

A STUDY OF THAI SOCIETY: A CRITIQUE OF THE 'LOOSE STRUCTURE'
CONCEPT AND AN ALTERNATIVE MODEL SUGGESTED.

By

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THESIS SUBMITTED FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY
IN
THE UNIVERSITY OF LONDON
DECEMBER 1969



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ABSTRACT

The 'loose structure' concept was originated by Embree in his article 'Thailand: a loosely structured social system' in 1950. The aim of this thesis is a critique of this article as it relates to Thai society and the school of thought that has grown up around it.

X Firstly, in order that the reader may familiarise himself with what Embree actually said, and does not have to rely on a possible misinterpretation by the author, Embree's original article, in which he evolved the loose structure concept, has been inserted at the beginning so that Embree may be allowed to speak for himself. Then, after a few of the major methodological issues are discussed in the introduction, a critique of Embree's article and the major ideas of the loose structure school of thought will be attempted. Finally, an alternative model for the future study of Thai society is suggested.

However, before commencing, it must be pointed out that when this thesis was near completion Yale University published a collection of papers entitled 'Loosely Structured Social Systems: Thailand in Comparative perspective' which is a detailed discussion of this particular concept. Obviously such a book is very relevant to this and involves a virtually definitive study of the loose structure concept. Thus many of the points made by the authors of the book overlap with the points made in this thesis. Where this has occurred it has been noted, and where the Yale Symposium has introduced fresh points, they have, where possible, been included in the discussion. But it must be born in mind that the thesis was in an advanced stage when the Yale articles were published. It has not always therefore been possible to deal with all the fresh points introduced by the Yale thesis adequately for at this late stage it has been impossible to restructure the thesis in a manner necessary to do so.

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THAILAND—A LOOSELY STRUCTURED SOCIAL SYSTEM

By JOHN F. EMBREE

THAILAND (Siam) lies in the heart of Indochina in the midst of a broad culture area which includes French Laos and Cambodia to the east and the Shan States of Burma to the west.¹ This region is made up of Thai speaking peoples who came down from the old kingdom of Nanchao in what is now Yunnan. Before that they appear to have been inhabitants of Szechwan. Dodd, for instance, presents some linguistic evidence for this.² But Credner holds a different view and thinks that they came into the Tali region of Yunnan from the east.³ The present distribution of Thai speaking peoples in Szechwan, Yunnan, and Kwangsi makes both theories plausible. Whichever may prove to be correct, the present Thai people of Indochina appear to have come into the southern area from Yunnan, spreading out into Thailand, northern Burma (Shan), and the upper valleys of Tonkin (Lao, Thai, and Tho). Both Dodd and Credner emphasize the fact that the Thai have always been wet rice cultivators and settlers in valleys and plains suitable for this type of economy. The basis of Credner's theory that they came to Yunnan from the east is his view that the Thai are not only valley dwellers but tropical paddy cultivating valley dwellers. Thus the Thai are quite distinct historically and culturally from the mountain peoples of North Indochina such as the Yao, Meo, Lolo, and Wa.

All students of Thai history are agreed on the northern origin of the present Thai people. They are also agreed on the historic influences of Hindu culture in the area as reflected in the themes from the Ramayana in drama and literature, the form of dress (*panung*), and the Indian court terminology.⁴ Another important Indian influence which seems to have come to the Thai via Burma when they were still in the North was Mahayana Buddhism and some Brahmanistic practices; later, about the sixth century, A.D., the Hinayana form of Buddhism became predominant.⁵

Thai culture is markedly different from that of Vietnam (Annam), a region with long historic contact with China and under actual Chinese rule

¹ Studies of Thai culture are few. Useful material is to be found in Graham's *Siam*, in Dodd's *The Tai Race*, in Landon's *Siam in Transition* (Ch. 8), and especially in Chandruang's autobiographical *My Boyhood in Siam*. A valuable old source is De la Loubère, *A New Historical Relation of the Kingdom of Siam*. The only anthropological analysis of Thai cultural materials is *Thai Culture and Behavior* by Ruth Benedict. The present paper is based on several trips to Thailand, the first of which was in 1926 and the last in 1948. In 1947, the author was United States cultural officer in Bangkok and later in Saigon, French Indochina.

² Dodd, 1923.

³ Credner, 1935.

⁴ Coedès, 1944; Landon, 1949; Wales, 1937.

⁵ Landon, 1949, pp. 100 et seq.

for many centuries. The religion of Vietnam is a combination of Taoism and Mahayana Buddhism, with rituals similar to those of China; family relationships and rituals are Confucianist.⁶ Thus despite their northern origin, the Thai draw much of their cultural heritage in religion, literature, and art from India, while the Vietnamese heritage is drawn from China.

Thai culture is also markedly different from the Islamic Malayan culture to the south in the Peninsula and in Indonesia. Both share Indian influences, but the dominant religions in the two areas—Hinayana and Islam—are different, and so are many other aspects of their culture. For example, the Thai are a land-bound people in contrast to the seafaring Malays; and the Thai mode of dress differs from that found in Indonesia.

At the same time, despite these important cultural diversities, there are several culture traits which Thailand shares in common with the whole Southeast Asiatic area: wet rice agriculture as a basis of subsistence,⁷ "roasting" of the mother just after childbirth,⁸ chewing of betel and blackening of the teeth,⁹ playing of kickball,¹⁰ and the piston bellows.¹¹

It is within this cultural context that some observations on certain characteristics of Thai culture are to be made, especially those which concern the question of relative integration of a culture in terms of a loosely as against a closely woven social structure; loosely integrated here signifying a culture in which considerable variation of individual behavior is sanctioned. Some of these traits may be shared to some extent by peoples of neighboring cultures, but for the most part they are characteristics which mark off Thailand and the culture area to which it belongs from the type of culture represented by Vietnam in Indochina or Japan to the northeast. These last, of course, differ from each other, but both contrast with Thai culture in having more tightly woven cultures—that is, cultures whose patterns are clearly marked and which emphasize the importance of observing reciprocal rights and duties in various situations to a greater degree than is to be found among the Thai.

The first characteristic of Thai culture to strike an observer from the West, or from Japan or Vietnam, is the individualistic behavior of the people. The longer one resides in Thailand the more one is struck by the almost determined lack of regularity, discipline, and regimentation in Thai life. In contrast to Japan, Thailand lacks neatness and discipline; in contrast to Americans, the Thai lack respect for administrative regularity and have no industrial time sense.

When two or three Thai walk along the road together there is no attempt to keep in step or to swing the arms in rhythm. On the contrary, each individual

⁶ Brodrick, 1942.

⁷ Adams, 1948.

⁸ Cole, 1945.

⁹ Huard, 1939, 1948.

¹⁰ Embree, 1948; Kaudern, 1929.

¹¹ Cole, 1945.

walks along as if he were alone.¹² This is a trait common enough in nonliterate societies and also in rural India, but it is in marked contrast to cultures such as the Western European, American, or Japanese. Regimented walking together, with clock time consciousness of minutes and hours and their significance in Western culture have been discussed for Western Europe by Lewis Mumford in his *Technics and Civilization*.¹³ Walking in step is no mere cultural curiosity, but is an important index to a whole way of life which stresses regularity of behavior of the "keep in line" and "be on time" variety. Certainly in Thailand, individualism in walking is associated with a number of other traits which may well be more than mere coincidences. The Thai have often gone to war against their neighbors in Burma and Cambodia, but until the 1920's they never developed a regular standing army of any size. Indeed, at one time the king had guards of Japanese, French and Portuguese soldiers,¹⁴ who, however, were as much for maintaining the balance of power *vis à vis* European countries as they were for the conduct of organized warfare. Not only is the military tradition weak, but Thai peasants, when drafted into military service, show little aptitude for the life of a soldier. They do not care for its discipline, and they show a marked reluctance to go into battle.¹⁵

Individualistic behavior is found in other aspects of Thai life. In the family, the father is putative head, and children are supposed to obey their parents. But in practice, there is none of the strong sense of duty and obligation to parents which is so characteristic, in diverse ways, of Vietnam, China, and Japan. Even the family precepts in this regard are milder, since the Thai follow the Buddhist rather than the Confucian rules. Chandruang, for example, quotes the following Buddhist rules of family obligations:

These are the duties of parents to their children: giving food, clothing, and shelter, forbidding wrongdoing, encouraging right conduct, giving education, assisting them in matrimony, and transferring properties to them in good time.

The duties of children toward their parents are: taking care of them when they are old, helping them in their work, keeping the good name of the family, obedience, trustworthiness, using their properties sensibly, and remembering them after their death.¹⁶

It is notable that these rules include duties of parents to children as well as of children to parents. Also, it is the mother who transmits these teachings to her children, not the father. She transmits them as sage advice rather than as mandatory obligations.

¹² While two friends do not walk in step they do maintain psychic contact by holding hands or by one holding a finger or two of the other. This is a common action among young men as well as young women, but not, traditionally, of a young man and a young woman.

¹³ Mumford, 1934, e.g., pp. 90-91.

¹⁴ Hutchinson, 1940, p. 34; Prabha, 1949.

¹⁵ Thompson, 1941, p. 296.

¹⁶ Chandruang, 1940, pp. 141-142.

By contrast the Chinese system of filial piety emphasizes strongly the masculine side of the family and the duties of children to parents, especially to the father, and of wife to husband. There is a strong emphasis on a clear-cut system of reciprocal rights and duties which all proper people should follow. "In practice . . . *hsiao* (filial piety) is *demanded* of children toward all the members of the parental generation and above; and *ti* (respectful obedience) *must be* shown by young people toward any older person in their own generation."¹⁷

The father is head of the family and inheritance is through him. Various members of the family are expected to respect his word. If the father dies, the eldest son is supposed to look after his mother and siblings. For example, Chandruang writes, "Father, as the eldest son, was obligated to look after his mother and his younger brother and sister." He wanted, however, to go to Bangkok for further education, and so, "he consulted with his mother on the idea. . . . She naturally refused, for she needed him to work on the farm."¹⁸ Nonetheless, he left for the city. Later he revisited her, and when he begged her forgiveness, she gave it. This kind of loose obligation and adjustment of family relations to the desires of individuals in it is not uncommon. In another family with which first hand contact was had in Bangkok, the father, a governmental official, had left his family to marry another woman and the first wife looked after the children. One of her sons, also married, left Bangkok for political reasons and left his small son with the grandmother. The man, in his place of exile, married another woman. When informed of this development the mother and sisters were interested but not surprised; and one sister remarked, "He always liked to have a lot of women around him."

The point here once more is that the structure of the family is a loose one, and while obligations are recognized, they are not allowed to burden one unduly. Such as are sanctioned are observed freely by the individual—he acts of his own will, not as a result of social pressure.

Thus, again, Chandruang's father took a second wife, Rieu, a girl not too well educated and one who had a difficult time in her relations with the other women of the household. Later, Rieu went away to Bangkok for her health, and after a time fell in love with someone there. Before she remarried, she asked Chandruang's father's permission, which he gave. "Father felt sorry for her and gave her a few hundred ticals to start a new life with her new husband."¹⁹ He was under no social pressure to do this, but he "felt sorry for her." Similarly, the political exile, while under no obligation to keep in touch with his mother in Bangkok, did so when opportunity offered because he wanted to.

By contrast, if some individual—often a woman—wishes to be uncooperative with other members of her family, she can become very difficult. Rieu suffered, not from the first wife's jealousy, but from the venom of her mother.

¹⁷ Titiev and Tien, 1947, pp. 261-262 (Emphasis supplied).

¹⁸ Chandruang, 1940, p. 16.

¹⁹ Chandruang, 1940, p. 180.

Prince Chakrabongse, when he brought home a Russian wife, faced opposition from his mother, who upbraided her son and so made his bride's position a difficult one.²⁰ She *should* have received her daughter-in-law on arrival by social tradition; but as a woman she did not wish to, and there was an end to it. A year later, however, she softened and did receive the foreign daughter-in-law.

Where social structure is "close"—that is, where the behavior of the people conforms closely to the formal social patterns of human relations, as in Japan—it is difficult for an individual to deviate, and reciprocal rights and duties are clearly marked and carried out. Under such conditions, a foreign bride may not be approved, but once she becomes a member of the family, then the forms at least will be observed. The mother would receive her even though it hurt to do so. In Siamese society it is relatively easy to achieve a *fait accompli* by doing something not approved by other members of the group. But in so doing one does not necessarily achieve the acceptance of the others. The "accomplished fact" does not accomplish much.

The local group in Japan, the hamlet, has a clearcut social unity with special ceremonies for entry and exit and a whole series of rights and obligations for its members. Each man must sooner or later assume the responsibility of being the representative of the local group, each must assist on occasions of hamlet cooperation such as road building or funeral preparations. In Thailand the hamlet also has its own identity and the members also have rights and duties, but they are less clearly defined and less strictly enforced. Exchange systems are less clear cut. Thus in Thailand, with its mobility of population and lack of emphasis on long term obligations, we do not find the financial credit associations (*ko*) which extend over twenty years or so in a Japanese farm community. But they are found in China and Vietnam, areas in which we find societies similar to Japan in the sense here used.²¹

The difference in closeness and looseness of cultural pattern as between Thailand and such a culture as the Japanese may also be seen in games of poem exchange. In Japan a well known "social" game involves knowing by heart a hundred classical poems, so that when two lines are recited by one contestant the other can complete the poem with the remaining lines. In rural Japan the folk poetry is less likely to take a contest form and there is some improvisation, but by and large the texts are remarkably standard in any given region.²² In Thailand also there are poetic contests, but here, while there is a general plot to which any given series of rhymes must conform, there is much room for improvisation and direction of the story to suit the occasion.²³ Both societies have poem contests, but one is bound by tight formal rules

²⁰ Chula, 1943, p. 16.

²¹ Embree, 1939, pp. 138-151; Fei, 1939, pp. 267-274; Vinh, 1931.

²² Embree, 1949. ²³ Bidyalankarana, 1926.

while the other stresses individual variation within broad boundaries of rhyme and plot.

Still another manifestation of the Thai way is found in cabaret life. In Singapore the Chinese have organized cabarets so that there is no dancing with the taxi dance-girls without tickets, and the whole procedure is well organized to give a steady financial profit to the management. Bangkok also has cabarets—but no manager has succeeded in running one Singapore style. Each girl comes or does not come on a given night as she pleases; she may or may not require a guest to buy a dance ticket; and if she goes home with him afterward she may or may not be mercenary about it, depending on how she feels. A man from Singapore with some experience in cabaret management commented unfavorably to me on the casual way in which these things are done in Bangkok. Cabarets are, of course, an innovation in Bangkok from the West, but the permissive behavior pattern of managers and the individual behavior of the girls are characteristically Thai. Even if the manager is Chinese or European he finds it necessary to adjust his management to the Thai way.

This "unreliability," as Westerners are likely to call it, does not reflect naïveté. One evidence of this is that in the average business deal it is the foreigner—not the Thai—who loses his money. And on a national scale, Thailand by a combination of good luck and clever diplomacy, managed to retain her political independence when all the small countries around her succumbed to European colonial control. The good fortune was the Franco-British rivalry in Southeast Asia which made of Thailand a "buffer" state between British Burma and French Indochina. But of itself this could not have saved the independence of the nation. What saved it was the diplomatic skill of the Thai—a kind of delay and doubletalk which doubtless irritated more than one foreign diplomat, but which succeeded in preventing them from ever joining forces to carve up the country. In this regard Thailand has been more successful than any African country or than such a "buffer" state as Poland.

In her diplomacy Thailand succeeds in exploiting her cultural differences from the West. While never so adamant in her resistance to some Western demand as to force a showdown fight and sure defeat, what the Thai governmental official does is first to smile and if this is not sufficient to disarm the unwelcome stranger he also says, smilingly, "Yes, I'll see." In the weeks, months, or years of "seeing" how the foreigner's wish can be implemented, some new factor usually enters the picture either to make the foreigner change his mind or to give the Thai government some opportunity backed by outside strength to give a negative reply.

To tell a lie successfully, to dupe someone else, is praiseworthy in Thai culture—a tradition that, no doubt, has not been without utility to the nation.

in its foreign relations. It is not so praiseworthy to have one's lie discovered, however, and one so discovered invites any punishment he may receive. There are many sayings bearing on the point, and many of the popular stories collected by Le May reflect an admiration for the man or woman who can successfully deceive another. It is shameful to be caught, but clever to succeed; and the moral of many of the stories and sayings is that one should always be wary.²⁴

A good liar, of course, requires a cool temperament, and the Thai accord considerable respect to this. There is a special term, *choei*, to refer to a cool temperament; Landon has described this in his *Siam in Transition*:

The word is seldom applied in a derogatory manner unless used by a foreigner who is trying to break down lassitude and indifference. Siamese regard it as complimentary and the attitude it expresses as a virtue. It means the ability to take life as it comes without excitement. He who meets the crises of life with cool mien is "choei." A certain girl, who held a prominent position and who, when caught in adultery and theft and stood to lose both good name and position, met the situation with a coolness that was most astonishing, was described by Siamese as undeniably "choei." The term implies coolness of attitude toward work, responsibility, or trouble.²⁵

A former government official of cabinet rank expressed the belief that political parties are not likely to succeed in Thailand because the people are too individualistic and do not like to work in organizations. In contrast to the Japanese the Thai do not allow an obligation of loyalty to a chief to take precedence over other considerations. Thus one may often see a man prominent in one political group today join forces with the leader of a different group tomorrow if circumstances warrant. Several of Premier Phibun's opponents of 1947 were his political allies in 1948.

Together with Thai individualistic behavior within a loosely integrated social structure is an attitude of minding one's own business when it comes to matters of action. A thief can steal from a man's house and not be stopped unless the owner himself raises the alarm. A man may assault someone in full view of onlookers, who will make no move to interfere. This is another sharp contrast to traditional Japanese culture where personal property—at least before 1945—was usually remarkably safe, and house keys the exception. A thief or assaulter would soon be caught and subdued by neighbors or bystanders if observed.

An important fact in Thai life is the utter insecurity of physical property. This applies not only to a piece of clothing laid out to dry, but even to temple

²⁴ Le May, 1930. There are several tales in this collection which reflect this point of view—for example, "The Snare," "The Glass Stopper," and "The Love Lesson." Buddhist morality, however, condemns the lie, and schoolteachers stress the virtue of not telling one.

²⁵ Landon, 1939, p. 148.

property. Every temple altar must be locked up when no priests are present. In Bangkok all frame houses are supplied either with shutters, which are locked at night, or with iron bars on the windows. The more well-to-do have their property surrounded by a wall provided with a lockable gate. This ever-present danger of house-breaking and theft, which is no new thing in urban Thai life, means that nothing of any value can ever be left unlocked. At Chulalongkorn University library, for instance, *all* books are kept in locked bookshelves. Such a situation requires a constant alertness on the part of even the small property owner. It does not encourage either neighborly trust or a sluggish mind.

At the local group level, while the people live by wet rice agriculture, there seems to be a less closely woven pattern of cooperative organization for accomplishing agricultural labor as compared with, say, Japanese society. In considering this, and perhaps the family structure, too, it must be borne in mind that the number of people per square mile is not nearly so great in agricultural Thailand as it is in agricultural Japan or Vietnam. Dense population may enforce more carefully laid out modes of interpersonal conduct. Group pressures and set patterns of behavior become more important for harmonious group life where many men live in little space.

The lack of the intense insular patriotism among the Thai, which is so characteristic of the Japanese islanders, affords another contrast. Thai as a rule are not ethnocentric; they are not anxious to prove to themselves and to others that they and their country are superior. At the same time there does exist pride of race. The reaction of Prince Chakrabongse's mother to his marriage with a Russian girl, already mentioned, was an example of this. Premier Phibun has gained some of his popularity by means of antiforeign pronouncements. He also, like some Japanese political leaders, tried to reform Thai customs, to "modernize" them. Yet though this resembles some of the Japanese reactions to Western cultural influence, the phenomenon is much less general in Thailand. When Thai intellectuals criticize Phibun, they scorn his attempts to "make us civilized." Such people assume that they are civilized and that striving to imitate Western custom too seriously is rather to be ridiculed.

The class structure of Thailand in the days of the absolute monarchy provided for the situation created by the custom of extensive royal polygamy by a rule that each succeeding generation lost rank until by the fifth generation, the descendants of royalty ranked as common people. Formally the system was a neat one as follows:

The sons and daughters of the king and of the queens are born with the title *Somdet Chao Fa* while those of the king and of ladies who are not queens are *Phra Ong Chao*. The children of *Chao Fa* and *Phra Ong Chao* are *Mom-Chao*, their children being *Mom*

Racha Wongs, and the next generation Mom Luang and the next are without title of any sort.²⁶

However, it was always possible for the king to confer titles on men of ability or favor, and so raise them in rank. The declining descent rule, in turn, applied to their children, but in this case, too, could always be counteracted by conferred rank.

