there a sancau (spirit house) and hing phra (shelf for sacred objects)? How often are offerings made at each? Were there any special ceremonies for the phi this year? Who is invited to help at the ceremonies?

18 Does the householder use a mo du, mo phi or medium? For what? How often? Does he wear phra (amulets)? Does he have tattoos? Does he use a horoscope?

19 Has the householder been a phra (monk)? Have his sons?

20 Does the household own a television or radio? How many? Which members of the family own them? Which programmes do they listen to?

21 Are there books in the house? On which subjects? In which language?

22 Does the family attend festivals? Which ones? Where? How often? What transport do they use?

23 What kind of entertainment is preferred by the different aged members of the family? Who likes to listen to so, niyai, like, kamlan? Who likes to go to films, listen to records, listen to modern music, go dancing? Who likes to go to the wat? Who likes to sit and chat? Who likes to listen to or tell stories?

24 How does the family get news of the outside world? Do they hear through radio, television, newspapers or neighbours? Does news come from the wat or from meetings?

25 How do they view entertainment artists - nak rong (singers), film stars, chang so, etc.? Do they think they have high status or not? Are they honest? Do they have good morals? Are they rich or glamorous? Would they expect them to have good education? Would they like their children to be entertainment artists? Would they like their children to marry entertainment artists?

26 How often do members of the household go visiting? How often do they go to town (Chiengmai)? Do they go to the hospital? Do they go away to trade? How do they travel? (by bus, bike, taxi or car).

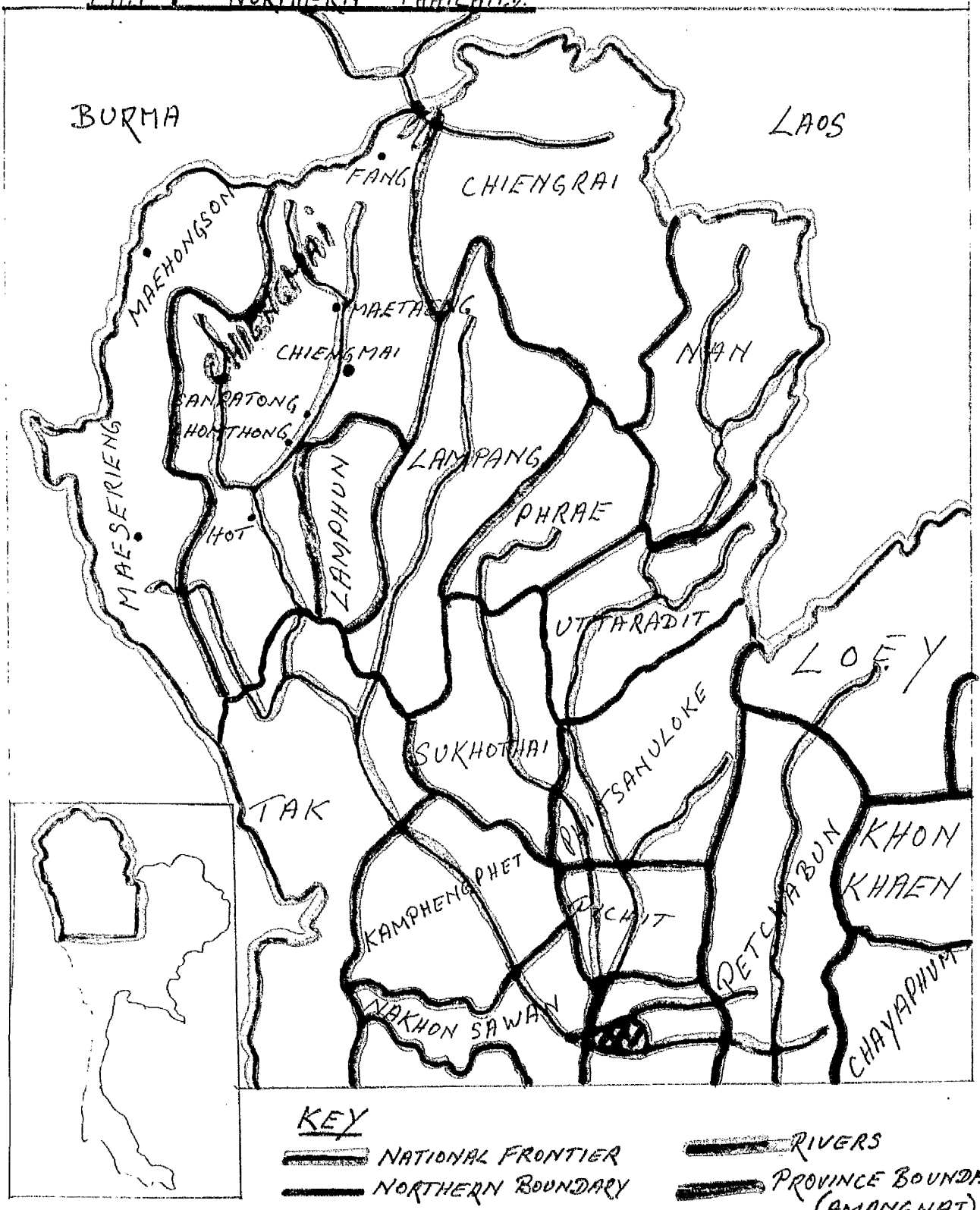
27 Can they think of any outstanding changes in the area over the past 10 years (size of the village, roads, radios, electricity, etc.)? Are there changes in manners, customs or attitudes?