Succession to the throne was through a younger brother, or the eldest son of one of the queens—rules not so strict but that various aspirants to the throne felt free to make personal bids for power. This uncertainty of succession often led to extensive assassinations. For example, when King Budayot Fa died in 1809 his son, "fearing, or feigning to dread, conspiracies against him, put to death one hundred and seventeen Siamese nobles, among whom were several generals who had fought at his father's side against the Burmans."²⁷

The lack of interest in exact procedures was dramatically demonstrated when King Chulalongkorn died and no one seemed to know in detail the proper ritual procedures.

Preparations were then hurriedly begun for the bathing ceremony which is always performed as soon as possible after death; and after that for the conveyance of the body to the Grand Palace for the lying-in-state. But now difficulties arose. The ceremonies to be observed were all laid down by ancient tradition but no one could be found who remembered them. It was 42 years since a King of Siam had died. No preparations could be made beforehand, for to have discussed the funeral rites while the King still lived would have been regarded as treason. The details of the procession had also to be arranged. So the archives were searched, old documents consulted; there were endless discussions. It all meant delay, with the result that what should have happened in the afternoon did not begin till well after sunset. It was seven o'clock and quite dark before the bathing ceremony was over.²⁸

In modern Thailand the school system is, as in Japan, a national one, with teachers appointed and curricula fixed by the state. In the schools themselves teachers and students wear uniforms and the children are expected to respect teachers, but there is none of the stiff formality in the Thai classroom comparable to that in Japan. The teacher may speak quite informally and the pupils are under no compulsion to sit at attention. And while the total system is state run, many schools operate largely on their own initiative for lack of properly qualified teachers from normal schools and for lack of sufficient text books and school equipment. This is another example of how two struc-

²⁶ Graham, 1912, p. 216.

²⁷ Mouhot, 1864, vol. 1, p. 92. Further evidence of the looseness of the rules of succession is to be found in Kaempfer, 1906 (writing in the 17th century), p. 36 and Chula, 1943, p. 16.

²⁸ Smith, 1947, p. 120.

tures, similar on paper, are quite different in operation, the one (the Japanese) being closely knit, the other (the Thai) loosely woven.

Neatness as a cultural trait seems to be related to the closeness of a social structure. For example, the neatness so stressed in a Japanese household is notably absent in the Thai home. In a royal household, Smith noted, "The other rooms in the house where the family lived were clean but never tidy,"²⁹ a statement equally true of ordinary Thai homes today. Even in dress the Thai are individual, or rather ununiform. A less regular form of dress than the loosely draped *panung* would be difficult to find. Officials now wear Western style uniforms, but their garments are seldom very neat.

There are some other characteristics of Thai society which may well be associated with the individualistic behavior of the people and the loose integration of the society. One of these is the attitude of people toward work.

In Japan, as in puritan New England, work is regarded as a virtue, and an easy life of self-indulgence is considered wrong. In China hard work is the rule but, according to Hsü, it is not of itself a virtue—indeed, the wealthy man's son is expected not to work as a sign that the father is rich.³⁰ The Vietnamese are a hard-working people and put a considerable premium on this trait. For the poor, physical labor is a necessity, but with the wealthy, white-collar tasks in government or as scholars are prestige-giving—and a Vietnamese is willing to work long and hard and deny himself many pleasures in order to achieve a name in the administrative or scholarly world. This is not the point of view of the Thai. Work is not regarded as good in itself. There is, on the contrary, a good deal of attention paid to things which give enjoyment. Pleasure is often considered a good thing *per se*.

A word that indicates an important part of the Siamese character is the word "snuk." In its simplest aspects it means "fun-loving" or "pleasure-loving." The word also means a "deep interest in something, momentarily, to the exclusion of all else." The Siamese are a pleasure-loving people, as is shown by their ready laughter. The people they like are those who can make them laugh and feel happy. Siamese have remarked that they respect those who make them laugh. They enjoy a show, a dance, a game, a trip to some near or distant point. To travel is definitely "snuk." The idea of "snuk" carries even into religion. A group of Siamese attended a Christian Church service for the first time. They remarked, after leaving the church, that the service was not "snuk" and that they would not come again. When they were asked if Buddhism was "snuk," they said that it was. Their religion not only provided a method of worship, but also a system for satisfying the social needs of the group. The temple is the focal point of the community, the centre around which revolve the religious rites, the picnics, the plays, and the other amusements of the people. The religious year has days for boat racing, sports, games, trips to holy places, shadow shows, and festive parades. So even religion becomes "snuk."³¹

²⁹ Smith, 1947, p. 121. (Writing as of the late 19th century.)

³⁰ Hsü, 1948, p. 274. ³¹ Landon, 1939, p. 143.

Related to this point of view is the problem of the Thai student abroad. The Chinese and Japanese drive for learning is not a Siamese characteristic. There is, however, a prestige associated with study in Europe or the United States; and then, travel is pleasurable. A reflection of these factors is that many Thai are not so much interested in going abroad for the love of learning, but rather in order to visit some well known American or British institution. It is more important to have attended Oxford, or Yale, or Princeton, even if one does not take a degree, than it is to have graduated from some smaller or less well-known college.

Thai students, when they return home after a period of years abroad, find it difficult to readjust to Thai life. They are not content with some lowly office job or teaching post, but feel they must head a department or a laboratory, and if not, that their talents are wasted. The net result is that many of these returned students enter politics or try to manage an import-export company or, better still, obtain a government appointment overseas. Thus the returned Thai student often does not join the lower ranks of a body of other Thai scholars and scientists and so build up a strong university or research center. Each man rather tries somehow to exploit the prestige value of his foreign residence so as to obtain a pleasant post. The net result is that there is no well-manned Thai university or scientific center in the country today, despite the generations of Thai who have studied at the world's best universities.

Such evidence as has been given from Thailand, when contrasted with that of Japan or Vietman, would indicate that there is considerable variation in the rigidity of the structures of different societies even when these structures at certain points bear surface similarities as, for instance, in family organization or the school system. The permissiveness of individual behavioral variation in the culture does not mean that the society is poorly integrated. On the contrary, the loose integration is a functional one, allowing not only variation in individual behavior but also in national behavior. It has a survival value which may well go back to the early days of extensive Thai migrations and which has served the nation well to this day. In such a society the processes of acculturation may produce fewer dysfunctional social situations than those which have occurred in, say, Vietnam society—that is, a loosely integrated structure such as the Thai may adjust to external cultural influences with less drastic overall changes than a more rigid structure such as the Japanese or Vietnamese. Both types may adjust “successfully” in the sense of retaining their basic cultural values, but the adjustments are of different forms, and probably the Thai type of adjustment causes less nervous strain on the people involved than does the Japanese. Thus, in a broad sense, the loose integration does serve a social function. However, it should be remarked that there seems to be little if any relation between closeness or looseness of social integration

and any immediate social or psychological "needs" of a people. Whether or not this is true, studies of the differences of behavior in different cultures with similar social structures should be made to test a number of current assumptions in the social sciences—e.g., that social structures are neatly adjusted to individual and social "needs," and that similar social systems create similar culturally determined types of behavior.

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INTRODUCTION

The previous article by Embree, which was published in the American Anthropologist in 1950, has had great influence on Thai specialist's work. As Punyodyana(1969:77) says:

In the nearly two decades since the late John Embree put forward his thesis on the Thai 'social system' and boldly characterized it as 'loose', many Western specialists in Thai studies, particularly American cultural anthropologists, have become so pre-occupied with his thesis that in their **observations** and analyses of Thai society, or aspects thereof, they have increasingly centered their attention on this notion and seem little interested in viewing Thai society from any other angle.

So central an issue in Thai social studies has the loose structure concept become over the years, that recently (1968) an entire conference was devoted to discussing it; the papers given at the conference being later published. Controversy has arisen as to the loose structure concept's philosophical and empirical(for Thai society) validity. This has resulted in the development of a polemic.

On the one hand there are the supporters of Embree e.g. Hanks 1962, Hanks and Hanks 1963, Hamburger 1967, Wilson 1959; 1960; 1962, Phillips 1965; 1969; Ladd Thomas 1962, Piker 1968 a b; 1969, Graham and Graham 1958, Sharp et al 1953, Mosel 1957; 1965, to some extent Evers 1968, and until recently Moerman 1966. They can be **considered** a school of thought because of the uniform assumptions in their argument. The loose structuralists, as they will be called, attempt to show that Embree's description and explanation of Thai social behaviour is accurate. They point to features in Thai society that support Embree's article. They have also further developed his concept and applied it to other spheres, Hanks, for instance, has attempted to describe the Thai social processes which he calls the 'calculus of movements'. Others such as Wilson and Mosel **relate** loose structure to the politico/bureaucratic system. Whilst Phillips

and Piker have related peasant personality to loose structure. Hamburger has even analysed Thai music in terms of loose structure! Moreover, their works tend to give the impression that Thai society is amorphous and Thai social behaviour is random.

On the other hand, opponents of loose structure, whom, for convenience, will be called anti-loose structurists, (e.g. Wijewardene 1965, Tambiah 1966, Moerman 1968; 1967; 1966, Textor 1967, Keyes 1966, Mulder 1968a; 1968b; 1969, and to some extent Evers 1966; 1967; 1969) criticise the loose structure school on two grounds. They empirically point to other features of Thai society (e.g. the bureaucracy and Sangha or monastic order) to prove that Thai social behaviour is not loosely structured. They also argue that if Thai society is studied from another point of view than that of the loose structurists a totally different picture emerges; that is a picture of regularity and coherence.

Since the loose structure concept has become so influential and a major focus of attention, it seems worthwhile to analyse the loose structure concept in order to determine its validity empirically and its adequacy as a description and explanation of Thai society and social behaviour; and also to determine the accuracy of the random and amorphous picture of Thai society that is implicit and explicit in their works. In order to bring to light the crucial issues involved in the loose structure concept an analysis will be made of Embree's definition of the loose structure concept and the major ideas of the loose structure supporters. At the relevant points in the analysis the criticisms of the anti-loose structurists will be evaluated.

This thesis aims to show that the loose structure hypothesis is invalid and is inadequate to explain and describe Thai social behaviour. Moreover, it aims to show that the amorphous picture of Thai society conveyed in the loose structurists' work is misleading. In Chapter 3, in the course of examining Embree's and the loose structurist's ideas relating to Thai society's loose structure a few tentative suggestions for future investigation will be put forward which it is suggested will reveal an alternative

picture of Thai society. In Chapter 4 the loose structure concept will be tested by analysing the degree to which there is geographic and social mobility in Thai society.

Having shown the fallacies in the loose structuralists' school of thought, in Chapter 5 the basic assumptions which underly the loose structuralists' school of thought and where relevant those of the critics too, will be examined to show how they fostered the fallacies in the loose structure polemic. This analysis will also indicate those factors that must be taken into consideration if Thai social behaviour is to be understood. In the last chapter a new model will be suggested which, it is hoped, will benefit from this study of the fallacies in the loose structure concept, and also avoid the pitfalls into which it fell. But before commencing the critique some methodological issues must be discussed for two reasons. Namely that the reader can understand why the thesis is structured in the manner that it is and why the argument takes the form that it does. Also since questions of methodology are points of issue in the polemic, it is necessary to discuss them before beginning. This is necessary not simply in order to justify the author's own methodology but also to show how these methodological issues will be tackled so as to avoid some of the fallacious methodology committed by participants in the polemic.

Firstly, what type of statement is 'loose structure'? This is an important point for the type of statement that it is will determine the type of criticism it is open to. Several participants in the polemic seem to assume, whether implicitly or explicitly, that loose structure is some kind of theory, thesis or hypothesis. Phillips(19669:p27) however, states:

It must be made clear that the "loose structure" concept is not a theory, if by "theory" is meant - as it always has meant to me - a comprehensive, abstract, and conceptually parsimonious explanation of behavior." It very obviously is a descriptive generalization and, like all descriptive generalizations, has limited empirical reference.

Phillips statement that loose structure has only ' a limited empirical reference' is difficult to understand since both he

(1969: p27) and most of the other loose structurists have applied the term to a wide variety of social spheres, as will be seen. Even so, Phillips point that it is a descriptive generalisation and does not explain anything is open to question not only because Hanks (1962) and Phillips (1965, 1967) have attempted to explain Thai behaviour in terms of loose structure, but also because, even if it were only a 'descriptive generalisation' it would be explanatory to some degree. Although controversy still rages in philosophy as to the relationship between description and explanation, as has been pointed out by Whewell (1860) in what is still considered a seminal work on the subject, descriptions are explanations and as such their validity is open to testing and verification. Thus since loose structure is explanatory on both these grounds, it does seem reasonable to consider it a form of hypothesis, thesis or theory (without going into the finer points as to the philosophical difference between the three.). As such it is open to testing and verification. In the following thesis this will be attempted.

Secondly, as will become apparent, the type of data used is an issue in the polemic and is a major factor in determining each side's views. Therefore, it seems worthwhile on two grounds to discuss the type of data used by the participants ~~and~~ in this thesis.

wt / Firstly, so that the reader may be aware of their importance at the outset and bear this in mind when reading. Secondly, so that the reader will be aware of the reasons why the author uses the type of data that she does.

Embree's article lacks an empirical basis. His examples are essentially anecdotal in nature and lifted out of their context. In fact the works of the loose structurists as a whole tend to be impressionistic. Opponents of loose structure often criticise ~~the~~ its supporters on these scores. These are valid criticisms for it is generally accepted in anthropology today that for an analysis to be acceptable, from an anthropological point of view, social data must be analysed in context. A Frazerian methodology and approach are no longer acceptable. Moreover, nowadays anthropologists

t/ tend to favour intensive 'hard fact' analysis. Bearing this in mind in the following chapters, an attempt will be made to study Thai social behaviour in context and intensively based on 'hard facts'.

But, since this is a library thesis, the data that can be used will be determined by the literature available. Unfortunately, the available literature is both scanty and sketchy. Before Embree's time Thailand was not well known to social scientists. Prior to Embree's article there is little literature that is sociologically useful. As Kirsch (1969:p39) says:

When Embree published his article characterizing Thailand as a 'loosely structured' social system.... There were, of course, numerous missionaries' reports, travellers' accounts, and reminiscences of former officials dealing with the country, but there was little reliable evidence gathered by trained observers.

In fact, prior to 1950, the only studies that can really be considered to be ^{of a} social science nature are the rural economic surveys of Zimmerman(1931) and Andrews(1935). It was not until 1968 that the first full length structural analysis, by Moerman, was published.

This lack of literature obviously limits the type of analysis that can be made in this thesis and will determine to a great extent the type of situations which will be discussed. In fact, since the majority of the available literature, especially that of the loose structurists, refers to rural communities, most being community studies, and at the interpersonal level of analysis, the following analysis will have to refer to, and the critique be based on, this kind of literature.

Moreover, another reason for primarily concentrating on rural areas in the following critique is because, although Embree and the loose structurists apply loose structure as a blanket term to Thai society, as Nadel(1958) points out, it is methodologically impossible to characterize the total social structure of a whole society for so many variables would be involved it would be impossible to classify them all. Also he

points out, not all these variables will necessarily be functionally related. Therefore only a cluster of related variables can be dealt with at any one time.

Applying this theoretical point to the loose structure polemic, it means that it is impossible to test the loose structure concepts' validity for the totality of Thai society, only a cluster of related Thai variables can be tested. Since the Thai peasantry forms such an important cluster of variables in Thai society for it forms almost 85 percent of the population, and since the loose structurists primarily base their arguments on peasant data and it is the most well documented section of Thai society, in the following critique the validity of the loose structure concept will be tested against rural Thai data. However, where necessary for an understanding of certain issues in the polemic other social variables will be discussed.

But it is true, as Punyodyana(1969: pp83-84) points out, when criticising the loose structurists, community studies may not be representative of the wider community. Where statistics are available they will be used to support any generalisations wider than those relating to a specific community. But unfortunately, since these statistics are limited in variety and number, and data in general is scanty, many wider generalisations will necessarily have to be based on a limited number of community studies. However, using this kind of data it is valid to make generalisations based on logical inference and where possible this form of generalisation will be used. But the author is very aware that any generalisations made at the present time, especially those appertaining to Thai society as a whole, can only be tentative until more 'hard facts' become available.

In the polemic the level of analysis is a point of issue too. Punyodyana for instance, (1969: p86) argues that if Thai society is looked at from another, different level of analysis than that of interpersonal analysis, that is the level of 'institutional norms', a totally different picture of Thai society will be revealed.

Since the polemic is primarily orientated around the interpersonal level and the majority of data relates to this level, this will be the primary focus of attention but where necessary for the argument, as with ~~Raymond's~~ point, and for throwing light on crucial issues, other levels of analysis will be taken into account where relevant.

Another crucial methodological point that must be discussed is the type of concept that loose structure is. Although Embree entitles his article 'Thailand: a loosely structured social system' and the loose structure school of thought concentrates on the study of Thai society, loose structure, is, in fact, a comparative concept for Embree compares the 'loose structure' of Thailand's society with the 'tightly woven' structure of Japan, Vietnam and China. Significantly, as will be seen, the loose structure school rarely refers to the 'tight' aspect of Embree's theory.

Since this is a comparative concept, in Chapter 2, Embree's definition of closely woven social structure will be analysed for several reasons. Not only to throw light on Embree's meaning of closely woven social structure and its significance for the theory in general, but also to provide a background for the subsequent study of the validity of applying the loose structure concept to Thai society. Tightly structured will also be examined so that it can be seen what it is that Thai society is being compared to, so that Thai society can be seen in perspective, and also so that crucial issues can be highlighted. At the same time the study of 'tightly woven' aims to show a major fallacy in Embree's argument that is very relevant to the study of Thai society, especially the study of choice.

However, owing to space not all the societies considered to be tightly woven will be able to be examined. But since the majority of Embree's examples relate to Japan and it is no doubt this society that he primarily had in mind when he was comparing Thai society, for it was ⁱⁿ Japan that he did most of his fieldwork in and this was his primary field of specialisation, Embree's definition of tightly woven social structure will be examined in terms of

Japanese ethnography alone.

But it must be pointed out that Japan is not the author's field of specialisation, this analysis will be based on a limited number of books and Japan is a society that is undergoing rapid social change. As such this cannot be, and is not intended as either an intensive or definitive study of Japanese social structure or a critical evaluation of the literature of Japan. Rather it is intended to be a brief sketch, of high generality, for the most part ahistorical: a kind of ideal type. The author is very aware that it might not always be applicable to the particular. But, given the reasons on the previous page for discussing tight structure and the reasons above, this is all that is necessary or possible.

Lastly, Embree uses the terms 'Thai' and 'Thailand' in an ambiguous manner. On the one hand he seems to be referring to the Thai ethnic groups who are found in several countries in South East Asia, such as Burma, Laos, Vietnam, and South China. On the other hand he applies the term loose structure to Thailand i.e. the nation state. To avoid confusion and ambiguity it is necessary to be clear as to which people it is that he is actually referring to. Although he says Thailand is a loosely structured social system it seems reasonable to assume that he is not applying the term 'loose structure' to the social relations of all inhabitants of Thailand for the term is obviously not applicable to such nomadic food gatherers as the ^{Pui} _A Tong Luang (spirits of the yellow leaves), or the northern hill tribes such as the Karen and Shan and Meo, or to the Chinese inhabitants. Rather he seems to be applying loose structure to the Thai ethnic group. Since he is referring to Thailand however, it seems reasonable to assume that he is referring to the Thais that inhabit Thailand alone.

The Thais who inhabit Thailand while having the same basic culture and language, vary in name, dialect and certain customs from district to district. But in the literature (Lebar 1964,

Seidenfaden 1958, Keyes 1967, Moerman 1965, Le May 1935) it is very often difficult to distinguish between groups, to determine which group is which, and in some areas whether a group of people are Thai or not. Not only because of a confusion in the use of names in western observers models of the ethnic groupings but also because the Thais themselves, in their own 'conscious models' use group names ambiguously. (See Keyes 1967, 1966^u: p362-369; Moerman 1965).

From the literature it does appear however, that the major Thai groupings in Thailand include the Central Thai or Siamese who inhabit the Central Menam Plain and southern Thailand, the Thai Yuan or northern Thai (sometimes called Lanathai or Lao) and the Thai lue, a minority group, who inhabit the north of Thailand, the Pak Thai who dwell in the extreme south, and the Lao or Khorat Thai of the northeast. Also found in the northeast are the Puthai, Yaws, Muais and Phuans (Seidenfaden 1958: p111). But since available literature refers only to the Central Thai, the Thai Yuan, the Thai lue, the Lao, the Khorat Thai and the Phu Thai Embree's theory will only be able to be tested against the ethnography available on these groupings.

Chapter II

Japan: a Closely Woven Social System?

Embree states in his article that societies such as Japan, Vietnam and China are closely woven social structures. These, he argues:

contrast with Thai culture in having more tightly woven cultures - that is, cultures whose patterns are clearly marked and which emphasize the importance of observing reciprocal rights and duties in various situations to a greater degree than is to be found among the Thai (p182).

Embree also implies that closely woven social structures have 'set patterns of behaviour (p188)' and states:

Where social structure is "close" - that is, where the behaviour of the people conforms closely to the formal ^{social} patterns of human relations, as in Japan - it is difficult for ~~an~~ individual to deviate, and reciprocal rights and duties are clearly marked and carried out (p185).

In these definitions Embree is making three propositions:

- 1) That in closely woven societies such as Japan, patterns are clearly marked.
- 2) Reciprocal rights and duties are clearly marked and the importance of observing them is emphasised to a greater degree than is to be found amongst the Thai.
- 3) There are set behaviour patterns; it is difficult for the individual to deviate; reciprocal rights and duties are carried out and the behaviour of the people conforms closely to the formal patterns of human relations.

But how valid are these propositions? In the following pages, for reasons stated in the introduction, these statements will be tested, primarily against the ethnographic data on village Japan, but where necessary also against the ethnographic data on Japan in general.

At no point does Embree explicitly define what he means by such terms as 'rights and duties', 'pattern' and 'clearly marked'; only very recently in the Yale symposium have the loose structuralists attempted to define their terms. Since, as will become apparent, many aspects of the loose structure polemic are the result of confused and ambiguous definitions it is both worthwhile and necessary to determine what Embree actually means by the above terms before starting the analysis.

Firstly, what does Embree mean by 'rights and duties'? This is a well known social anthropological and socialological term, being used as a concept in role theory. Usually, at least since the war, 'rights and duties' are generally defined as a set of normative institutionalised expectations about how individuals in a particular status ought to behave in particular situations. A right is understood to be an ego expectation that the person will be acted towards in a particular way and a duty that he will himself act in the way prescribed by the normative rules.¹

It can be inferred that Embree is using 'rights and duties' in the customary anthropological and socialological way with the emphasis on the normative aspects of behaviour for he states that in the Chinese tightly structured family there is 'a strong emphasis on a clearcut system of rights and duties which all proper people should follow' (p184, my underlining).

Secondly, in everyday usage 'pattern' is generally accepted as meaning a regularity, that is the continuous repetition of the same phenomena or sequence of phenomena. In social anthropology however, since Lévi-Strauss pointed it out (1963: p283)², it has been generally accepted that anthropologists are dealing with two kinds of social patterns, normative or jural patterns and statistical patterns of behaviour. The former being behaviour governed by the normative or jural rules derived from the belief system and the latter being patterns of behaviour revealed to the anthropologist by the collection and analysis of statistics on behaviour. But which sort of pattern is Embree referring to? It is apparent from his article that he is using the term in two different ways. He applies the term to material culture as, for example, when he states that 'the difference in closeness and looseness of cultural pattern as between Thailand and a culture such as Japan may also be seen in games of poem exchange (p185).' His stress in the great majority of the article on formal social

1. See Banton 1965: p2.

2. This was of course first published in ANTHROPOLOGY TODAY 1953, edited by A. KROEBER. Chicago.

patterns of human relations and rights and duties reveals that when using the term pattern he is also referring to regularities governed by normative rules. Since Embree implies his definition in terms of normative behaviour patterns they would seem to be the most important and fundamental to his argument. For this reason and also because it would be methodologically impossible to effectively deal with all his examples and to analyse Thai society in toto (as has been pointed out previously), the following analysis will be focused primarily on normative behaviour patterns.

Lastly, when Embree uses the term 'clearly marked' it is apparent that this also is being used in two different ways. He applies the term to 'rights and duties' in the quotation 'a clear cut system of rights and duties which all proper people should follow (p185).' and from this it appears that he is referring to the degree and specificity to which rights and duties are defined, stating that they are very specifically defined in Japan. Also, since he suggests that the reciprocal rights and duties are clearly marked and carried out, then he is logically implying that they are clearly marked to the Thais; that is they are part of what Levi-Strauss would call the Japanese 'conscious model'¹ - they are normative expectations.

Embree's second usage of 'clearly marked' occurs when he applies it to 'pattern' and this reflects a confusion that is apparent in many anthropologists' work of this period, the confusion of conceptual categories with empirical 'reality'. For Embree pattern is in some sense 'real'. It actually exists 'out there' in society.² But patterns do not exist 'out there' in society; a pattern is the product of the anthropologists' conceptualization. The anthropologist superimposes pattern onto social behaviour.³ He categorises actions into patterns and regularities that he thinks he can discern in society. But these patterns are conceptual; they do not 'exist'.⁴ The fact that regularities described by the anthropologist are

1. For further information see Levi-Strauss 1963: p281.

2. For example see page 188, paragraph 2.

3. Firth (1954) has pointed out that religious beliefs satisfy a need to superimpose order onto the chaos man sees around him. Maybe, in an increasingly secular society, anthropologists' obsessions with patterns satisfy the same kind of need.

4. Within the scope of this thesis, the term 'real' is not used in the metaphysical sense of 'ultimate' or 'infinite' but is confined to the phenomena discernible to the senses.

conceptual is very relevant~~m~~ as will become apparent, to the study of the loose structure polemic.

Since 'pattern' is the product of the anthropologist's conceptualisation to state that it is clearly marked is meaningless or at least tautologous for 'clearly marked' is the product of the anthropologist's process of conceptualisation and in no sense exists by itself either. But even so it ~~does~~ have a generally accepted meaning for anthropologists and is a useful analytic tool. This is because some regularities are more obvious and easier to ascertain for the anthropologist and in this sense are more 'clearly marked.' Which patterns seem more obvious to the anthropologist are no doubt due to the scholastic tradition to which the anthropologist belongs and to the type of training he has received.¹ Examples of patterns which, in this sense, seem more clearly marked to the anthropologist are normative rules, groups, hierarchies and so on.

Bearing in mind Embree's definitions and the fact that 'pattern' and 'clearly marked' are conceptualisations, Embree's three propositions will now be analysed.

- 1) The difference in the interests and attitudes between the 'Intellectual' French School and the 'Empiricist' British School of the pre-60's reflect the affect of tradition and training on the kinds of regularities with which they deal. It has led them to look for different kinds of pattern and to superimpose order on their data in different ways. A comparison of **Levi-Strauss's 'STRUCTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY' (ANTHROPOLOGIE STRUCTURALE (1963))** and **Radcliffe Brown's 'STRUCTURE AND FUNCTION IN PRIMITIVE SOCIETY' (1952)** clearly reveals this.

- 1) In closely woven social structures such as Japan, are patterns clearly marked?
-

According to Embree the Japanese hamlet is patterned in a clearly marked way for he says that:

The local group in Japan, the hamlet, has a clear cut social unity with special ceremonies for entry and exit (p185).

The literature does tend to bear out Embree's proposition, for the buraku(hamlet) is both an administrative unit governed by elected officials and a corporate communal residential unit with a well defined traditional political life.

This clear cut unity of the village is accentuated and emphasised by various factors. It is a distinctive residential unit surrounded by fields. Although land is owned individually by households, the number of households in a village over the generations has tended to become fixed. Only land owning households or honbyakusho (meaning titled farmers) have full rights in the village and have a voice in deciding the important details of village management and can be candidates and voters for the positions of village officials. Other households or kakaebyakusho (meaning non-titled farmers) are usually either offshoots of the honbyakusho or late comers to the village and are of lower status having only access rights in the village ^{through} the honbyakusho whose dependants they become. Outsiders wishing to enter the village must either become a dependant of the honbyakusho or take over a honbyakusho household and this can only be done with the consent of the villagers. In areas where there is economic differentiation between households the boundaries of the village are further accentuated by a tendency to endogamy amongst the less well off households.

- 1) By hamlet I assume Embree means the basic social unit of about fifty clustered households in rural Japanese society, sometimes called a mura and sometimes a buraku in the literature. As Nakane (1967:p43) points out there is a great deal of ambiguity in the literature as to the use of the term mura for in various administrative reshuffles a number of villages have been amalgamated and the term mura also applied to them. Thus to avoid confusion I will call Embree's hamlet a buraku and the larger collection of villages a mura.

The unity of the village is further symbolised by ritual. Each village has its own Shinto shrine which is considered to belong to the village alone and at which only members of the village worship.

The buraku also has ceremonies for entry and exit and these also further accentuate the unity of the village. For example Yoshida(1963) in his study of 3 buraku in the mountain locality of Nao approximately 15 kilometers from Saga City and 2 buraku in the flat locality of Honjo during the period of 1955-60), points out that:

Both newly established branch families and newcomers to Nao are required to offer two and a half bags of rice to the buraku and to stay for several years before they are treated as real members of the community (p.107)

Whilst in Honjo Yoshida describes how the newcomers:

were supposed to offer a bottle of saki to the buraku on the occasion when they introduce themselves to a formal gathering of village inhabitants and join the co-operative labor. (p.108)

Within the village also patterns are clearly marked. The basic unit in the buraku is the household, a well-defined corporate social property-holding unit with a distinctive pattern. The household or ie is organised around the elementary family and may include relatives and non-relatives, the latter usually being servants.¹ Normatively a patrilineal ideology pervades. Inheritance is from father to eldest son who inherits the household goods, chattels and land. Other siblings move out on marriage. If the natal household is rich enough it will supply the other siblings with land and capital to set up a 'branch' household. If not they will either move to the town, marry into other households or remain as labourers in the natal household.

The ie is a property holding unit; land is not owned by the individual. The unity of the ie is reflected in the fact that the Japanese do not conceive of the ie in terms of the individual but as a unit (Nakane 1967: p2). This strong consciousness of the residential domestic unit is symbolically phrased in terms such as 'under the same roof' or 'the relationship in which one shares the meals cooked in the same pot.'

Marriage customs also reflect and accentuate the clear cut unity and form a clearly marked pattern, for a woman when married, if she goes to her husband's household, will break completely with her natal

1. The actual people living in the ie at any one time will depend upon the economic situation of the household and the stage the family development cycle has reached. See Nakane (1967: p1).

household and lose her rights in it. Instead she becomes part of her husband's household. This complete change of affiliation is symbolised in the wearing of a ceremonial white kimono (the same colour as the shroud in which corpses are buried) when the bride moves to her husband's household and at death a wife is buried in her affinal ie's graves.

The clear unity and pattern of the ie is further reflected in the fact that it is normatively considered to be continuous over time, having both a past and a future. Thus it is considered wrong for a father to sell or break up ie land as he is depriving future ie members of their. The ie is also defined in ritual terms for each ie has its own ancestral shrines at which only members of the household worship. In fact the Japanese ie is a perfect example of a corporate group in the Maine, Fortes, and Radcliffe Brown sense of the word.

The ie also belongs to other well-defined groups with clearly marked patterns within the village. A household may belong to various, often overlapping, groups which exchange goods and services such as the Shinrui, the corporate dozoku, kumi, tonari and okato. The actual groups found in a village depend upon the economic situation and the ecology.¹

The Shinrui is a kinbased action group which exchanges goods and services, its most important function being the arrangement of funerals. Shinrui, as a term, is a category of kin. The shinrui of an individual are ego's bilateral kindred including all the members of ego's kindred's households. Generally however, according to Nakane, kinship ties are not articulated after first or second cousin range.² Not all the Shinrui of all the individuals in a household exchange goods and services; usually it is only the Shinrui of the household heads that is actually articulated. Thus as the household's head's life cycle evolves the composition of the Shinrui of the household changes.

1. See Nakane (1967: p119).

2. When a Shinrui household is rich ego's household may interact with it even though ego's household is only distantly related to it. (Nakane 1967: p34).

A household may also belong to a dozuku. This is a group of neighbouring co-operating households. Normally found in areas where there is a wide economic differentiation (see Nakane 1967: pl20), it consists of a main household and branch household(s). The branch household, bunke, is set up by the main household, honke, and the latter provides it with the necessary land and capital for setting up an establishment. The branch household may consist of younger sons, brothers or servants. If a branch household is rich enough it sometimes sets up a further branch household. The dozuku is internally stratified. The main household has higher status than the branch household and controls it. This status difference is emphasised by the fact that marriages between honke and bunke are frowned upon. Honke prefer to marry their daughters to households of the same economic status.¹ The dozuku is structurally continuous over time. If it is large and wealthy it may become very powerful in a village. However the fortunes of a dozuku may change over the generations and a rich dozuku in subsequent generations become poor. If it does so it will no longer be effective and probably break up. With the modernisation of Japan in the last century the number of dozuku has been gradually decreasing.

A Japanese household may also belong to a kumi. This is a collection of houses, a territorially placed neighbourhood unit which is also structurally continuous over time. It is a local ceremonial unit, labour exchange unit, welfare and co-operative unit. It may or it may not contain dozuku and if it does not, it will be organised democratically. This collection of houses within a village is linked by close kinship and sentimental ties.

The ko, unlike the dozuku and the kumi, is a voluntary association. The types of associations found in the villages vary for example there may be credit associations, ceremonial associations, young men and young women's associations, old people's welfare associations, trade associations and so on.

1. See Nakane 1967: pl58. "Marriage should take place between households of equal status is the golden rule."

There are also other patterns within the village such as a clear cut agricultural system of exchange labour and an equally clear cut patron-client system (oyako-kankei) which, once established, tends to continue over generations.

- 2) Are reciprocal rights and duties and the importance of observing them clearly emphasised?
-

In his article Embree states that in Japanese villages:

(there is) a whole series of rights and obligations for its members. Each man must sooner or later assume the responsibility of being the representative of the local groups, each must assist on occasions of hamlet co-operation such as road building or funeral preparations. (p185)

Although the statement that 'each man must sooner or later assume the responsibility of being the representative of the local groups' does not seem to be borne out by the literature, certainly there are a whole series of rights and obligations for its members and they are expected to assist on occasions of hamlet co-operation. In Japanese villages many activities are organised communally by the buraku, for instance the administration of the local irrigation system, and, if communally owned, of the pasture and forest lands which provide both fodder and fertilizer. In some areas because it controls the water supply, the buraku determines how much of each man's holding should be devoted to rice growing. It also plans and makes arrangements for local festivities and the biennial cleaning of the village. Other activities organised communally are such things as the maintenance of local facilities - roads, paths, bridges, the shrine and community hall.

The buraku usually has two officials, one of whom is generally a headman, and, in some areas, a council of 10 to 20 people to administer village enterprises and organise village activities. However, important matters such as the allocation of buraku funds, work assignments on the irrigation system and choice of candidates to represent the buraku, are decided informally at a general meeting. Decisions are normatively reached by majority vote, the voters being the member households of the village.

Within the household Embree refers to the:

strong sense of duty and obligation ^{TO PARENTS} which is so characteristic, in diverse ways, of Vietnam, China and Japan (p183).

He implies that they are mandatory obligations.

By contrast the Chinese system of filial piety emphasises strongly the masculine side of the family and the duties of children to parents, especially to the father, and of wife to husband. There

is a strong emphasis on a clear cut system of reciprocal rights and duties which all proper people should follow....In practice.... Hsiao (filial piety) is demanded of children toward all the members of the parental generation and above; and ti (respectful obedience) must be shown by young people toward any other older person in their^{own} generation. (p184).

In Japan as in China the father is an authoritarian figure.

Although, as Nakane points out, in Japan the father's authority derives from the fact that he is the head of the household whereas in China his authority derives from the fact that he is 'Father'.

Traditionally the authoritarian father figure was an ideal model which was enforced and influenced by the legal and ethical patterns established under the old Civil Code. Although this Civil Code has been abolished¹ the father still retains an authoritarian image and his rights and duties are clearly defined. Normatively in Japanese households, every activity was regulated under the leadership of the father. He represented the household in external activities, was the sole figure to make final decisions and often made them unilaterally. If he wished he could appoint his successor and, in an extreme case, could chose an adopted son-in-law, superseding his real son. Since children were expected to obey their parents and carry out their commands he could even chose his children's marriage partners. His authoritarian position was symbolised by the fact that he was given the first bath, at times the best food and had a chair reserved for his use.

The normative rights and duties of wives are also clear cut. A wife is considered inferior to her husband and she is expected to be loyal, submissive and obedient, anticipating the wants of her husband.

There is a clear division of labour between husband and wife and they tend to lead segregated lives. Traditionally, according to the old Civil Code, wives could not buy or sell, give or exchange or accept property without the permission of their husbands. Despite the abolition of the old Civil Code, this pattern tends to still remain the ideal. What belonged to the wife on marriage remained her

1. After the war and under the influence of the allies, the old Civil Code was abolished and the legal character of the family was drastically redefined by the constitution of 1947 and the Civil Code (1948). However the modern family, although no longer sanctioned by law, still tend to follow the model on which the majority of traditional families were based.

separate property but automatically came under the management of her husband, severely limiting her right to use it or dispose of it. Although the wife did have the management of the budget it was under her husband's direction.

In the overlapping groups to which the ie may belong rights and duties are also clearly marked. In the Shinrui an individual household is expected to make the occasional presentation of mortuary offerings and wedding gifts to Shinrui. When a household has a funeral or wedding it is expected to invite all the Shinrui with whom they are in contact. Once a year, on the occasion of the local festival (though the reason for and name of the festival may vary with locality) a household must distribute presents (home-made ice-cakes, the kind of which varies with locality) to all its Shinrui households from whom it receives similar gifts.

Because of the economic obligations of the Shinrui the economic standing of a particular household tends to determine its range of Shinrui, the richer the household the wider its range of Shinrui. A Shinrui relationship between households is only maintained by the continuing performance of duties and obligations between households. Failure of the latter often leads to the termination of the Shinrui relationship, whatever the actual kinship relation may be.¹

Similarly with the dozuku rights and duties are clearly defined. All members of the dozuku form a labour pool under the guidance ~~lead~~ of the head of the main household. The branch households supply free labour to the main household in exchange for help which was given when the branch household was in difficulties. On balance the branch household gave more than it received but the actual amount of goods and labour exchanged varies with how dependent the branch household is on the main household and how far it is from it. For instance in times of famine distant branch households will be eligible for food gifts only after the nearer branch households have received them. The relationship between main and branch households is reflected in such statements as :

When Beeke (branch household) have nothing to eat, they just go to honke (main household) to ask for rations.

Beeke often visit Honke and are offered good meals there.

Nakane 1967: p113

1. For further details on Shinrui see Nakane 1967: p36

The rights and duties of the kumi are also clearly defined. The number of people supplied for corporate activities is ~~not~~ proportional to the size of the household. The essential duties in which members of the kumi co-operate include building and repairing houses, thatching roofs, help during sudden illness, fire fighting and local festivities. According to Nakane (1967: p136) every household offers its house in turn for a festivity and each household send men and women to help. The cost of the festivity is either borne by the host household or raised by corporate levy. The most important function of the kumi is the organisation of funerals and on the death of a kumi member the entire responsibility for the burial is assumed in a corporate form. Members report to the temple, notify every household in the village, purchase articles necessary for the funeral, make arrangements for the altar, coffin, grave, haircutting and shaving of the people who attend, prepare the funeral meals for people calling to condole and find accomadation for relatives and friends from outside.

Embree also states that exchange systems in a Japanese village are clear cut and this seems to be borne out by the literature too. For instance as Nakane (1967: p145) points out, a household makes arrangements for exchange of labour with other households on a clear cut contractual basis:

The labour given to X household by Y household should be similarly reciprocated to X by Y. It is borrowing in the form of labour with the obligation of future repayment. One day of work should be repaid by one day of work, not by money or in kind. The labour itself is called yui, and the act of returning the labour is called yui-modoshi. This exchange of labour is always measured according to local values so that a-man-one-day unit is returned by a-woman-one-and-a-half-days unit; one days labour in the busy spring season should be repaid by two days labour in the short winter; one-horse-two-days is repaid by one-man-one-day, etc.

Moreover rights and duties between patrons and clients tend to be both institutionalised and ritualised. It is normatively expected that a patron will do such things for his client as lend him money directly or stand as his guarantor when he borrows money, act as a go-between at weddings, lend him rice, agricultural tools and a house site and help him with his reading and writing. The client is expected to discuss his affairs with the patron.