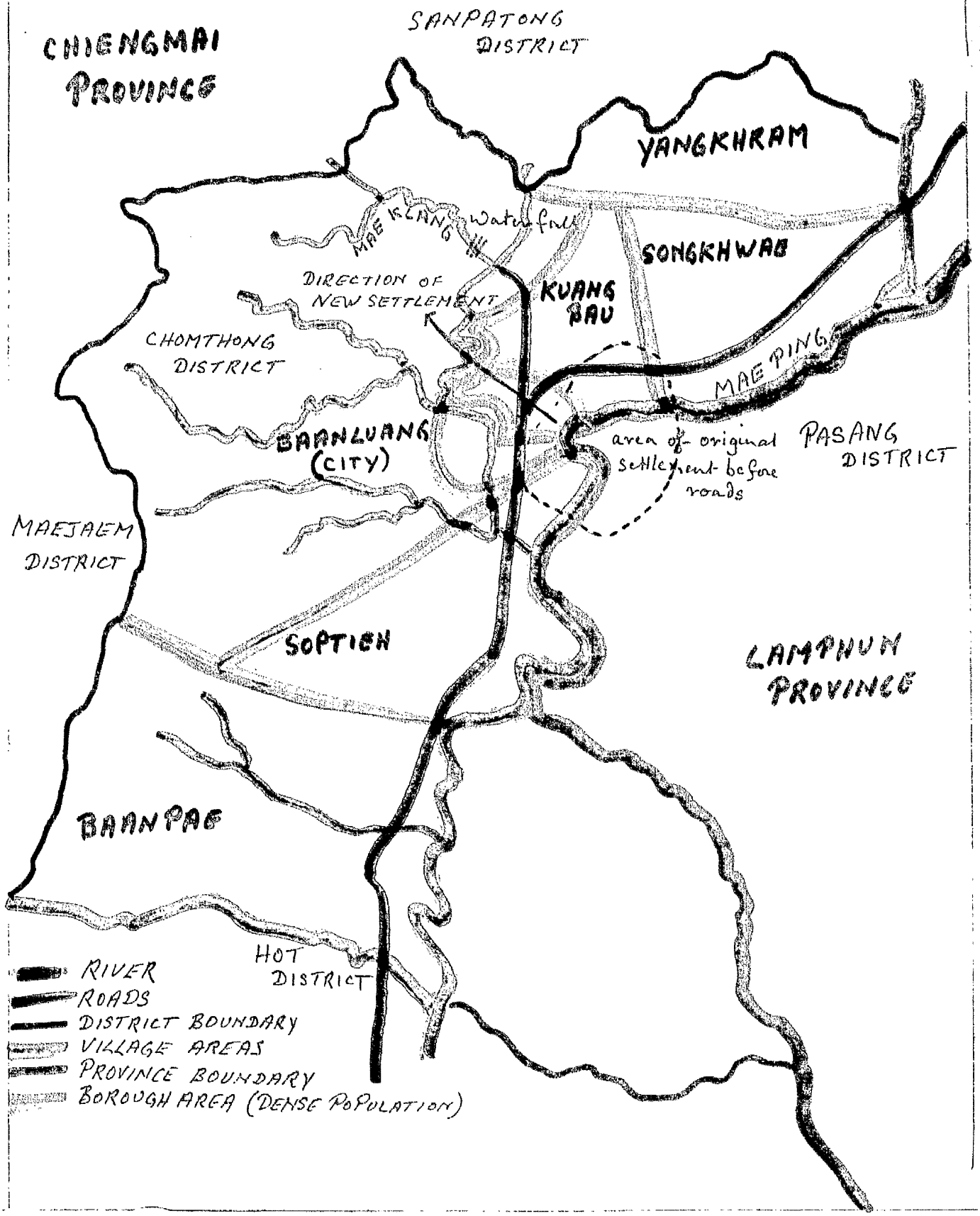
28 Do local people observe the same customs for festivals? Is the language changing? Are the same kinds of stories and jokes used? Can household members remember any games, songs or stories that were favourites in childhood?