In a Japanese village patron-client relationships are symbolised by rituals. For instance, according to Furushima¹ (1953: pl02-3) in Ainosshima buraku in Nagano Prefecture the patron (oyabun) gives a New Year's dinner and gifts in celebration of the New Year to his client(s) (kobun). Similarly, the client visits his master's house with a present at the end of the year festival. Similarly, during Bon (annual ancestor festival in the summer) the client visits the graves of the patron's ancestors and offers the patron a gift and the patron in turn offers him dinner and gifts. This reflects the specific nature of the type of goods and services exchanged.

1 The author has been unable to obtain this article which is written in Japanese and has had to rely on Nakane's (1967: pl25) interpretation of this work.

- 3) Are there set patterns of behaviour; does the behaviour of the people conform closely to the formal social patterns of human relations; is it difficult for individual to deviate from the norm; and are reciprocal rights and duties carried out?
-

The previous description has shown that there are clearly defined institutionalised normative patterns and rights and duties. Examples of the former being the buraku, ie, kumi, dozuku and Shinrui; examples of the latter being the role of the koshu, other members of the household, the buraku officials, patrons and clients.

Within the literature also there are numerous references to the institutionalised normative patterns and to the specificity and detail of normative rules. Benedict, (1946: p49) for instance, states that:

The Japanese, more than any other sovereign nation, have been conditioned to a world where the smallest details of conduct are mapped and status is assigned.

In fact, as Harris et al (1961:p97) points out, during the early Tokogawa period (1600-1868):

The hardening of occupational groups into classes was accompanied by detailed legislation prescribing manners, dress, housing and occupation to each class. Every effort was made to eliminate overlapping among the classes, as in requiring all non-Samurai to surrender their swords. Prohibitions against a change in employment tended to make occupations and therefore clan affiliation hereditary.

As Harris's quotation shows, during the early Tokogawa period behaviour patterns became very set. Nevertheless, although as Benedict points out, by the nineteenth century this massive ascription had begun to break down and after the last war was largely abolished. But many of the old set patterns remained; the new patterns being assimilated to fit in with the traditional patterns.

These factors tend to suggest that as Embree says, there are normative institutionalised set patterns of behaviour in village Japan. Moreover the statements made above tend to suggest that such an assumption is probably valid for Japanese society in general both during the Tokogawa period and in the present.

Even when there are normative set behaviour patterns it cannot therefore be stated a priori that people will conform closely to them. Nor can it be presumed that the individual will find it difficult to deviate from them. As anthropologists have often pointed out there may be a discrepancy between the set normative institutionalised patterns and what actually happens. Bearing this in mind, to what extent do people conform to the formal social patterns and how difficult is it for the individual to deviate in Japanese society?

Firstly, the issue of deviation. To avoid terminological quagmires, what is meant by 'to deviate' will be considered. From a study of Embree's article it would seem that he is accepting the general anthropological and sociological sense, that is the carrying out of an action that is contrary to the normative rules of the groups to which the deviant(s) belong. The degree to which a normative rule is followed depends on various factors such as the extent to which the group which accepts the normative rule enforces its maintain^aence by sanctions and the extent to which the norms are inculcated into the individuals conscience during childhood.

Although an analysis of the latter is, in theory, beyond the scope of this thesis, it is worthwhile to note, since it throws light on Japanese behaviour, that many psychological studies have stressed that conformism is a major attribute of the Japanese personality and they relate this to various aspects of the socialisation process.

The literature tends to suggest that secular and supernatural sanctions act as effective social deterrents to deviant behaviour in village Japan. Although legal sanctions exist at the local level in the form of the mura constable this cannot be considered a major deterrent since the constable is considered an outsider and represents the law which the buraku folk do not understand well and distrust. If individuals do deviate from the accepted patterns of social behaviour the buraku inhabitants rarely invoke the law, preferring to settle such deviance amongst themselves. Nor do the buraku officials act as sanctioning bodies. As can be inferred from Cornell (1962: p37) the buraku

officials have no legal sanctioning power and, although there are exceptions in certain areas, they do not generally tend to wield informal power.

The major deterrent for deviant behaviour is village pressure groups.¹ If an individual attempts to deviate members of the village community, his kumi or ko will attempt to make him conform by ridiculing or shaming him; if he is a continuous offender or if he makes a major act of deviation, his group may ostracise him.² As Cornell (1962: p65) in his study of the Japanese village says:

When disciplinary gossip and ridicule fail to stop an offender, sterner measures must be tried. Isolation or ostracism are directed against inveterate offenders and ultimately against their households as well.³

As Beardsley et al (1962: p75) says:

In Japan the procedure for formal ostracism is called mura hachibu, "village eight parts". The etymology refers to cutting off most (80 percent) of all relations with the village. A community council which, after solemn debate, declares mura hachibu thereby excludes one of its members from all normal contact with the rest of its members. This ostracism deprives the offending household of support in crisis and, depending on local conditions, may greatly handicap the everyday processes of making a living. It is, therefore, a severe penalty and not lightly invoked.

As such it acts as a very effective deterrent to deviant behaviour.

1. For an intensive and comprehensive study of the buraku system's sanctions see Smith (1961: p522-533).
2. Although of course an official may instigate pressure group action.
3. As Cornell (1962: p65) says:

In one case a man with a long past history of heavy drinking, gambling and brawling, found it convenient, after his original house fell apart from disrepair, to move to a vacant satellite homestead, where he is largely ignored. A decade or so ago, another household of this type which had caused a series of irritations in one jokai (a division in the village) finally capped the climax in disregarding the compulsory day of rest in the spring by raising a new barn. A further injury to conventions occurred when the householder called only his intimates to assist him, instead of inviting all the jokai as is customary. The jokai met and determined to cast this household from its ranks.

In certain social groups in the West, for example in London's East End, an individual can usually rely on his kin group for help and support even if he is deviant but this is not the case in Japan. The opposite is more the case as they are likely to punish him as well. As Gorer(1962: p322) says:

While they are able to avoid such adverse criticism, the Japanese are given complete support and approval by their own group, especially the extended family; but if the individual arouses criticism in strangers, or if he fails to measure up to demands made on a person of his age and sex (e.g. failing to get a rise in grade, in a "modern style" school) then his own group will turn on him, punish him severely, even repudiate him if the criticism is strong enough.....One is only ~~given~~ ^{sure} support from ~~by~~ one's own group so long as approval is given by other groups, if outsiders disapprove or criticise, one's own group will turn against one and act as the punishing agents until or unless the individual can force the other group to withdraw its criticism.

Thus, not only does the outside world act as an effective pressure group but so too does the individual's immediate group. Moreover, the power of the *koshu* (head of the *ie*) acts as an effective sanction against deviance for he has the power to expel the individual from the *ie*, regardless of his kinship relationship to *ie* members. Threat of expulsion is an effective sanction for the individual without his *ie* would find it very difficult to make a living in the village; in fact he would find it virtually impossible to continue to live in the village. As Harris et al (1961: p135) says the:

threat of being struck from the koseki, excluded from the family and denied the right of its support and protection deterred persons from defying the koshu's decisions on matters of importance such as marriage, divorce and occupation.

Secular sanctions are further reinforced by supernatural sanctions. Not only does the Japanese fear of the wrath of their ancestors' spirits and the concept of ong which stresses the necessity of repaying one's indebtedness in religious terms, but so too does the Confucian view of society and the individual's place and occupation in it.

The Confucian view of society illustrates the gearing of social and cosmic thinking. Confucian thought views society in religious terms. It sees society as the product of heaven and aims at achieving the inherent harmony in society. It holds that if each part of society

fulfills its functions all will go well; but if any part gets out of kilter the whole system is apt to be upset. This view of society does not just see occupation as an end in itself but as a part of society. One's occupation is the fulfillment of what one owes society, it is the part one plays which justifies one's receiving the benefits of society. Significantly the first character in the compound of one of the words for occupation, tenshoku, is 'heaven' and the implication is 'heavenly occupation' or 'heavenly calling'. As Bellah (1957: p115) says:

In the pure Confucian thinking the implication is that this calling is a fixed and definite duty which demarcates each class and functional group in society. It is the duty of individuals to perform their callings in the appropriate manner, and be tranquil and contented with their lot, which is after all determined by heaven.

Such a world view acts as an effective deterrent for not only will individuals fear to deviate because this will cause disharmony in society but others who will also want to prevent disharmony will pressurise the deviant into conforming.

This discussion of both secular and supernatural sanctions does tend to suggest that it is difficult for the individual to deviate, rights and duties are carried out and people do conform to the normative set patterns of behaviour. Although there is no statistical evidence available which would support Embree's propositions there are many references in the literature to the conformity of the Japanese to the normative rules both in cultural terms, for example Benedict's Chrysanthemum and the Sword (1946) and in psychological terms, for example Moloney's Child Training and Japanese Conformity (1962: p214-219) As Haring (1962: p389) says:

The Japanese conform most eagerly to numberless exact rules of conduct and exhibit bewilderment when required to act alone in situations not anticipated in the code.

Yet if the Japanese do conform to set patterns of behaviour, it would seem, as Embree is implicitly trying to show, that in Japan the individual has little choice of action; his life is blue printed from birth. But, if this were in fact so, it would seem logically probable that such a society would be static and change little over time. Paradoxically, Japan has had a long history of social change. In fact, it has been a continuously changing society. In the last hundred years alone Japan has undergone rapid and radical change at all levels of society. It has changed from what Bellah would call a 'prescriptive

society' to being one of the most important industrial nations in the world. If it is difficult for the individual to deviate and reciprocal rights and duties are carried out, how can such change be explained? The answer lies in the fact that Embree, in looking at Japanese society from the point of view of convention, rules, set behaviour patterns and deviation, has arrived at a misleading impression of Japanese society. By looking at the clearly specified normative patterns alone, Embree was logically led to infer that the individual had little choice of action open to him and that thus Japan had a 'rigid' social structure (see p192).

But sanctions and the specificity of normative rules do not alone determine the amount of choice open to the individual, for other aspects of the social system may allow a wider choice of action that is apparent from Embree's article.

Firstly, because a role is specifically defined it does not mean necessarily that the role holder does not have a wide choice of action open to him for the rules may specifically state that he has. An example of such a role is that of the koshu, head of the ie. Although specifically defined the incumbent of the role has a wide variety of actions and choices open to him for the rules cover a wide area of social relations and specifically allow him a wide choice of action. In fact all superordinate roles in Japanese society have a wide variety of action open to them; they can command their subordinates to do practically anything.

Secondly, even at the village level Japanese society is more dynamic than it would at first appear. Although all farming ie's have equal status, in practice in many areas they are not forever rooted in the same economic, social and political position, as is apparent from Nakane's study. In areas where there is a marked economic differentiation a wide choice of action is open to the individual household and especially to the household head in terms of economic and social mobility. It is possible, even for poor households to use economic endeavour and political manipulation to accrue wealth and to use this wealth to attain political power in the village and local area. In such a situation the head of a dozoku will have a wide choice of action open to him. Certainly, the

literature is full of references to such social mobility in rural areas and to the rise and fall of dozuku, ko and kumi in effectiveness in the community.

Thirdly, in Japan the social system is itself flexible in that a certain amount of manipulation of the system is possible without going against the normative rules. For instance, during the Tokogawa period status and occupation were hereditarily assigned and this, to a certain extent, has tended to continue in practice today. Thus, in principle, the individual was unable to be socially mobile. But unlike the Indian caste system where status and occupation were hereditarily assigned,¹ the individual in Japan was able to manipulate the system so that his descendants, if not himself, could have higher status. For example, as Benedict (1946: p50) points out, rich merchants were able to buy Samurai status by either marrying their daughters into rich Samurai families or by arranging for the adoption of their son into such families. Unlike in India where a specific status and occupation was applied to a whole group and had an all pervading influence throughout social life in Japan it was applied to a category and thus it was possible for an individual to manipulate the system even though it was ascriptive.²

But the most important point that Embree missed out was the significance of the type and content of the world view in its relationship to choice. The importance of this factor is borne out

1. As Rudolphs (1967: p29) says:

the local subcaste, or jati, established by ascription the group into which a person might marry and more broadly, the social, economic and moral circumstances of his life. He could not, in so far as caste was embedded in the social structure and cultural norms, change his social identity....Comparatively....the norms appeared to be rigorously ascriptive with endogamy, summation of roles and congruence among social, religious, economic and political structure characterising the system. Jati norms and shaped character and prescribed ritual, occupational, marital and social conduct and jati organisation enforced them.

2. If ascriptive criteria are applied to membership of a group then it will be far more restrictive on action than if applied to a category, primarily because it will have an all pervading influence on other spheres of social life as in the subcaste. If an individual in an ascriptive group wishes to be socially mobile, he cannot do it alone but would have to do it in terms of a group since as an individual his new status would not be recognised by other groups. This is happening in India today, as Bailey (1967: p84) points out. The lower subcastes are climbing by taking on the symbols of higher castes, that is by sanskritization.

by the literature in which there have been many studies of the world view as it relates to behaviour. For instance, there have been attempts aimed at showing that the content and type of world view has either been a decisive or contributory cause of the rapid changes that Japan has undergone in the last hundred years; Bellah's (1957) 'Tokugawa Religion' being a notable example of such.

The content and type of certain aspects of the world view foster change for two reasons. Firstly, although it emphasises the desirability of conformity, the world view simultaneously fosters the acceptance of change in that it facilitates the easy acceptance of change, even radical change, in the normative rules. Secondly, it allows individuals in certain statuses to reinterpret and/or change the rules, rationalise rules, aim at high performance and compromise in situations of conflict.¹

Although there is not the space here to discuss the basic assumptions of the Japanese world view and go into them in detail, some relevant points do seem to emerge from the limited number of books studied. The world view of the West accepts the images of man and society through abstractions, with concepts by postulations; the Japanese world view accepts the images of man and society, with their immense variety of attributes, as they are naively perceived by the senses and with radical empirical immediacy. It is a type of world view that is basically non-metaphysical. With its emphasis on 'inner reality', the 'ground of being' and 'harmony', it stresses this worldliness; the absolute is found in the phenomenological world. The importance assigned to down to earth realism, practical mindedness and activity tends to lead the Japanese into finding a comfortable condition of human living by adapting to the environment and the establishment and by the achievement of tranquility and serenity in facing the problems of the world.

¹ This is fostered by the Confucian view of the harmonious world, a world view in which perfection and concord are the ideals.

This positive emphasis on experience naturally minimizes the significance of intellectual examination and analysis of life and experience. Ideas are important in so far as they have applicability to human living. The indifferent pursuit of truth does not appeal; intellectualism and speculation falsify and distort life. More importance is placed on human relations than on universal ethics. Order is not sought through the systematic application of general principles and prescriptions, but through each person acting in accordance with what is appropriate, in each particular relationship. The world view does not emphasise the importance of believing in the normative rules, rather it stresses rationalisation of means, high performance and compromise.

In fact it is essentially an eclectic world view. The literature has continuous references to the minimally abstract, non-theoretic and anti-intellectualist nature of it. Similarly the literature refers to the world view's tendency to non-rationality, non-logicality and inconsistency and also to the weak ability of the Japanese to think in terms of logical sequences. It is often pointed out that the Japanese lack imagination, that they are out of their element in speculative thought, that their powers of criticism are not highly developed and that their ability to produce complex representations is weak. Moreover it is said that they tend to avoid any form of rational compromise based on a selection from alternative possibilities, rather they tend to base their conclusions on one fact. The world view emphasises adaptation and tends to reconcile contradictions. Any potential conflict is resolved by a theory of the levels of truth.

These aspects of the world view have implications for social behaviour, for they further the acceptance of change in several ways, a few examples of which will be given here.

Firstly the emphasis on particularism rather than on universalism is of great significance. If Japan had a universalist system of change would be much more difficult because universalist standards are used to evaluate a wide variety of roles and role performances in a social system. Thus a change in the norms in one role will affect other roles governed by the same universalist standards. Individuals with a vested interest in the

maintain^aence of roles will see any attempt to change the norms governing one role as a threat to their roles because they are governed by the same norms. Thus instigators of change in the norms governing one role will not only face resistance from those who have a vested interest in that particular role but also from those who have a vested interest in the continuance of other roles. Moreover, an attempt to change a universalist standard would be seen as a threat to the central value system and as such it would be generally resisted.¹ But in a particularist system this is generally avoided for, as in Japan, standards relate specifically to one role.²

1. For example in England in certain sections of the community there is a general consensus of agreement on the desirability of the universalist belief 'thou shalt not commit adultery'. If, for example, in time of war an attempt was made to introduce a norm that allowed married non-commissioned members of the armed forces to commit adultery openly it would be met with resistance on several fronts. It might be seen as resistance to the role forced upon conscripted men and so incur the disapproval of the higher echelons of the army because it might undermine discipline. Married women might resist because they saw such an open acceptance as a threat to their way of life and to the value system which made marriage meaningful to them.

2. As Benedict (1946: pl37) says:

They (the Japanese) see the 'whole duty of man' as if it were parcelled out into separate provinces on a map. In their phrase, one's life consists of 'the circle of chu' and 'the circle of ko', and 'the circle of giri' and 'the circle of jin' and 'the circle of human feelings' and many more. Each circle has its special detailed code and a man judges his fellows not by ascribing to them integrated personalities but by saying of them that "they do not know ko" or "they do not know giri". This is not to say that the Japanese do not recognise bad behaviour but they do not see human life as a stage on which forces of good contend with forces of evil. They see existence as a drama which calls for careful balancing of the claims of one 'circle' against another and of one course of procedure against another, each circle and each course of procedure being in itself good.

And again Benedict (1947: pl37) says:

Instead of accusing a man of being unjust, as an American would, they specify the circle of behaviour he has not lived up to. Instead of accusing a man of being selfish or unkind, the Japanese specify the particular province within which he violated the code. They do not invoke a categorical imperative or a golden rule. Approved behaviour is relative to the circle in which it appears. When a man acts 'for ko' he is acting in one way; when he acts merely 'for giri' or 'in the circle of jin', he is acting - so Westerners would judge - in quite different character. The codes, even for each 'circle', are set up in such a way that, when conditions change within it, the most different behaviour may be properly called for....Until 1945, chu demanded of the Japanese people that they fight to the last man against the enemy. When the Emperor changed his requirements of chu by broadcasting Japan's capitulation, the Japanese outdid themselves in expressing their co-operation with the visitors.

Secondly, the Japanese world view with its minimally abstract nature, its anti-intellectualism, inconsistency, and tendency to non-rationality and non-logicality fosters the acceptance of change, even radical change such as the introduction of western democratic norms. In the West, where great stress is laid on the importance of logicality and rationality, if a new norm is to be accepted it must fit in with the basic premises and concepts of the world view and the abstract conceptual framework; it must seem both logically and rationally plausible in terms of these premises and concepts. If a new norm does not fit in it will be strongly resisted and any attempt to introduce such a norm would be unlikely to succeed.

In Japan, however, with the lack of emphasis on the importance of rationality and logicality, the acceptance of inconsistency and the disinterest in ideas for their own sake, the introduction of a new norm would be far less likely to be evaluated in terms of whether it fitted into the premises of the existing world view and the canons of logicality and rationality. It would not even matter if it was inconsistent. As such, even radical changes such as the 'rights' of man can be introduced and general acceptance will not be too difficult to achieve, for they will not be rejected on account of their implausibility, 'irrationality' or alienness. This factor is also further fostered by the Japanese tendency to avoid making a judgement based on a rational selection of alternatives. In turn this factor also enables a much wider variety of change to be introduced than would be possible in the western system. Moreover, since this combines with the Japanese tendency to come to a conclusion from one fact the introduction of change is much easier than in the West because far less justification will be needed.

Thirdly, in the West many of the norms are seen as ends in themselves, such as the capitalist belief in the desirability of making money for its own sake. In Japan the stress is on role performance; a role should be performed to the best of the individual's

ability whether the role be that of a tenant farmer or a member of the government. Norms are not usually seen as being desired ends in themselves; norms as ends are relatively unimportant. Thus it is much easier to introduce changes in the norms which are not considered ends in themselves than in those that are for a change in the former will not be seen as a threat to a way of life as it would in the latter.

Fourthly, a concomitant of the last point, the Japanese are not expected to believe in the norms.¹ This factor further facilitates the easy acceptance of change for it does not give rise to questions relating to the beliefs and integrity of the individuals who are following the existing norms.

Fifthly, the emphasis on immediate experience also decreases the importance attributed to the norms by the Japanese. This emphasis tends to orientate the individual to the situation rather than to the norms and gives greater priority to the situation than to the norms.

Sixthly, the emphasis in the Japanese world view on inner reality, or the 'ground of being', and moral introspection leads to greater stress being placed on the inner needs of man than the outer and greater priority is given to the inner needs of man than to the needs of the outer world. Thus normative changes, if seen as furthering the inner reality, will easily be accepted even if they involve radical changes in the existing norms.

Lastly, orientation to the exigencies of the situation and greater priority being given to the situation than to the norms is also fostered by the worldliness of the world view, its radical empiricism, its emphasis on practicalmindedness and activity and 'high' performance. This orientation to the situation is also fostered by the normative emphasis on the desirability of compromise and

1. As Hulse (1948: p351-2) says:

Since so much of overt Japanese culture is purely arbitrary convention, which must be accepted like the rule of passing to the right in driving, the importance of objective truth, which must be believed, is relatively minor.

Moreover, as Parsons (1946: p96) says:

Obligations are not imposed by a principle in which one "believes" but by specific acts of oneself or others in traditionally defined situations, or by the accepted patterns of ones status.

adaptability.

These factors do foster the easy acceptance of change for if a new norm is introduced it is evaluated in terms of whether it is useful and relevant to the situational needs rather than in terms of normative coherency and plausibility. If a new norm fits the situation better than the existing norm it will be fairly easily accepted. In fact there are many examples in the literature of such adaptation of normative rules to situational needs. As Nakane points out, although traditionally succession was normatively from father to eldest son in practice there were many local normative variations. For example, in some areas the normative rule was male ultimogeniture, in others the husband of the eldest daughter inherited. Nakane states that these were the result of adaptation to the local situation. As she says (1967: p107):

The modification of a category originally connoting descent by economic and local factors seems a wide spread native principle in Japan.

And again (p168):

Certainly kinship functions in various ways, but, without a positive rule, it is easily overruled by other factors.

But once a change has been introduced in a local area it is expected that individuals and groups will conform to the new norms.

The examples discussed in the last few pages show ⁱⁿcertain aspects of the type and contents of ideas foster the easy acceptance of change. This tends to suggest that the type and content of ideas is an important factor that must be taken into account when discussing the choices open to an individual. In Japan the type and content of the world view ⁱⁿtends to foster change in itself. For instance the orientation of norms to the situation leads to a continual change in the norms since actual situations are continually changing due to environmental, ecological, demographic and economic factors. Thus in Japan as the environment changes the accepted norms will also change. Besides this it is also true to say that while individuals find it difficult to deviate there is a paradox in that certain ideas in the world view enable individuals in certain statuses to have a wider variety of choice open to them, and this enables them to introduce new norms and reinterpret old ones. Some roles, that is those of superordinates, normatively allow the individuals in certain statuses to change the rules that determine their

relationships with their subordinates although the rights and duties are clearly defined in Japanese society. The higher up the superordinate is in the social scale the greater the ability to change the rules and for an increasingly wider section of society. The fact that superordinates can change the rules is the result of certain aspects of the ideas in the world view from which the norms are derived. The most important of these are certain ideas embedded in Confucian thought.

The concept of on postulates that man is weak and helpless by himself; only by fulfilling his indebtedness to the ancestors and his superiors by absolute obedience and limitless selfless devotion can the individual expect to reap the benefits necessary for a comfortable life. This concept of on enables superordinates to legitimately introduce normative changes for they can introduce them in the name of the obligations they ^{subordinates} owe their ancestors and expect their subordinates to obey them. Moreover with the stress on implicit obedience and devotion it is unlikely that such newly introduced norms will be disobeyed. Also the Confucian emphasis on the inherent hierarchy in society, with its postulation that each individual should act according to his station, not only legitimises the superiors position but also it minimises the likelihood that anyone will resist the commands of a superordinate. Thus the Emperor, the 'father' of the nation, in the name of Chu demanded at the beginning of the last world war that the Japanese fight to the death. After capitulation, still in the name of Chu, he was able to demand that they co-operate with the American occupation forces in all possible ways. To Westerners such behaviour would be impossible, but in the name of Chu virtually any behaviour is possible.

The description in the last few pages of some of the factors that allow the Japanese to have wider choice of action than is at first apparent, tends to suggest that Embree's article, studying the society from the point of view of normative rules, deviation and conformity alone, is, in some ways, misleading and that the actual choice is wider than he infers.

Conclusion

The literature implies that Japan is a much more dynamic fluid society than Embree's characterisation of it as a tight rigid social structure would tend to suggest. Not only does the system allow individuals and groups to manipulate it in certain respects and within the limits of ascription and social sanctions, but also the norms themselves and the content and ideas of the world view on which the norms are based normatively allow superordinates to legitimately change the rules. The Japanese world view fosters the easy acceptance of change by both groups and individuals. A major mistake in Embree's article was not to take into account the fact that it was relatively easy to reinterpret norms and introduce new ones. Whilst it was difficult for individuals to deviate from the norm it was still possible for individuals in some statuses to change the normative rules either by reinterpretation or by the introduction of new ones. But once the new norms have been introduced and the old ones reinterpreted the system would return to zero and the individual be expected to conform to the new norms; sanctions would be used, most probably the old sanctions to enforce the new norms.

The fact that Embree's concentration on norms, deviation and conformity alone led him to give a misleading picture of Japanese society is of relevance to the discussion of loose structure, as will become apparent in later chapters, since his view point might also give a misleading picture of Thai society.

Chapter 3

Thailand a loosely structured social system?

Turning now to Thai society, bearing in mind the previous discussion of certain aspects of Japanese society, how valid is it in comparison with societies such as Japan, to designate Thai society as being loosely structured? Also how valid are Embree and the loose structurists' assumptions as to the nature of Thai society per se?

Although Embree does not always state it explicitly, it can be inferred from a close examination of his article that he maintains that in comparison with 'tightly woven' societies such as Japan, in Thai society normative patterns are less clearly defined, the importance of observing reciprocal rights and duties in various situations is emphasised to a lesser degree, sanctions are less severe and the individual does not have to conform to the formal patterns of social behaviour. In fact, he argues that the Thais are essentially individualists and the individual has a wide choice of action vis-a-vis the social structure.

Although most loose structurists (until recently i.e. the Yale Conference and the publication of the Yale Symposium in 1969) have not viewed loose structure from a comparative point of view, that is, they have not attempted to see it in comparison with Japan, but have accepted Embree's definition of the situation in Thai society. For instance, Wilson (1962: p46) states:

(Embree) meant to underscore the degree of independent action and the importance of the individual will among the Thai. He was comparing his observation of Thailand with his views of the Vietnamese and Japanese, but the characterization etches one of the most striking qualities of Thai society...Within a structure of social obligations and rights, he is able to move and respond to his personal and individual inclinations without suffering a mortal social wound.

In accepting Embree's definition of the social situation they have pointed to certain features of Thai society which, they argue, support

Embree's hypothesis. They have also further developed his thesis and Phillips and Wilson have attempted to explain the causes of loose structure. The type of community and the existence of groups have become important issues in the polemic. The loose structurists argue that villages in Thai society are not clear cut and that groups are either absent or limited in number; these factors, they argue, are indicators of the 'loose structure' of Thai society. (Phillips (1965, 1969) and Piker (1968 a and b, 1969) have related loose structure to Thai peasant personality, Wilson (1959: 1962) and Mosel (1957, 1965) to the politico/bureaucratic structure and Hanks (1962) to the social processes which give it its form. Moreover, in their works loose structurists tend to stress the randomness of Thai social behaviour and the amorphousness of Thai society, as is obvious from the following well-known statements by loose structurists. Sharp (1953: p26) neatly sums up the loose structurists' position as follows in his discussion of the social organisation of Bang Chan, a village in Central Thailand where he did fieldwork. This village incidentally, is where members of Cornell University in the late 40's and 50's did an intensive team study of the community and although nowadays other data from other villages in Central Thailand is cited as well, it was and is primarily on data from Bang Chan that loose structurists base their arguments. For many loose structurists rural Thailand means the Central Plains.¹

The exceptionally amorphous relatively unstructured character of all Thai society is clearly reflected in the undifferentiated social organisation of Bang Chan. In contrast to the peasant of neighbouring India or China, the rural Thai can belong to few formal groups of any kind, and occupy few statuses in which his role is formalised and his behaviour defined so that it firmly channels his social relations with fellow villagers.

1. This point is corroborated by Moerman (1967: p419) who says:
Bang Chan (Sharp et al) is the village on which most scholars ideas about rural Thailand are based.
Even Phillips (1969: p28) accepts this.

In a system of few recognised social positions, in which appropriate role behaviour is only vaguely predetermined and great latitude for personal idiosyncrasy is allowed, the Thai farmer is of necessity an individualist who finds and maintains his own way. He must navigate a largely uncharted social life, guided primarily by only the most general rules and directions provided by his local and national culture.

Phillips' (1965: p29) discussion of Bang Chan kinship supports this view:

Actually, I feel that any attempt to bring descriptive order to Bang Chan kinship does violence, in the very process of ordering, to the reality of what is being described. This is said neither out of a sense of inadequacy or apology, but simply to underscore the fact that kinship relations in Bang Chan are considerably more unpredictable, inconsistent, and chaotic than our descriptive modes typically admit, and that any coherent discussion of them must unavoidably involve an element of reification.

Hanks (1959: pl)¹ has made a similar observation with regard to Thai social structure in general:

The Thai social scene at its most orderly moment seems to flaunt conventional Western requirements for organization and to travel always on the brink of social chaos. Every inclination of the student would give it more regularity.

But how valid is the loose structuralist school's view of Thai society? Controversy has raged around the validity of their theory in recent years. In fact a polemic has evolved. Some anti-loose structuralists e.g. Keyes (1966^b: p79a), Amyot (1965: ppl63-164) using a 'my village is not like yours' argument, have argued that Bang Chan and the Central Thai data in general on which the loose structuralists base their arguments is not representative of Thai society as a whole. Keyes, for instance, argues that in the northeast the situation is totally different. Others have pointed to features of Thai society which, they argue, contradict the loose structuralists' position. For instance Evers (1969: pl19) argues:

Writers on Thailand addicted to the "loose structure" concept have over and over stressed the individualistic character of Thai personality and the consequent absence of corporate groups. Those groups which cannot be overlooked and play an important role in village life, such as the Buddhist monks or the wat committee, are often degraded into a footnote (Phillips 1965:22, note 6) or are seen as negligible exceptions (Piker 1968:779).

1 The author has been unable to obtain a copy of 'Changes in Social Organization' (1959) from which this quotation was derived. It has been taken from Mulder (1969:19), who it is assumed quoted Hanks correctly.

^{Although} Although the author has not been able to read it at first hand nevertheless since it is one of the clearest statements of Hanks' point of view it seemed worthwhile including it.

Schools and Buddhist associations, government officials, members of the police, the military forces, and lately insurgents form durable and functionally important groups but are completely ignored. The fact that recruitment to these groups is not governed by kinship relations or other ascriptive criteria does not make them unimportant or "loosely structured".

Evers (1969: ppl-2) in the introduction of the Yale Symposium which he wrote bears out Evers. He argues:

One might easily add a host of other data from the non-rural sector of Thai society which authors have seemed to ignore, indeed very little is "loosely structured" in certain fields of Thai political life; no individual variations of behaviour are allowed and sanctions are severe and constant. Also in other fields roles are clearly defined and deviations are immediately punished; especially in the Buddhist monkhood, in the Thai bureaucracy and in the Thai army.

Finally, some anti-loose structurists, e.g. Mulder (1968, 1969) and Keyes (1966), Punyodyana (1969) and Evers (1969), maintain, either explicitly or implicitly, that if Thai society is looked at from another point of view than that of loose structure it will be seen that behaviour is both regular and predictable.

From this brief discussion of the issues and the major views of each side it is apparent that the polemic involves two totally diverse sets of opinions. But which side is right, if either? In the following pages, although it will primarily be centred on rural society, an analysis will be made of Embree's views as to the difference between Japanese and Thai society and the loose structurists' views as to the nature of Thai society alone. Secondly, the explanations that loose structurists give as to why Thai society is loose structured will be examined. In the process of carrying out these two studies, where relevant to the argument, the views of the anti-loose structurists will be examined. Finally, an attempt will be tentatively made to indicate some of the areas in which coherency and normative regularity may be looked for in Thai society.

- 1) Embree's views as to the difference between Japanese and Thai society and the loose structuralists' views as to the nature of Thai society alone.
-

Embree (1950: p185) holds that:

In Thailand the hamlet also has its own identity and its members also have rights and duties, but (unlike in Japanese villages) they are less clearly defined and less strictly enforced.

How valid is Embree's description of Thai villages? In Japan clearly defined normative patterns serve both to demarcate and provide the social unity of Japanese villages, but to what extent in Thai villages are normative patterns clearly defined and to what extent do these normative rights and duties serve to both demarcate and provide the social unity of Thai villages?

In Japan villages tend to be ecologically demarcated, but in Thai society, from the literature, it seems that the degree to which villages are ecologically demarcated varies from region to region. According to De Young (1955: pp8-9), and the rest of the literature tends to support his contention:

Villages in Thailand commonly fall into two types: a group of houses strung along a waterway or road, or a cluster of houses set among fruit trees, coconut palms, and rice fields. Along a wide river, houses of the latter type of village are built on only one bank, but along a narrow river, a canal, or a road, houses may be located on both sides; the houses often being only one deep along the road and rice fields starting at the rear of the house compounds.

Villages of the other sort, the cluster type, are set some distance (one-quarter of a kilometer to a kilometer) from a main thoroughfare - a river, a navigable canal, a railroad line, a branch road, or a main highway.

The literature e.g. Madge (1954: Chapter 3 pp2-3)¹, Long et al (1963: p103), Moerman (1969: pp538 and 548) and Tambiah (1968: p46) tend to suggest that the compact clustered nucleated variety of village is ^{generally} to be found nowadays in the north and northeast regions; and are characteristic of these regions. Both Ban Ping and Thai Lue village in Chiengnam District in Chiengrai Province and Ku

1. Although Madge (1954: Chapter 3 p2) does also point to the existence of "straggling groups of houses" in the Province of Ubon.

Daeng, a village ten kilometers south of Chiangmai City are ^{northern} Thai examples of nucleated villages. As Moerman (1969: p537) says:

Ban Ping is physically separated from its neighbours by ceremonial gates (in disrepair), rice fields, gardens, a cremation ground, and groves for the village spirit.

Similarly, Tambiah's study (1968: p46) of Ban Phran Muan (The Village of Muan the Hunter) and its similarity to other villages in the region clearly reflects the nucleated character of northeastern Thai villages:

The settlement pattern is clustered. The nucleus is a dense settlement called ban yai (big hamlet) intersected by narrow lanes. The branch dirt road that leads up to the village, and goes beyond to Tambon Bunpue, separates this village from the ¹¹ Wat (cluster of buildings forming the Buddhist temple). Lined along this road, opened ten years previously, are houses that have overflowed from the main settlement and comprise ban noi (small hamlet). This settlement contains primarily young families who could not find space in their parents' compounds in ban uai. All villages in this region are clustered and are separated from one another by distances of 3-4 kilometers or more. The village is thus a distinct ecological entity.

'Ribbon' type villages on the other hand which are strung along rivers, tend to be characteristic of the Central Plains. Examples of such villages are Banoi and Bangkhuad¹¹, both situated near Bangkok. Kaufman (1960: p17) clearly demonstrates the ribbon like nature of Bangkhuad in his description of the village:

The village of Bangkhuad, comprising three undemarcated hamlets (10, 11, and 12) occupies an area of 3900 raj (1560 acres) exclusive of house sites, Bangkhuad is a linear village, with houses and compounds constructed along the canal. There are no obvious boundaries or markers to demarcate the various hamlets.

But in some areas of Thailand it is clear from De Young (1955: pp10-11) who is supported by the rest of the literature, households are dispersed over a wide area. As he says:

In parts of central Thailand, isolated farms or an isolated group of ~~several~~ households have become prevalent; the former have

1. To be precise, Bangkhuad is located in the commune of Khlaungkhum, in the district of Bangkok in the province of Phranakhaun, approximately 25 kilometers by road northeast from the heart of Bangkok.

become dominant in the Rangsit irrigation region outside of Bangkok, and throughout parts of the lower delta, the traditional compact, integrated village has given way since 1900 to small groups of farmhouses, each widely separated from its neighbours on its own piece of high ground. This new sort of community is the result of intensive commercialized rice-growing in the delta region; anywhere from ten to fifty of these widely separated house clusters will be grouped together conceptually for administrative purposes and each such 'village' has an elected headman.

No records are available of how many of the Central Thai peasants are involved in this new type of community, but probably less than one-tenth of all villages in Thailand fall into this category. Scattered households apparently are typical of only the portion of the delta near Bangkok. Isolated farm dwellings are also found in the rubber-growing districts of the South, where workers on rubber plantations must live close to the rubber trees to give them daily attention, but almost all of these households consist of Chinese families whose way of life is radically different from that of the Thai peasant. In the region directly south of Bangkok, where fruit growing is combined with rice farming, "villages" of the scattered, small-cluster type and isolated farm houses are grouped together to form a conceptual unit although the farm houses may be distributed over several miles.

The village of Bang Chan is probably the most famous example of a dispersed village in Central Thailand. As Goldsen and Ralis (1957: p4) say:

In this section of the central plains the inhabitants live as near as possible to the rice paddies which they till, so that instead of a compact village Bang Chan is a community spreading broadly along the banks of a canal network which from its two-mile stretch through Bang Chan, covers most of Central Thailand.

These various types of distributions of households as is indicated by De Young on the previous page, are grouped administratively into villages under an elected headman (phuyaibaan). But as Wijewardene (1967: p69) points out:

A brief review of the literature shows that there is no general correspondence of local residential and social units with administrative ones, except perhaps in parts of the northeast.

1. Although Madge (1954: Chapter 5 p3) is not clear on this point, the Province of Ubon seems such an area.

However, it can be inferred from De Young (1955: p19) that compact communities tend to have their own headman and Moerman (1969: p546) suggest that compact communities are characteristic of the region and since Ban Ping (Moerman 1967: p403) and Ku Daeng (1960: p81), both northern villages, are examples of administratively demarcated villages, the literature does tend to suggest that probably where communities are compact in the north their boundaries will coincide with the administrative boundaries.

Even so, although Wijewardene may have underestimated the degree to which residential and social units are coterminous in the north, nevertheless his point is crucial as far as the demarcation of Thai villages is concerned, for unlike in Japan Thai villages may not coincide with administrative boundaries. This is particularly true, according to De Young, of small villages in northern Thailand (1955: p 19) which, because they are considered to be too small to have their own headman, are grouped together under an elected headman. It can be inferred from De Young (1955: p19) that they have been grouped on the basis of contiguity and proximity rather than in terms of their social unity. In Central Thailand too, where ribbon villages are contiguous as in Bangkhuaed and in the delta region where households are often isolated from each other by fields, the government has arbitrarily defined the lines of village boundaries. In the delta region where households are isolated as De Young (1955: p10) points out:

Anywhere from ten to fifty of these widely separated house clusters will be grouped together conceptually for administrative purposes and each ^{such} village has an elected headman.

Phillips' (1965: p17-18) description of Bang Chan's administrative structure, which he maintains is not atypical of the region, shows clearly this lack of correlation:

The formal governmental structure of the village which, although perhaps more of an administrative nightmare than is normally found elsewhere in the Central Plain, is in its organization essentials not atypical of the region. Instead of villages being organized administratively on the basis of natural social groupings and demarcations- that is, social centers and groups with which people feel a primary identification, in Bang Chan's case the local Buddhist monastery and governmental

primary school - so that governmental and social units are isomorphic, they are gerrymandered into highly arbitrary administrative units. Thus the village of Bang Chan is comprised of seven mubaan or hamlets, at the head of which are seven headman; these hamlets are located in two different tambon, or communes (four in one commune, three in the other) headed by two commune headman, neither of whom lives in Bang Chan; the two communes are located in two different districts headed by two different district officers and their staff.

Not only are villages as social units not always isomorphic with administrative units but, as is continuously pointed out in the literature, villages as clear cut communities with clearly defined normative patterns which serve to demarcate and stress this unity, are weak or absent. For instance, Wilson (1962: p47-48) maintains:

Observers agree that the communities of rural Thailand are loosely organized in comparison with their counterparts in other Asian areas. Patterns of village allegiance or community solidarity are weak. The institutions defining a village are quite likely to be not concerned with the corporate entity of the village itself, which may be quite incidental. For example, in the central plains village of Bang Chan, the Bang Chan temple and governmental school define the village by their clientele. Thus the community, in so far as there is one, exists to support or receive the services of these institutions. Although the situation may be somewhat extreme in Bang Chan because it is a settlement of recent origin, the character of a village as a clientele is consonant with the traditional organization of the kingdom.