29 Do families have any written records of their family history, or pictures?

(Each household was asked to name any chang sǫ, like players, nak rǒng, storytellers or other artists in the area with whose work they were familiar.)

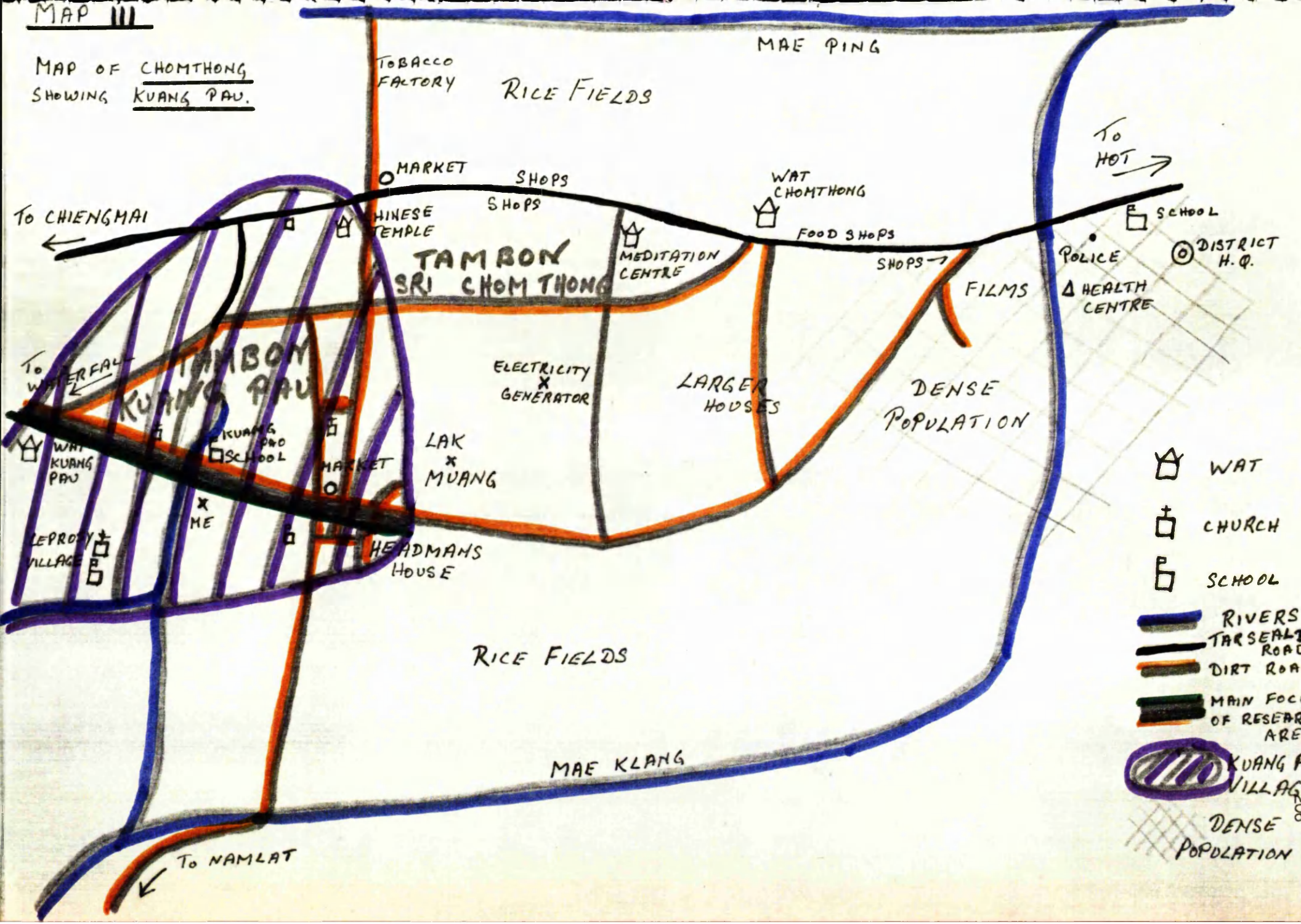
MAP 1 NORTHERN THAILAND.