More recently, others such as Phillips (1969) and Piker (1969), although restricting their argument to Central Thailand, have put forward similar arguments. In fact, Piker even goes so far as to argue that in Central Thailand villages as social units are absent. Piker says (1969: p 62):

In many, perhaps most, regions of the Central Plain, villages (muban) exist mainly as government defined administrative units and nothing more. To be sure, one sometimes finds 'physical' villages - clusters of houses or compounds separated from neighbouring villages by rice fields, canals, or roads, but more often, particularly along major canals, rivers and roads, even such physical delimitation of villages is nonexistent. Other than the election of village headman (phujaiban) by universal adult suffrage, however, one is hard put to find any instance in which the village operates as a social unit clearly distinguishable from other comparable units.

Piker gives the village where he did fieldwork, Banoi, which is situated 50 miles north of Bangkok in the province of Ayatthaya as an example of such a village. (1968: p204):

Banoi is not a self contained social or political unit. Although the village elects its own headman, it is virtually impossible to identify Banoi as a cohesive entity in the organization of the villagers' social, economic, political, or religious activities.

Although Embree holds that villages in Thai society have their own identity, loose structurists who derive the majority of their data from Central Thailand, tend to generalise from this to the whole of Thailand, as is obvious from the previous quotation of Sharp (see page 55) and from Wilson's quotation on the previous page. They have taken up the absence of clear cut communities in Central Thailand as an issue in the polemic, pointing to it as an indicator of the loose structure of Thai society. But how valid is the assumption that villages as integrated inward-looking social unities with clearly defined normative patterns which serve to define and demarcate this unity, are absent? To what degree is it generalisable to all Thailand, and to what degree are Thai villages comparable to the communal corporate residential units which have a clearly defined political life that are Japanese villages, bearing in mind that loose structure is a comparative statement?

Firstly, in Japan the inhabitants conceive of their village as a unity: they identify with it and have a sense of in group solidarity vis-à-vis outsiders. But in Thai society this seems to vary from area to area. In Central Thailand, according to Piker, such a village identity is absent. However, it can be inferred from Moerman (1969: p538) that villagers in compact communities in the north do tend to have such a feeling of identity with the village.

Similarly with exogamy/endogamy: Whereas in Japan endogamy amongst the poor tends to emphasise village boundaries, in Thai society it seems the degree to which this happens varies from area to area. According to Kaufman (1960: p28) about one-half of

in Bangkok.

the marriages are locally exogamous. Whereas Kingshill (1960: p47) of northern Ku Daeng and Tambiah (1968: p47) of northeastern Ban Phran Muan state that they are predominantly endogamous.¹

Moreover, in Japan the social unity of villages was emphasised by the fact that the number of main households tended to become fixed over the generations and although the village did not exercise complete corporate control over the village land, outsiders or non-main householders would not take over a main household without the permission of other main householders. But in rural Thai society village sites, settlement patterns, boundaries and the number of households in the village are continuously changing, especially in areas where there is swidden agriculture such as in

1. The statistics they give are as follows:

Kaufman (1960: p28):

Only about twenty percent of the women in these cases bring in their husbands, whereas seventy five percent are exogamous marriages in which the man is from Bangkok, the wife coming from another village.

Tambiah (1968: p47):

There is a high degree of endogamy in the northeastern village of Ban Phran Muan. In the sample of 87 families, it was found that 56 (64%) of the family heads were natives of the village, and of these, 48 had married women of the village. The corresponding number of women (intact marriages) was 83, and of these 78 were born in the village.

Kingshill (1960: p47):

The figures on the married villagers born outside Ku Daeng give an indication of the extent of endogamy practiced in choosing marriage partners. In fifty-five cases, which represent 34.2% of all married couples, the spouse was chosen outside the village (this does not include the single case where both husband and wife were born outside Ku Daeng and presumably immigrated at a later time in their lives). Out of these exogamous marriages, forty-one (or 74.5%) involved native girls of Ku Daeng, who married men from other villages. Most of the marriage partners were chosen from neighbouring villages. In one case, a husband was born in central Thailand, but he was living near Ku Daeng at the time he married his wife and moved into her village. We may conclude, then, that marriage in Ku Daeng is predominantly endogamous.

the north. The number of households even in a physically demarcated village is continuously changing for villagers may move from one village to another. Rights and duties in the local area are determined by residence alone.

Land is not owned corporately, nor is there any corporate control over land even in the compact clustered communities in the north and northeast. As Wijewardene (1967: p71) says:

There is little or no evidence that villages exercise corporate control over all or part of their territories. Village territory may generally be divided into fields, house sites and forest (or scrub). Of these the first two are owned by individuals, the third is crown land. Corporate entities such as temples own land, but, except administratively, villages do not have such characteristics.

Land, in fact, is individually owned and registered, unlike in Japan where it is registered in the name of the ie. There are no customary restrictions on the buying and selling of land; it may be bought and sold without the consent of the village. It is up to the individual what he does with his land. This is no doubt partly fostered, especially in the Central Plains, by the bilateral system of inheritance whereby all children inherit equally regardless of sex. This system results in fragmentation and eventually land has to be sold. Thus land ownership, the criteria for village membership and rights in the village do not serve to stress the social unity of Thai villages even in the nucleated villages. Wijewardene's description of the ideological and legal basis of Thai villages clearly emphasises this point:

The way in which new villages have formed is an indication of the 'ideological' and legal basis of village communities. Except in the rare co-operative villages set up under state sponsorship, all new settlement appears to be individual. Individuals move into unoccupied land, acquire squatter's rights (jap jawng) and in due course become a village community. South village¹ developed in this way from a tiny hamlet about forty years ago. The incentive for expansion was the building of a new road by the Department of Irrigation. The process becomes complete with the recognition of its headman by the administration. A village is made up of individual land-owning households; it is not a case of the community allocating corporate resources among its members.

1. South village, in northern Thailand, is where Wijewardene did his fieldwork.

What is more, generally, anthropologists when studying rural areas expect to find traditional normative integrated political systems which serve both to demarcate and stress the social unity of the village, as in Japan where ie, dozoku, kumi and maybe ko compete for both formal and informal power within the village.

k/ In the literature on Thai society little reference is made to politicking at all in rural areas (e.g. Kingshill 1960, Kaufman 1960, Phillips 1965). Where the literature refers to 'politics' the tendency is to stress their absence (e.g. Kaufman 1960) or to stress the Thai abhorrence for situations of conflict (e.g. Blanchard 1958: p483). It seems from the literature, as Wijewardene maintains (1967: p74):

There is within the village no self-acknowledged, relatively permanent group who can exert their influence to create a clearly demarcated local community over which they may wield authority, and from which they may derive benefit in competition with similar groups in other local communities.

Although it is true to say that in most areas there are small cliques of older men who form an informal council of elders. De Young (1955: pp17-18) states:

Retired headmen, along with other old men of the village serve as a sort of informal council to the headman, and wield great influence in village life, rarely will a headman initiate an important undertaking without discussing it first with this group.

This probably holds true for the north and northeast. Certainly, it holds true for Ban Ping where Moerman (1969: p542) refers to a 'self elected group of elders (thaw muu kaeae) which in many respects, governs Ban Ping'; this 'group of men in late middle age' he states:

advise the headman especially on matters of village policy toward official demands, the mobilisation of village wide activities and important trouble which threatens to involve the police.

But there is no evidence that these informal councils of elders form a political structure in which they attempt to attract followers and compete for control of the village.

In Central Thailand however, De Young's statement does not seem to hold true for the elders do not act in this manner or exercise power. Yet given the fact that the Central Plain, unlike the rest of

Thai society, is economically differentiated and it is the area where one would tend to expect the richer farmers to compete for power and prestige and that this competition would be reflected in the composition of the informal council. But it seems to be absent. In fact, Kaufman (1960: p69) describes Bangkhuaed which he says is representative of the lower delta region as having a 'power Non-Structure'.¹ The only 'political life' reported in the Central

1. Kaufman succinctly sums up the political Non-Structure as follows and conveys the apolitical nature of Central Thailand clearly:

Since Bangkhuaed consists of three separate hamlets each with its own headman, the only unifying factor in the village is the wat. Although its abbot is the most influential member of the community, it would be a travesty to say he is the most powerful. Nor can one say that the headman, as such are the most powerful. They are chosen as much for their generosity as for their wealth and therefore do not represent a threat to any of the villagers. The extent to which they exert power lies in obtaining free help from their debtors, but this type of power is also possessed by other wealthy farmers. The abbot who can and does wield influence to his own advantage within a limited range, is checked by his inability to become thoroughly engrossed in mundane affairs. Thus there comes into being an informal series of checks and balances which militates against any one person obtaining too large a sphere of influence.

Large landowners are potentially in a position of great power. They can buy out poorer farmers, refuse to lend them money with which to buy necessary articles for cultivation and can refuse to rent needed land and equipment to them. The rich landowners do not exploit this power unduly since the prerequisites for wealth are fairly simple. More wealth means more gold chains and more gold belts, and a more elaborate funeral. Tractors, cars, and an elaborate house are neither necessary or desired. Great wealth might enable the farmer to establish himself in Bangkok, but here again, fear and illiteracy are strong impediments against a move to the complex, competitive existence of the urban area. Thus there is no major incentive for power as a means to wealth.

The village farmer is not interested in power for its own sake; it exists as a prestige factor but within limitations. One cannot hope to rise higher than the level kamnan without the proper education, but with education, the farmer tends to sever his ties with the village and move to urban areas.

In short, there is neither incentive nor outlet. The Buddhist values which emphasise non-aggressiveness, honesty, and indifference to fortune and misfortune initiate against strong drives for leadership and power.

Another factor to consider is that each household enjoys its autonomy. In contrast to the Chinese clan system where one household may wield considerable influence over other members of the clan, the Bangkhuaed farmers are neither leaders nor followers. They are too busy and too concerned with their day to day subsistence. When harvesting is over their interests turn from toil to sanug (pleasure).

Plains is by Sharp (1953: p 75). He reports that two factions, one centred on the Bang Chan village school teacher, the other on the local abbot, exist. But this seems an exception for factionalism is not reported anywhere else in the literature, as Wijewardene points out (1967: p74). In fact, nowhere in Thai society is there a clear cut traditional institutionalised political system of the kind one finds in Japan. Even the effectiveness of the headman seems to vary from area to area. The headman is popularly elected and his duties are promulgated by the government. As Sharp (1953: p42) succinctly says:

the powers and duties of the hamlet headman are rather vaguely outlined in the Local Administration Act of 1914 which is still in effect. They are to "preserve peace and promote happiness" for the people under their care. In the face of dangers, natural or civil, they are to organize appropriate action and report to higher authorities. They check strangers, report suspected criminal offenses, caution those who harbor malicious intention, and see that those under them comply with law and government policy. They promote agriculture, commerce, industry, sanitation and the prevention of disease and maintain public utilities. They keep current population data. They inform the people of government policy, act as their instructors, and "generally conduct themselves as an example for the people," the manner fixed by the government". When warrants are issued they are empowered to make arrests, searches or seizures, and they may hold and turn over to higher authorities persons suspected of criminal offenses.

However, there seems to be some controversy in the literature as to the degree to which the headman is effective. On the one hand De Young states (1955: p18):

Headmanship confers prestige and honor on the incumbent, but it carries heavy responsibilities, and demands considerable time.

On the other hand, Horrigan (1962: p60) maintains that:

The position of the headman in modern Thailand is not strong. On the one hand he is treated as the creature of the central government and dominated by the district officer; on the other hand, he is reportedly losing much of his influence to the Buddhist clergy and local school teachers. Government officials on the whole do not admire the headman and often characterize him as an "influence seeker" who "does the work of fourteen ministries" in his tag end position in the official hierarchy.

Territorial officials report that they have to "plead with good men" to take the post of headman, adding that "the headman is not envied and good men will avoid being headman if they are doing well."

Although these two views seem contradictory, in fact there is an element of truth in both of them. On the one hand it is true that in Thai society the headman has prestige and outwards respect but this does not mean that he always has power and influence. As is apparent in Bang Chan. Sharp says (1953: p41):

Regardless of the character of the incumbent, some prestige normally attaches to the position of headman as it does to most public offices in Thailand, and this may be enhanced if the headman's age requires respect. However a headman who lacks leadership traits will be almost disregarded and will have little influence either in the hamlet or in the district office.

Certainly some of the headman in Bang Chan at the time of the pilot scheme were not influential figures. As Blanchard says (1958: p404):

Observers discovered that in several cases headmanship was merely an honorary position. Three of the seven persons who held the official title were clearly recognized as village leaders, and the other four had a goodly measure of prestige but little or no real power, and one of these was clearly incompetent, managing to stay in office simply because his fellow villagers did not want to hurt his feelings by demanding an election.

Moreover the point Horrigan makes that the headman are loosing their influence to the school teacher and the abbot is relevant to the situation in Bang Chan where both the abbot and the school teacher are influential figures (Sharp 1953: p75). Similarly in Bangkok it seems reasonable to infer from Kaufman's description of the 'power Non-structure' that the position of headman is not strong. In fact, the literature on the whole tends to suggest that the position of the headman in Central Thailand is often not strong. Thus it seems De Young's statement regarding headman tends to be misleading as far as Central Thailand is concerned. Rather, Horrigan's statement that the position of the headman is not strong would generally seem a more accurate description for this area.

It would seem that De Young's description of headman is much more relevant to the north. It can be inferred from Moerman that in the north in what he calls strong compact communities, the position

of headman tends to be different. For instance in Ban Ping which he (1969^a: p546) says is probably representative of such strong compact communities, the headman has a wide variety of duties which demonstrate his effectivity:

To a far greater extent than headman described elsewhere in Thailand, their activities consist of running village meetings, mediating village disputes, organizing village work parties, collecting village resources, maintaining official records for the benefit of the villagers, and funnelling land and labor between Ban Ping and members of other communities. In addition, he acts as his communities foreign minister and symbolizes that community to outsiders, whether from other villages, the local market or the national government.

Further, Moerman states, and it seems reasonable to infer from Kingshill (1965: p80) that it is applicable to the headman in Ku Daeng too:

Within the constraints of community life, the headman is probably more powerful than any other villager. In directing labor gangs, organizing community enterprises, and conveying government orders, his control over the behaviour of others is straightforward. In mediating trouble cases, threatening government intervention, and interceding with officials, it is only slightly less direct. Force and public authority are rare in village life, but their monopoly can reward an able headman.

In fact, from a survey of the literature, Blanchard comes to the conclusion (1958: pp404-5):

In the North and Northeast, however, the headmen tend to be quite strong, their authority commensurate with their prestige, so that they are the active leaders of their community.

In such villages as these Horrigan's view that the position of the headman is not strong therefore seems inaccurate, but even in villages such as these, he had a point when he said that it is often difficult to get good men, or any one for that matter, to become headman throughout Thailand. There are no doubt a multitude of reasons why individuals do not want to become headman. Partly no doubt because the pay is poor and the duties time-consuming but also because the headman does not control the distribution of resources nor does he have any sanctioning power (as will be discussed later) which might act as an incentive to enterprising individuals. Moerman (1969: pp 545-547) makes an important point when he states that the reason

why men do not like to become headman because of conflicting pressures of the villagers and the district officer, both of whom they are expected to serve.

Headman's major source of discontent is that he must serve two masters who value and reward different and often incompatible behavior....headman are fully aware of the conflicting pressure to which they are subjected. It is their chief complaint about their job and a main reason why they are unwilling to serve. As one former headman phrased it:

It's hard to be headman. One must listen to the officials and listen to the villagers. If one says 'no', the villagers scold; if one says 'yes' the officials scold. One is neither a villager nor an official. One is in the middle, it's hard and the money is small. No one wants the job.

But although the position of headman does not seem to be a highly desired job anywhere in Thailand, nevertheless the degree to which the headman serves to define and stress the social unity of the village tends to vary from area to area. In the centre where the headman does not have effective control over the village it is apparent that his position does not serve to define and stress the social unity of the village. But in compact communities such as Ban Ping which tend to be found in the North and Northeast, the position of the headman does tend to serve this purpose. In Ban Ping as Moerman (1969: p542) says 'The headman symbolizes, represents and protects his village.' as can be seen in the fact that 'He ritually seals off Ban Ping for the annual ceremony of which he is in charge, which propitiates the village spirit.'

Speaking of collective rituals, in Japan the buraku acts collectively as a social unit on many occasions. These collective acts, such as collective rituals and the collective performance of public works, in which all villagers or representatives of all households are expected to take part, serve both to foster Japanese Buraku's extreme sense of solidarity and to stress its social unity. But in Thai society there is some controversy as to the degree to which Thai villages act as social units and undertake collective actions.

Wilson (1962: p48) states that in Thai society:

The nature of the co-operative effort of villagers is another aspect of the loose and individualistic character of rural social organization. Such work, which is not uncommon particularly at harvest time, is structured on the basis of personal reciprocity of the individual members of fairly stable groups. It is not conceived as duty to village, community, or any other corporate

body.

Piker, referring only to Central Thai villages, maintains (see p 62) ^{prais} that Central Thai villages do not act as a social unit except for the election of headman. How valid is the loose structuralist point as exemplified by Wilson and Piker?

The village shinto shrine and the collective rituals connected with it, serve to demarcate and emphasise the social unity of Japanese villages. But the degree to which collective rituals are present in Thai society seems to vary from area to area. In Central Thailand neither Sharp (1953) nor Kaufman (1960) refer to ritual centres or collective rituals. This tends to suggest that such collective rituals and village shrines are either absent or unimportant in this region. However, both community shrines and collective rituals have been reported for the North and Northeast.

Keyes (1964: pp9-10)¹ reports a village cult for the Northeast. Both Tambiah (1968: p75) and Madge (1954: p 4^{ch.7}) give examples of such collective rituals. Tambiah describes how in Ban Phran Muan at the Kathin ceremony held once a year, when monks and novices are presented with robes and gifts, every household contributed cash as well as gave presents in kind. Whilst Madge refers to village shrines and collective rituals at the villages of Pa-ao, Nong Lai and Na Kwai and other villages in the Northeast. He refers to a firework display at Pa-ao which he says:

was intended to honour the village spirits, or Pu-ta, who have their simple wooden shrine in a grove nearby. The person who has special functions in regard to this shrine is known in this village as the Jam. This position, though not strictly hereditary, seems to run in the family; it is not elective as at Nong Lai, where this officiant is called the Chaoban, or householder of the shrine. Both at Nong Lai and Pa-ao, the area around the shrine is sacred; at Nong Lai it is a wood of 20 rai. In each place, and also at Na Kwai and other villages, though not universally, the whole village joins at a picnic near the shrine to bring luck and to honour the spirits. The dates vary from year to year and from village to village. At Pa-ao there

1. The author has been unable to obtain Keyes original article but this statement is based on Wijewardene's reading of Keyes (1967: p73).

are two annual celebrations, one in January, one in May, usually on a Wednesday morning. The Jam goes to every house to collect money to provide food and drink for the occasion.

Similarly, in the North Kingshill (1960: p180) refers to two spirit houses which he says are:

communal houses which are used only once every year for a special spirit ceremony.....At one of them a ceremony is conducted in June, and the other at the time of the northern New Year's festival.

Unfortunately, he doesn't say whether all members of Ku Daeng are normatively expected to attend. In Ban Ping however, Moerman (1966: p138) is more explicit:

Unlike the Siamese, Lue personal and household spirits are of minor importance, for the village spirit claims far more attention. Once a year, each member of the community contributes to a ceremony for the village spirit at which Ban Ping is closed off to outsiders.

In northern Thailand other collective actions associated with the religious sphere have been noted. As De Young (1955: p115) states unlike in Central Thailand where monks go out from their monasteries (wat) everyday to beg their food from individuals who live in the vicinity:

In northern Thailand some villages have dispensed with the morning begging of the monks. Instead, the village has been divided into sections of from 16 to 20 households, each with a designated chief. Each section provides food for the monks on a fixed day. A bamboo bell is passed from section to section, and the chief's responsibility is to ring the bell at dusk of the day before it is his section's turn to provide food for the temple, to warn his householders to prepare extra food.... The system is sponsored by the elders of the village, the old men and women who regularly attend all Buddhist ceremonies at the wat. This group selects a captain for each section, one, if possible, who has served as a novice or priest in his earlier days.

De Young's contention is corroborated by Moerman (1966: p142) and he himself gives examples of villages organised in this way. In a survey of villages in and around the community of Sang Pong he comes to the conclusion that:

The custom of dividing a village into sections responsible for providing food for the wat obtained in half of the villages of Sang Pong and in about half of some fifty villages in neighbouring

communes. This custom has been in effect in this area during the lifetime of the present generation but it has not been observed elsewhere in rural Thailand, and may be strictly a northern innovation. (pp114-115)

Moerman (1966: p150) also reports that:

In Central Thailand a candidate's family usually pays for both the ceremony and the still more expensive hospitality which accompanies it. In Ban Ping these costs are met in ways which maintain and illustrate village homogeneity. The chairman of the temple committee summons a meeting of all males and announces the amount the committee has decided each villager must contribute. In 1960 every villager of courting age and above was told to contribute four baht, about the village price of a small chicken or of 10 liters of unmilled rice.

As far as secular village collective activities are concerned Wijewardene (1967: p72), from a study of the literature, maintains that:

Villagers have obligations for the upkeep of temples, schools, roads, and irrigation works - where they do not fall within the responsibility of some central or local authority. The village headman is responsible for this work, and he has the authority to call on any labour he thinks is required. The literature is silent on the sanctions at his disposal - but it appears that the district courts enforce his authority. Thus it seems that the obligation is to (and the authority derives from) the state, and not the village community.

In Central Thailand, as Phillips (1969: p33) points out, the majority of public works are pre-empted by the government, nor are there any other regular communal activities reported. In fact, as Piker (1969: p 62) says:

(In Central Thailand) village-wide co-operation in development or other projects are all ^{but} unknown.

For example, Phillips (1969: p32)¹ states that in Bang Chan:

inhabitants did not have to contribute their labour to the ir community, serve as village guards, or contend with the dictates of village elders. Certain things that had to be done in the community were either done by the government - the apprehension of criminals, the maintenance of proper irrigation levels in the canals, the giving of inoculations - or were worked out on a dyadic contract or ad hoc basis by individuals and individual families - the harvesting of rice, the cleaning of the canals near one's home and fields, the arbitration of inheritance disagreements, some of which as a last resort might be taken to government.

1. Phillips (1965: p17) also points out that:
characteristic of other communities of the Central Region (cf Kaufman 1960) is the absence among village residents of any strong sense of identification with the needs of their community as a whole.

It is on this type of village which lacks communal organisation that Wilson based his view as to the communal organisation of Thai society. But De Young (1955: p79) argues that:

Many accounts of Thailand err in supposing that the exchange labor group for planting and harvesting is the only sort of communal labor in Thai villages. This notion, however, is quite erroneous and probably comes from too great a reliance on descriptions of the Bangkok region, where the adaptation of farming to an intensified rice agriculture has developed an economic pattern that is quite unlike that of most Thai villages. Actually there are several other communal work projects, some of a civic nature, some more specifically agricultural; these affect the village as a whole and many are less tightly organized so that the groups that perform them may not strictly be called reciprocal work groups even though a similar principal underlies them. Cart tracks and village streets are repaired communally under the direction of the headman; necessary work on the grounds and buildings of the wat is also done communally. For these tasks each household supplies as many able-bodied men as it can.

Although it is difficult to determine from the literature whether villages act as social units in secular affairs, and individuals are normatively expected to donate their labour and support village communal activities, because of the ambiguous conceptualisation of the specialists,¹ the literature does tend to bear out De Young's contention. There have been reports from both the Northeast and the North of activities such as the upkeep of wells, temples and ponds being organised on a communal basis. For instance, Mudge (1954: Chapter 4 p6) states in reference to the Northeastern province of Ubon:

All the villagers are used to following the lead of their elected village headman and he can get voluntary labour for work which needs doing in the common interest.

Whilst Moerman (1969: p136) points out that in Ban Ping until very recently, the village was the unit for the exchange of transplanting labour:

1. Specialists when describing village-wide activities often do not state clearly whether it is a normative rule that all households or adults are expected to contribute their labour to a communal activity or whether the event they are describing is an ad hoc arrangement between a large number of villagers. Kingshill (1965: p10) is an example of such ambiguity.

Men in their fifties could still remember the time when the village was the unit for the exchange of transplanting labour. Huge work parties that ensured prompt transplanting were composed of everyone in Ban Ping and everyone in the next village. Each household head would inform the village headman of the days on which he wanted to uproot and plant. The Headman would then send a messenger to announce the dates on the main streets of Ban Ping and the neighbouring village. Ideally, every household in both villages sent representatives to all the transplantings With growing population, with an increasing number of farmers, and with smaller households, the old system disappeared to be replaced by a more calculated exchange of labor among separate households usually within the same village.

Moerman (1969: p53) also refers to other activities that are carried out on a village wide basis in Ban Ping. For example, he states that during the period he stayed in Ban Ping:

On more than twenty occasions the Ban Ping headman organised road work by the entire village or its subdivisions.

According to him, village meetings are used to organise these public works, the actual activities being organised and directed by the headman. Moreover, he (1966: p142) points out that the Mot (the sections the village is divided into for feeding the monks) is used as the basis for communal organisation:

Although their origin and main task are to provide offerings to the temple, the mot are often used as the administrative unit for communal labour, school contributions and other secular affairs.

In the North the organisation of irrigation systems tends to be on a village-wide basis too. As Wijewardene (1967: p72) states of the North, irrigation systems are 'much more extensive and water the fields of a number of villages' but as Moerman (1968: p43) says 'irrigation is organised and maintained locally without the aid of the national government'. It seems a wide-spread custom (see De Young 1955: p 80) Moerman 1969: p43, Kingshill 1960: p81) for each village to elect an irrigation chief who is in charge of organising the village contributions of labour to the upkeep of the irrigation system.

For instance, Moerman (1968: p43) maintains that in the Chienkham area:

Prior to 1903 each village had a "dam chief"; one of whom was elected "Great Dam Chief" of Chienkham. These chiefs

decided how much each farmer was to bring to the dam, directed the work of irrigation, and celebrated its completion with a sacrifice (a pig) to propitiate the "spirit of the dam".... As irrigation was organized in 1900, so it was organized in 1960.

Wijewardene (1967: p72), however, argues that it is the farmers who use the irrigation system who have to contribute their labour:

It seems unlikely that villages as communities are responsible, (for the upkeep of the irrigation systems) though of course the farmers in a particular village or group of villages would be organised under a 'section' head.

But this is an example of intellectual hairsplitting that results in a misleading representation of the relationship between village communities and the irrigation system. To say that it is the individual alone, not the community that is responsible for contributing the necessary labour for the maintenance of the irrigation system is to understress the significance of community responsibility in certain types of villages. It is clear from Moerman's description of the protection that the Dam Chiefs in Ban Ping gave to individuals who shirked their communal irrigation duties that members of Ban Ping saw such shirking as reflecting badly not only on the individual but on the community as a whole. As Moerman (1969: p52) says, in 1958 the:

irrigation chiefs decided to stagger workdays with the result that Ban Ping villagers report to the dam, not with the entire district, but with the three adjoining Lue villages. In 1960, despite the presence of even such closely related villages, six Ban Ping households were not "too embarrassed before the others" to shirk their duties. The village chief - instead of threatening to tie them to stakes out in the sun for a full day, as chiefs are said to have threatened to do in the past - connived in their shirking. He later boasted to the village elders that he had protected Ban Ping's interests from the neighbors, "kinsmen", and fellow lue - all of whom, because of increased population and commercialization, are now often treated as strangers.

From this quotation it seems reasonable to infer that in Ban Ping villagers do see the obligation to give their labour for the maintenance of the irrigation system as a communal responsibility, otherwise why would the headman see protecting the shirkers as being in Ban Ping's interest? In fact, if Moerman (1968: pp50-53) is read between the lines this contention is confirmed. Although

Moerman's is the only specific example of labour contributions to the maintenance of the irrigation system being seen as a communal responsibility, nevertheless quite often the village which tends to elect a dam chief tends to coincide with natural social communities, e.g. Bang Ping (Moerman 1969: p43) and Ku Daeng (1960: p81) which, it is becoming apparent in this chapter, are present in certain areas. Where this happens it seems reasonable to suggest on the basis of the available evidence that in these circumstances such villages will probably see the contribution of labour for the maintenance of the irrigation system as being a communal responsibility.

Thus this discussion of community wide activities reveals that Wijewardene's argument stated previously (see p74), which maintains that the obligation to fulfil communal obligations are derived from the state alone, not from the village community, is a piece of intellectual hairsplitting that is often misleading. For it leads to understressing the fact that obligations to donate labour and support for communal activities may derive not only from the state but also may derive from and be legitimised by the village community too, as the organisation of the irrigation system in Ban Ping clearly demonstrates.

Moreover, some communal activities such as the village wide harvesting groups in Ban Ping in the past and the village wide organisation for feeding the monks found in some Northern villages, are patently traditional obligations derived from the community alone and have nothing to do with the nation-state. In such situations as this to see the headman's authority as being derived from the state alone is misleading. For in such situations it is patent that the position of headman is also being used to articulate traditional legitimised communal activities. Thus in such villages as these where there are clearly defined communal duties which are legitimised and internalised by the community itself, they will tend to be a primary means of both demarcating and stressing the social unity of the village.

From this discussion of the types of normative patterns that serve to define and stress the social unity of the village, it has

become increasingly apparent that they vary in the degree to which they are present and the degree to which they are defined.

In Central Thailand this analysis has shown that there are no normative patterns which serve to demarcate the village's social unity. In fact, specialists have had great difficulty in attempting to conceptualise Central Thai 'villages'. Some¹ have attempted to overcome this lack of normative patterns which serve to define village social units by conceptualising the wat and/or the local school as the centre of the village and defining the village in terms of their clientele. But this is a misleading conceptualisation for several reasons. Firstly, as Wijewardene (1967: p71) states:

The definition of a village, by most writers, as a community using a particular wat and/or school may tend to create the wrong impression. Temples are either state or 'church' owned (Kaufman 1960:97); in no jural sense are they owned corporately by a village or any other local community. Many village schools are built through local subscription, the government then supplying the minimum of equipment and teachers. The land used is probably in most cases either crown land (de Young 1955:166-7) or temple land. Legally the school apparently becomes the property of the Ministry of Education.

Moreover the clientele of the wat and school may be drawn from several surrounding villages, as Piker (1969: p62) points out. In fact, even within the immediate vicinity, not all individuals will necessarily attend the wat. Similarly, as Wijewardene says for the wat and it holds good for the school too, it does not operate as a cohesive unit in other spheres (1967: p73):

Local communities will see that their wat is maintained through labour, alms (including the daily feeding of monks), and attendance, but there is no evidence in the literature that this community operates in any other field. It would be wrong to think even of village communities each independently supporting and administering its own temple.

The wat does not ritually symbolise the solidarity of the village social group nor does common participation in ritual lead to solidarity

1 Sharp et al (1953), Wilson (1962), Janlekha (1955), Phillips(1965).

and cohesive action. This tends to suggest that neither can the wat be considered the 'centre' of the village nor can their clientele be considered as forming a clear cut integrated multi-stranded social community. In fact it is tentatively suggested that in the Central Plain where normative patterns which serve to demarcate and stress the social unity of villages are absent, it is not useful to attempt to conceptualise social relations in these areas into social villages at all.

In the North and Northeast however, although there is less substantive evidence available as far as the latter area is concerned, the literature tends to suggest that the case is different for these areas. It tends to suggest that ecologically nucleated villages in these areas do have social identity and do have clearly defined normative patterns which serve both to demarcate and stress their social unity. This is borne out for the Northeast by Wijewardene (1967: p73) who states that in the Northeast there appear to be 'more solidary village communities' and for the North by Moerman (1969: p548) who maintains that strong communities 'are common in the north'. For instance, he sums up Ban Ping as being (1969: p538):

In its presumptive perpetuity, distinct identity, unambiguous membership, clear boundaries, and exclusive common affairs - together with procedures, organization, and autonomy sufficient for the regulation of these affairs - Ban Ping is, within the Thai context, a corporate community. Ban Ping's physical isolation, ethnic insularity, ideological self-sufficiency, economic independence, homogeneity, and centripetal kinship underlie its corporateness.

'The fact of Ban Ping's communality he suggests (1967: p419) 'challenges accepted notions of rural Thai society.'

The presence of such compacy communities in the North and Northeast tends to suggest that Wilson was inaccurate and overgeneralised when he stated that 'Patterns of village allegiance or community solidarity are weak. The institutions defining a village are quite likely to be not concerned with the corporate entity of the village itself, which may be quite incidental.' Moreover, it tends to suggest that Embree understressed the significance of clearly defined rights and duties in northern and northeastern villages. Although it is true

that in comparison with Japanese villages even these villages' normative patterns and social unity are not so clearly defined.

Yet although the degree to which normative patterns are present which serve both to define and stress the social unity of the village vary from area to area, significantly even in those areas where village normative patterns are ~~clearly areas where village normative patterns are~~ clearly defined individuals do not necessarily conform to these normative patterns. Moerman's description of individuals in Ban Ping shirking their obligation to give their labour to maintain the irrigation system being a clear example of such non-conformity. Thai peasants do not have to conform primarily for two reasons. Firstly because institutions are not present which could be used to enforce conformity and secondly because the attitudes of the Thai mitigate against the use of force.

A clear cut sanction is certainly present in the form of a modern legal code, based on western principles dating from the 1890's ^{which} has been introduced into Thailand and which has a police force to implement it and enforce conformity. But from the literature (e.g. Moerman 1967: p416, Blanchard 1958: p194)²⁰⁶ it seems that for various reasons the law is ineffectively and intermittently enforced. Most disputes are still settled within the administrative village or the natural social communities where they exist, by the headman. Although Moerman (1966: p163) reports that in Ban Ping elders form an advisory council and help adjudicate cases of trouble which involve the whole village or the aged. But the headman has no normative sanctioning power or control over resources that he could use to enforce his decisions and maintain his conformity. Although it is true that the headman has the power of the law behind him as a sanctioning force. But in fact it is rare that he invokes it and few cases are reported in the literature. It is true that Kingshill (1960: p86) quotes several cases of the headman invoking the law against individuals in Ku Daeng, but it must be remembered that this individual was the kamnan, the chief headman who was in charge

of a number of villages in the area, and was a much more important and powerful person than the ordinary hamlet headman. But looking at the Central Thai data neither Kaufman (1960) nor Sharp (1953) refers to the headman personally using the law as a sanctioning force. In fact, Moerman points out that in Ban Ping the villagers expected the headman to protect them from the government and put pressure on him to do so. In fact, as Blanchard states (1958: p194) that the police are 'the object of general mistrust and fear' and peasants prefer to settle disputes amongst themselves. According to Moerman (1969: p545) even if the villagers in Ban Ping did not feel that the headman was doing his job properly they would not ask the district officer in charge of their district to sack him. As Moerman says (1969: p545):

To punish such failings villagers criticize and gossip, fail to attend meetings, and refuse to provide the labor and donations which the headman demands for the government. Their ultimate sanction is to complain to the officials and to have him removed from office, but this would embarrass them and expose Ban Ping to the very official interference which it is the headman's main function to avoid.

Certainly villagers attempt to put pressure on individuals who they want to act in a particular way. Kingshill (1960: p109), for instance, points to the use of public opinion in Ku Daeng to attain conformity in his discussion of the normative formalities a priest has to undergo on resigning from the wat. He says that after a priest has handed in his resignation:

For the next three days he must come back to the temple every morning to work for the priests. Public opinion in the village forces him to do this. The only alternative he has for leaving the temple is to run away. But this isn't done, for he would thereby not only lose the chance of getting an honorable discharge certificate, but he would lose the respect of the community.

It is probably true that a priest would lose the respect of the community. But what is significant is that the villagers could not force the priest to conform to the normative leaving pattern. For not only do the villagers have no normative sanctions at their disposal but they also do not have any effective informal sanctions,

either political, religious or economic, which they could use to enforce conformity. For example, the threat of expulsion from the village is an impotent sanction in Thai society since village membership rights are determined by residence alone, land is individually owned, individuals can easily move to another area if they don't like their treatment where they are living and moreover, even for the poorest in Thai society, subsistence is, as yet, no problem. Ultimately the choice of decision lies with the individual.

But as Moerman (1966: p 155) says in Ban Ping:

When the priest announces that he wants to return to secular life, the village elders try to convince him to change his mind. They remind him that it is "correct", and good for Ban Ping's reputation, ^{and} is pleasing to the old men for there to be more than one priest. The temple committee may threaten to resign if the priest leaves the order. Respected elders "beg him to stick it out for just one more Phansaa". But the decision is his and, although he may have to call meeting after meeting, the elders always give their consent.

As Moerman (1966: p 155) says of Ban Ping, and it can be inferred from the literature that this is applicable to Central Thailand also:

the child who won't take her medicine or the bride who won't sleep with her husband, like the priest who won't serve any longer (in the Sangha), can rarely be made to do what he is unwilling to do.

An important factor which must be considered when discussing the lack of coercion to conform to the norms in Thai society are Thai attitudes. Even where sanctions do exist, such as the authority of the headman to invoke the law, given Thai attitudes regarding face-to-face relationships, it would be difficult to enforce them. The emphasis on the desirability of krengcaj (feeling and attitude of self effacement and humbleness, involving the desire not to intrude upon or embarrass others, or cause others to extend or trouble themselves); choei (feeling strongly about a situation but expressing nothing, assuming an attitude of indifference and non-involvement) which Embree himself points to, and the exceptionally low tolerance of the Thais for interpersonal conflict and their tendency to walk away from potential conflict mitigate against Thais attempting to

enforce decisions and carry out sanctions.

As Sharp (1953: p34) says of Bang Chan villagers, and ~~since~~ no specialists have attempted to contradict this point, rather the literature tends to imply that it is valid as a generalisation for the whole of Thailand, there are:

widespread attitudes of benevolence and respect for others persons regardless of their situation. There are no formal behaviour patterns for the expression of malevolence, for harming your neighbor, no witches or black magic, no secret societies to harass the too powerful or deviant person, no charitable organizations to remind the poor of their dependence.... the poor, the nonconformist, even those who wander from the Buddhist path, are not embarrassed by public ridicule as long as they do no serious harm to others. The system entails values more positively tolerant than the simple attitude of live-and-let-live. The ideal is that face-to-face relationships whether between two individuals or one and a group, no person should be placed in a position of embarrassment or ashamed. This is ~~the~~ basis for the often noted Thai politeness. Undue pushing or pressure is to be avoided in order that all relationships, at least on the surface, may be pleasant and unforced. Violence is abhorred; quarrels and physical attacks are rare, even among those who drink;.... Unless they are an obvious nuisance or public danger, no one including children and women should be pushed or forced by word or deed that might jeopardize their self-respect.

Such a view of Thai society as this quotation conveys is totally different in comparison with Japan.

So far we have examined village patterns and have shown that the degree to which they can be said to be present varies from area to area and that where they are present, unlike in Japan, individuals do not have to conform to them if they don't want to. But another crucial issue is that of groups and institutions. Anthropologists, when they are studying societies no doubt due to the influence of unilineal societies from which, until recently, most anthropological theory has been derived, tend to attempt to look for groups in Thai society and to conceptualise Thai data into terms of groups and social institutions and to analyse Thai society from this point of view. The absence or presence of groups¹ in Thai society has become a subject of controversy in the loose structure polemic as Phillips (1969: p 31) himself admits. As he himself says since the article

1 'group' here being used following Freeman(1961: p212)'s well known usage, as a collection of individuals who all interact socially together.

was first published:

both advocates and critics of the concept, preoccupied with their own descriptive and theoretical problems, have awarded the concept additional meanings....The first has to do with the number and significance of social organisations that exist ~~within any village, organisations that exist~~ either because they are necessary to get things done in the community or because they provide villagers with a sense of group membership and affiliation.