CHIENGMAI PROVINCE
SANPATONG DISTRICT
YANGKHRAM
MAE KLANG Waterfall
SONGKHWAE
DIRECTION OF NEW SETTLEMENT
KUANG PAU
CHOMTHONG DISTRICT
MAE PING
BAANLUANG (CITY)
area of original settlement before roads
PASANG DISTRICT
MAEJAEM DISTRICT
SOPTIEH
LAMPHUM PROVINCE
BAANPAE
HOT DISTRICT
RIVER
ROADS
DISTRICT BOUNDARY
VILLAGE AREAS
PROVINCE BOUNDARY
BOROUGH AREA (DENSE POPULATION)

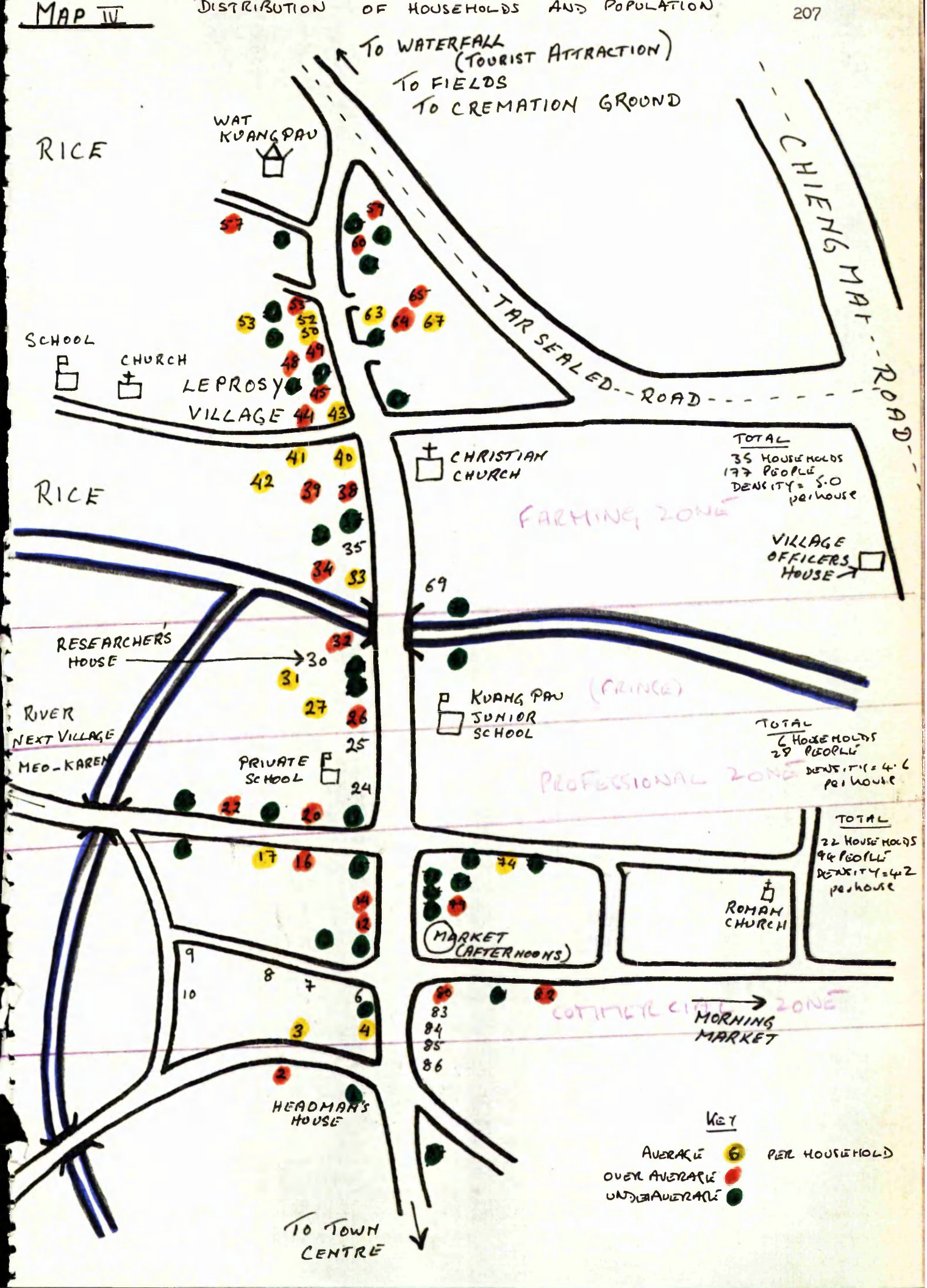
MAP III

MAP OF CHOMTHONG SHOWING KUANG PAU.



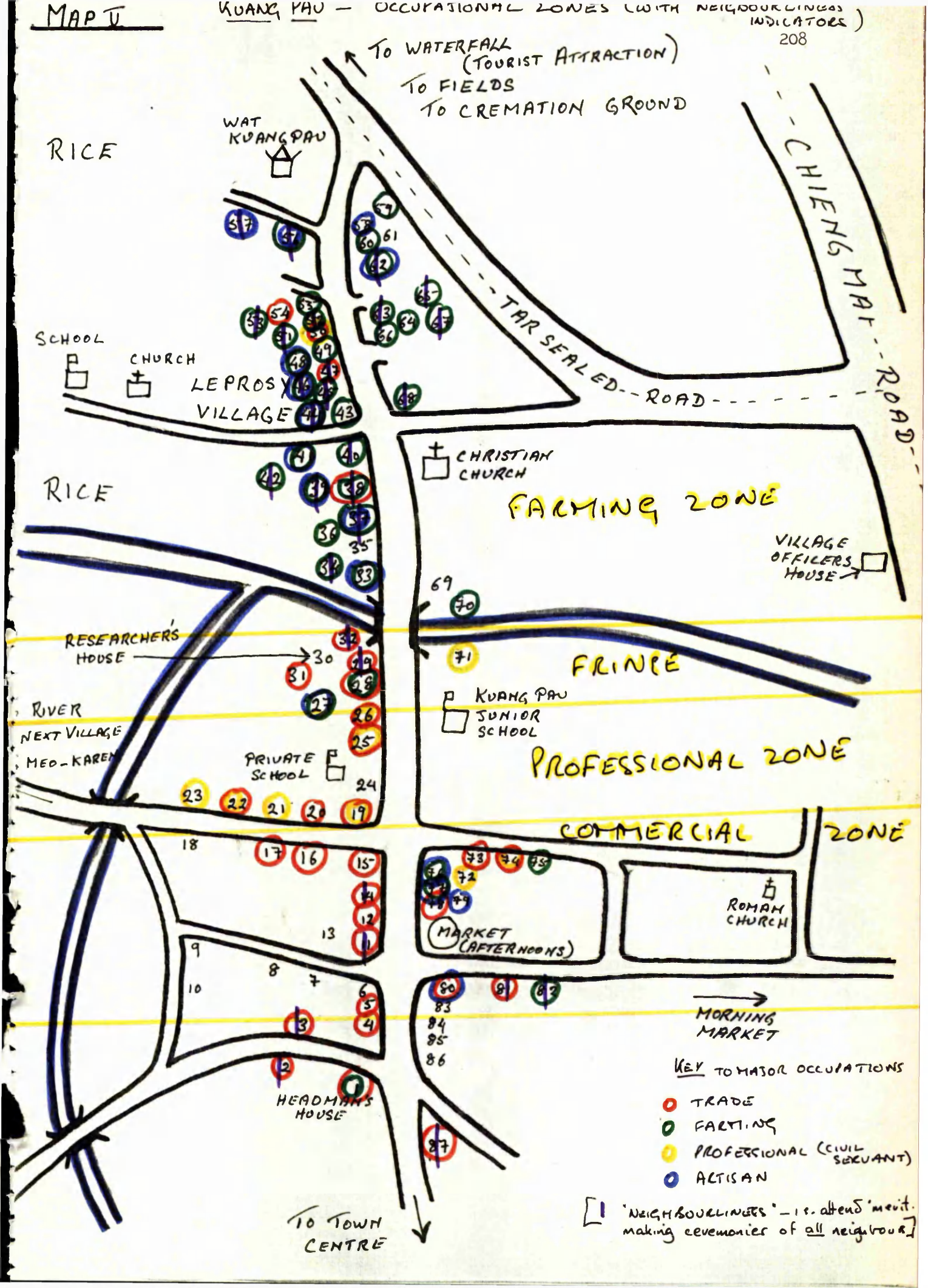
MAP IV

DISTRIBUTION OF HOUSEHOLDS AND POPULATION

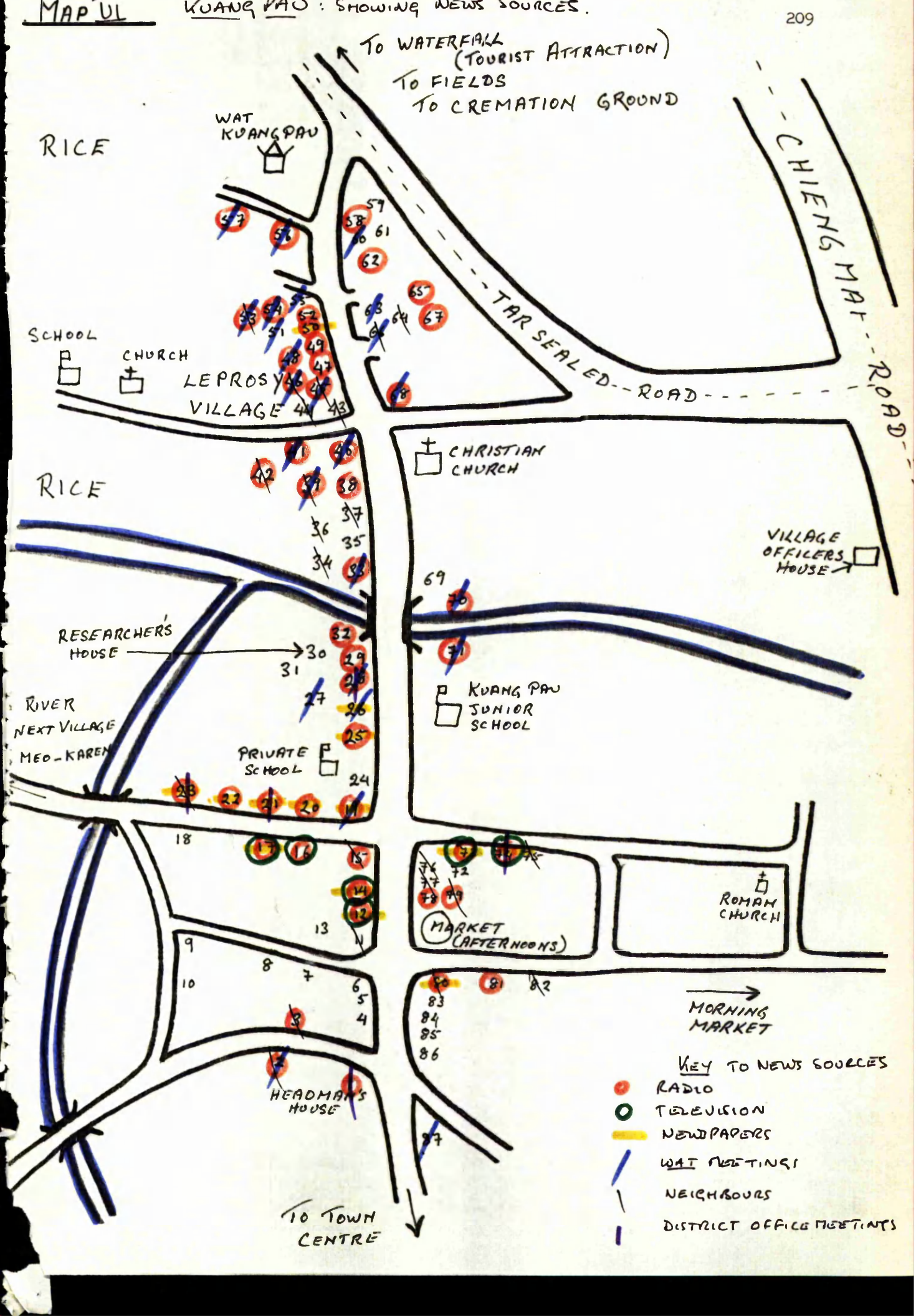


MAP V

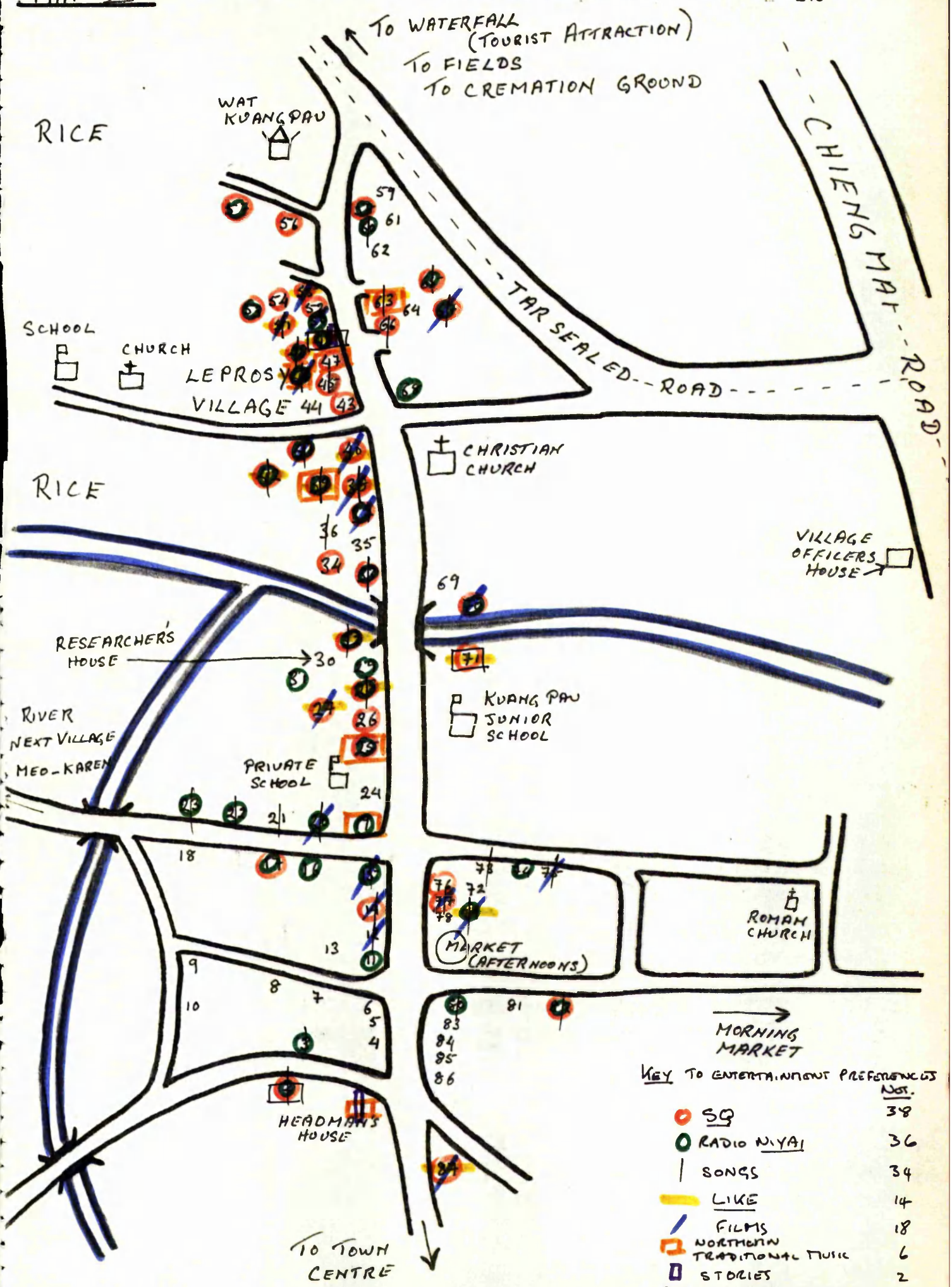
KUANG PAU — OCCUPATIONAL ZONES (WITH NEIGHBOURLINESS INDICATORS)



MAP VI KUANG PAO : SHOWING NEWS SOURCES.



MAP VII KUANG PAU: SHOWING ENTERTAINMENT CHOICES



Bibliography

For reasons beyond my control, there were no reference books except a Thai dictionary available to me through the period while I was actually writing this thesis. I wish to apologise for the lack of reference to specific works. There were however many writers who stimulated my research and the direction it has taken. It is some of those who are acknowledged in the following bibliography.

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