Primarily loose structurists, but others too e.g. Sharp(1953); Piker(1968 a b; 1969); Wilson(1959, 1962); Phillips(1965) have stressed the absence of groups and institutions in Thai society. Embree himself (1987) states the Thais 'do not like to work in organisations'. Whilst Hamburger (1967: p62) states:

~~The one and only constituent is the individual. The areas of contact between individuals are few and far between, and the contacts themselves are tenuous. The Thai form of course~~ The oriental society of the indigenous Thai is a fragmented society. ~~groups; indeed they are a most highly sociable people. But the typical persons interrelated bilaterally or plurilaterally and cooperating casually. It fails to consolidate into a collective stable whole. It does not integrate to assume corporate qualities such as identity; a life and function distinct from those of its members; a name, rights and duties, assets and liabilities of its own; a structural framework; and majority rule. Missing from Thai society are Montesquieu's pouvoirs intermediaires, Gierke's autonomous, self governing associations, in fact all the more or less tightly structured local and functional groupings, products of an age-old, and seedbeds of high social discipline that make up and function in the West as the girders and crossbeams of the body politic. Thai society is at the opposite extreme of a pluralistic one. State and society are disjointed. The state has a monopoly of organised social action. The subjects of the Siamese king face one another, as well as their government over the desert of an institutional vacuum.~~ groups; indeed they are a most highly sociable people. But the typical persons interrelated bilaterally or plurilaterally and cooperating casually. It fails to consolidate into a collective stable whole. It does not integrate to assume corporate qualities such as identity; a life and function distinct from those of its members; a name, rights and duties, assets and liabilities of its own; a structural framework; and majority rule. Missing from Thai society are Montesquieu's pouvoirs intermediaires, Gierke's autonomous, self governing associations, in fact all the more or less tightly structured local and functional groupings, products of an age-old, and seedbeds of high social discipline that make up and function in the West as the girders and crossbeams of the body politic. Thai society is at the opposite extreme of a pluralistic one. State and society are disjointed. The state has a monopoly of organised social action. The subjects of the Siamese king face one another, as well as their government over the desert of an institutional vacuum.

Another blanket statement is made by Bramley (1969: p308), although it is put more clearly and simply:

Another distinctive feature of the Thai social system is that permanent groups appear to be virtually absent.

Whilst Phillips (1969: p 31) says of Bang Chan that it was discovered:

that there were only five social units functioning in the community: 1) the nuclear family; 2) a loosely defined, laterally orientated kindred; 3) the nation-state; 4) the village monastery; and 5) the local school. Associated with three of these units were four functionally specific and limited groups; a) a group of seven village headmen; b) the clergy, several of whose members came from outside the community; c) a lay committee associated with the temple; and d) the village school teachers, some of whom lived outside the village. Otherwise to cite the familiar Bang Chan litany, there are no castes, age grade societies, occupational groups (other than the family), neighborhood groups, voluntary associations or groups expressive of village solidarity such as councils or governing boards.

But how valid are these statements? To what extent are groups absent from Thai society and to what extent is Phillips' discussion of description of Thai society accurate¹ and to what extent is it generalisable for the whole of Thailand?

In the literature, Phillips' description of Bang Chan seems to be borne out by other members of the Cornell team who studied the village e.g. Sharp et al (1953) and Hauck et al (1958). Moreover, as far as Thai society as a whole is concerned, significantly there is little in the literature which disagrees with what has become known as the famous Bang Chan 'litany'. From the literature there do not seem to be any castes or age grades in Thai society. The only occupational group that seems to be present are co-operatives. This would seem to contradict Embree's view that 'we do not find the financial credit associations (ko) which extend over twenty years or so in a Japanese farm community.' (p185). But it must be remembered that the co-operatives are recent modern innovations, mostly since the last war, and the only available evidence on the subject (Madge 1954: p13) tends to bear out Embree's view that the Thais 'do not like to work in organisations' (p187) for in the area he studied not many peasants joined the new co-operatives and the setting up of these co-operatives did not prove to be a very successful venture in the area.² Moreover, unlike in Japan where there are institutionalised harvesting groups, in Thai society, with the exception of Moerman's statement that in Ban Ping in the past the labour groups for the transplanting of rice were organised on a village wide basis, such groups seem to be absent. Even the family is not an occupational group; labour for agricultural purposes being contributed on an individual dyadic basis (as will be discussed in more detail later). In fact the exchange of labour for agricultural purposes where it occurs, is, in general, on an individual ad hoc basis. Embree's contention that 'Exchange systems are less clear

1. The nation state will not be dealt with in the following analysis for it is patently not a 'group' or institution in the sense that is being used in this chapter.
2. Madge states that the reason more co-operatives were not set up was due not to lack of interest on the part of farmers but to lack of finance. However, this does not seem a valid explanation for at the time he studied the area some of the credit co-operatives had been going for nearly 15 years and if Thai peasants had been really pre-disposed to co-operate and had desired to form co-operatives then one would have thought that they would have organised the necessary finance during this period.

cut' does not seem to hold true for agricultural activities for reports from various parts of Thailand have asserted that the rules governing the exchange of agricultural labour are very clear cut e.g. Moerman¹ 1968: p117, Kaufman 1960: p65, Soontornpasuch 1963: p46,

1. Moerman (1968: p117) when discussing the rules for the return of farm labour states:

There are three forms: lo, termkan aw haeng. The first lo, is co-operative farming. It occurs when two or more households agree to work together until all have completed the tasks stipulated in their agreement. If households agree to lo, they keep no account of the number of days spent at each task and plot. Termkan and aw haeng, the other two forms of what I call exchange, are often merged in casual speech. "But in termkan," says an articulate former headman, "there is no compulsion to return the same service that one has been given not need the return be immediate....Aw haeng, on the other hand, is like a formal contract in which (for example) one must return a day of male reaping labour for a day of male reaping labour." If A comes to term (literally, "to add to") B, then B is expected to go to term A on some job fairly soon. This is called termkan, "adding to one another". Alternatively, B may return a "gift" (pan) instead of labor. For such an exchange the reciprocal "kan" is not used. One is told, instead, that "A did such-and-such to term B, so B pn'd such an amount to A." Labor contributions that villagers call term can thus be reciprocated by any of the rewards.

Pan is a form of goods, the third reward for labor. Goods may be either rice or cash. Whichever one is given, villagers distinguish between a "gift" (pan) and a "wage" (kha-cang). A distinctive feature of a wage is that it is agreed upon through haggling before it is paid, while the amount of the gift is determined solely by the generosity of its donor. The recipient of a gift must therefore claim not to know how much he will receive.

In the Central Plains the rules governing the exchange of labour seem even more clear cut than in Ban Ping. According to Kaufman (1960: p65) the exchange of labour in Bangkhua takes two forms (1) "awraeng" and (2) "khaurang":

Awraeng is used for harvesting, transplanting and pool digging...A promises to work 10 raj for B, if B will work 10 raj for A when his fields are ready. If B can only work eight raj, he will send over another person, C, who owes B two raj, to make up B's debt to A. If A is hiring on a cash basis, then B send C and C must give B the wages for the two raj, B, in this case must return the money to A. If a farmer shirks his end of the bargain, word gets about and next year he will have difficulty getting people to awraeng with him. In such a case, he will have to promise to work four raj for three, or if on a wage basis, for less wages than the others.

Khaurang is used by all families for housebuilding, and occasionally for pool digging and pond digging. It is exclusively used by the well-to-do for transplanting and harvesting. Here they ask an indebted relative to round up all other debtors and persons for whom the wealthy farmer has rendered small services during the year. He thus gets his fields done practically free. However, he may, if so inclined allow this work to be deducted from the debt.

As far as the units and limited groups are concerned which Phillips states are present in Bang Chan, it is apparent that they are either simple in structure or categories. Where these groups are present in other areas the literature tends to suggest that this holds for these areas too. Although the village school is a physical unit, to see it as a social unity except in a very limited sense is misleading as it is a single interest group; for as has been pointed out previously, individuals who use the school do not necessarily interact in any other social sphere. Similarly it would be misleading to conceive of the school teachers as forming a social group, for there is no evidence available that they interact socially in any other sphere.

The wat, too, has a simple structure, Wats found in rural areas are only minimally corporate. Infact even to apply the term corporate to the wat is to mislead. Although a small piece of land may be owned by the wat, the monks normatively have nothing to do with its control because Buddhist Doctrine forbids them to take part in economic matters. The land is looked after and rented out by the lay treasurer of the wat committee; a committee which acts as advisers to the monks. The wat is not a corporate landowning unit like the dozuku or the feudal monasteries of Medieval Europe, for the monks normatively take no part in the control of the land. They have neither shares in it, or rights over it.

It is true that the structure of the wat remains the same over time. But it is not the sort of structure one would associate with say, the Japanese household or dozuku. It doesn't have a well developed and defined internal structure. Infact as far as the wat is concerned, what strikes one from reading the literature is the absence of structure. An abbot is in charge of the wat, but nowhere in the literature is there any reference to him being a strict authoritarian figure. Infact Bramley(1969) in her study of monasteries in Ayutthaya suggests that abbots tend to be 'dreamy-types'. Monks have clearly defined rights and duties it is true, in terms of how they ought to behave towards other monks. They live together, eat together, and pray together, but in actual practise their social relations are with the laity, especially their most socially meaningful ones. Really the wat is a place to eat and sleep and store ones belongings; it is not a corporate group in the Fortes(1953) Radcliffe Brown(1950) and Maine(1905) sense of the word.

This analysis is born out by Bramley's (1969) study of the monastic order in Ayutthaya. She too comes to the conclusion that monasteries in Ayutthaya lack a complex internal structure and she (p156-7) argues that:

the absence of a more complex system of internal organisation within the monastery can to some extent be explained by the fact that there is a great deal of movement not only into and out of the Sangha but also between monasteries on the part of the more permanent monks. I do not want to give the false impression that all Bhikkhus are in perpetual motion, as many of them stay in the same monastery for the duration of their career in the order, nevertheless, it is true to say, that movement is easy and frequent, and that although a monk must at all times be registered with a wat, no importance is attached to having permanent residence in any one monastery. The relative simplicity of the internal authority structure can in the third place be attributed partly to the fact that the majority of monastic communities are both small in size and outward looking, the average Ayutthaya monastery housed between eight and ten permanent monks most of whom were more concerned with interaction between themselves and members of the lay community than with relationships within the wat. Indeed in most monastic communities there is relatively little formal and purposive interaction between fellow residents.

If this is the situation in Ayutthaya, a centre of Buddhist learning, where it would therefore seem reasonable to assume the most highly organized and formalised monasteries would be found, then it seems even more reasonable to assume that the situation will be even more so in ~~the~~ the even smaller wats in rural areas. Thus the operative normative organisation of the wat does not contradict the loose structuralists stress on the lack of defined normative rules in Thai society.

Moreover, as far as the Wat committee is concerned Piker (1969: p63)

says:

the temple committee- a handful of laymen who assist the abbot in managing the temple's affairs. Even these groups, however, are often not formally constituted; membership in them at anytime may be uncertain; and the actual substance of committee activity may revolve more around dyadic ties between the abbot and individual members than around anything else.

Although Piker only refers to the Central Plain, a reading between the lines of Moerman's (1966) and Tambiah's (1968) tends to support this contention for the whole of Thai society.

Similarly while councils of elders may be present, from what has been stated previously, they are essentially informal cliques dyadically orientated around the headman.

As far as the nuclear family is concerned, a number of specialists support Phillip's contention for Bang Chan (e.g. Sharp et al 1953), maintaining that it is found ~~there~~, and others such as Wijewardene (1967: p65) argue that the nuclear family is a social unit found in Thai society as a whole. Wijewardene (1967: p65) for instance, states:

The norm for the Thai peasant household in all parts of the country is that the elementary family is the residential unit. The unit formed by a husband and wife and their children is not only the expected composition of the household, it is in fact the type which is most frequently found. This is confirmed by all village studies so far available, and indirectly by census and survey material.

Phillips (1965: p27) even goes so far as to maintain that in Bang Chan the nuclear family is the primary social unit. But how valid is it to see the nuclear family as a social unit and a primary institution? What kind of institution and group is it? Does it have a clearly defined set of normative patterns which serve to demarcate and emphasise its social unity?

Thai peasants live in autonomous households. Although in some areas of the Central Plains (Hanks 1959, Sharp 1953, Wijewardene 1967: p66) several households may be grouped together in the same compound. Although the national average number of inhabitants in a household is 5.7 (Long et al 1963: 95), this is no indicator and in no way reflects the composition of households. For instance, according to Phillips (1965: p23) in ~~the~~ Bang Chan:

In his study of the economy of the village, Janlekha (1955) found it necessary to distinguish five different kinds of functioning, mutually exclusive household units in Bang Chan: the typical nuclear family (59.4 percent of all households); a limited extended family, consisting of a man, wife, either or both their sets of parents, and unmarried children (8.1 percent); an extended family, consisting of the limited extended family plus married children, the latter's children and any collateral relatives of any generation (26.8 percent); a one person family (5.4 percent).

Whilst in the Northeast both Madge and Long et al report similar permutations. Madge (1954: p1 ^{ch.6}) stating that in the village of Pao-ao, in the province of Ubon:

among the 76 families analysed there are 32 of these "independent families", consisting simply of parents and children, and 18 other families in which to this nucleus there are added unmarried blood relatives, such as nephews and neices. Side by side with the "independent families" there are 25 families which include a male relative by marriage, usually a son-in-law. In only two cases are daughters-in-law living in the parental household. The effect of this is to produce a two-tier family, which includes some of the grandchildren as well as the children of the original parental couple. Many permutations are possible, and other relatives may be added.

Whilst Long et al (1963: p95) states that in the Northeastern Changwad Khonkaen:

The nuclear family was the most frequent form of household organisation; 58 percent of families contained only farmers, their wives, and their children, and 84 percent of households had a daughters husband living with them, three percent a sons wife, seven percent a grandparent, and 33 percent in addition to the immediate family some other relative or friend.

Lastly, from the North Moerman (1969: p97) reports that in Ban Ping in the past:

Early villagers lived in long houses accomodating four or five or sometimes even seven families....No one now lives in a household larger than three families.

From these few examples it is apparent there are many possible permutations in the composition of Thai rural households. In fact a household may consist of a husband, wife and children, but it may also include grandparents and/or collaterals. Quite often adopted children and even non-relatives will make up the composition of the household. Some households may only contain a single individual of either sex who may or may not have been married. Moreover, if there is more than one household in the compound very probably it will be composed of siblings and their families.

But this variation in household composition cannot satisfactorily be seen as the outcome of the family development cycle alone i.e. as reflecting the stage of development that a family has reached. For, unlike in rural Japan where a patrilineal ideology prevades and

serves to allocate many peasants into specific ies on ascriptive principles. in Thai society kinship is reckoned bilaterally outward from the individuals and does not serve this purpose. In fact the jural rules as regards residence tend to be flexible; the principle of association in households being expediency.¹ In fact the composition of households may change frequently (Janlekha 1953), especially amongst the poor.

This flexibility is stressed by Phillips himself when he discusses the composition of households in Bang Chan. The household

1. Actually, as far as the rules of residence are concerned in Thai society there is some conflict in the literature as to what they are. Wijewardene (1967: p47) in an attempt to stress the pragmatic nature of Thai society states that residence patterns are flexible. Kingshill (1960: p47) in his discussion of residence patterns in Ku Daeng supports Wijewardene:

Whether residence is matrilocal or patrilocal seems to depend largely on the circumstances in each individual case. If it seems more convenient to live with the husband's family than the wife's, then the bride and groom will live there. In many cases it is more expedient to establish a separate household immediately.

Radjathon (1954: p3) however states categorically that:

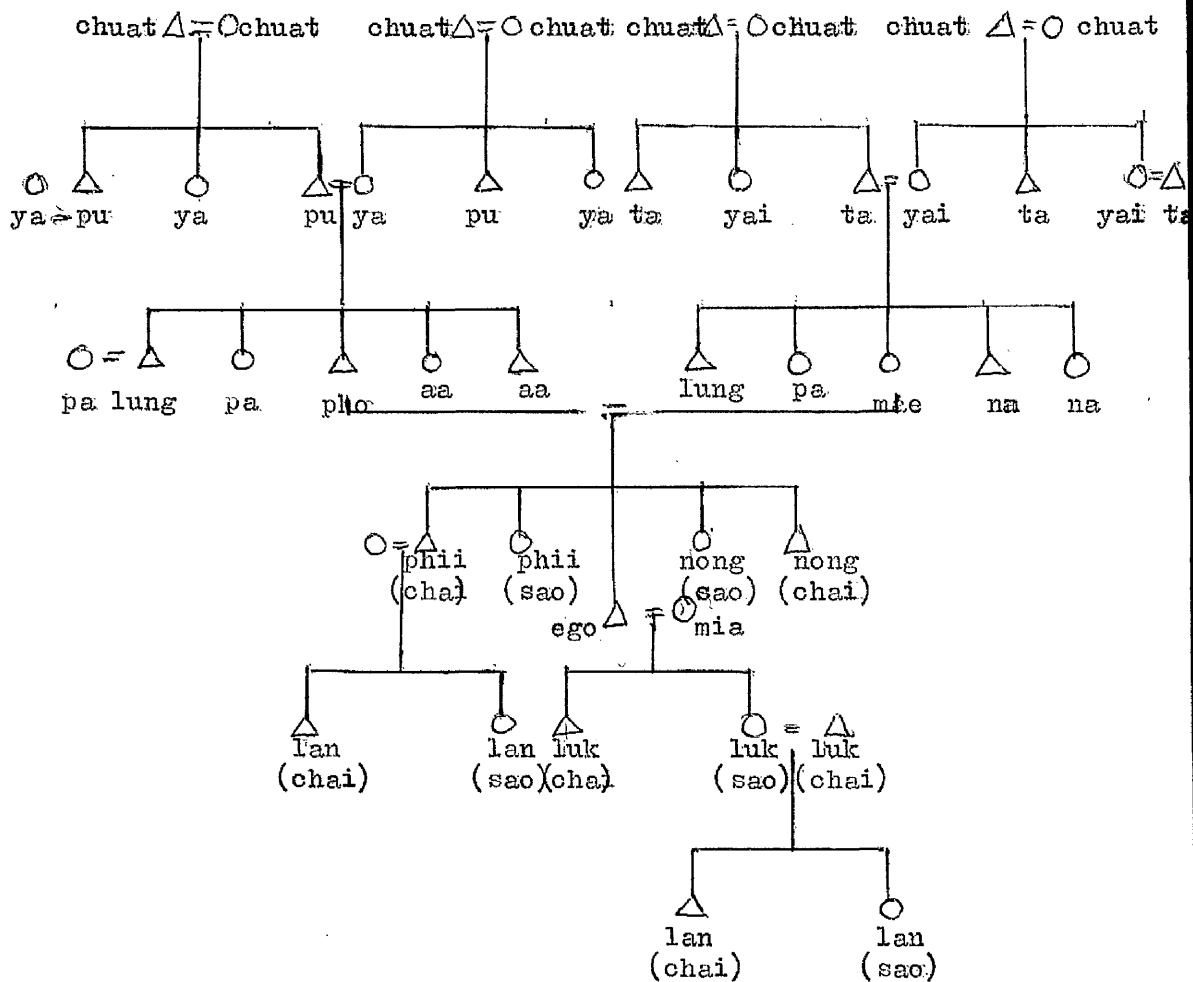
Thai custom in the past; and to some extent in the present, was matrilocal....People would not allow their daughters to marry out, that is make their homes with their husband's family, for it is considered a "loss of face".

Moerman's data on Ban Ping corroborates what Radjathon states:

Until recently, most villagers followed the traditional Lue rule of residence: "Leave for three years, return for three years." Upon his marriage, a man lived and worked for three years with his wife's parents. The couple then went for three years to the husband's parents. Although the rule was modified in practice to take account of the parents' labor needs and of the young couple's wealth, new households were normally expected to have a long period of nascence. Since the introduction of the tractor, many young men, landowners when still single, build houses for their families almost as soon as they become fathers.

However, in Bangkhud Kaufman states (1960: p29):

Residence is in general matrilocal for the first year or more and then becomes patrilocal. Because of the scarcity of available land, the newly weds must be content to share their parents' land. In the "old days", when land was still available for clearing, the newly married couple would spend a year with the bride's household and then clearing a plot near the groom's household, construct a house and raise their family. Today, with the ever-increasing shortage of available land and the change in economy from small subsistence farming to large scale market farming/ footnote continued on next page.

THAI KINSHIP TERMINOLOGY*

*This kinship terminology is derived from Bramley (1969).

patterns, he (1965: p24) states:

reveal what appears to be almost nonchalant willingness or acquiescence on the part of the villagers to make modifications and adjustments in their living arrangements whenever necessary. Underlying this seems to be a fundamental assumption that the question of who lives with whom simply is not one of overriding importance; as long as the individuals can live together without discord, act in terms of the household's established patterns of superordination and subordination, contribute labour or money to the family larder commensurate with their ages, and not inconvenience each other, they will be welcomed into the household, if unable or unwilling to fulfill such elementary obligations, they may take their leave, even if they are in fact full-fledged members of the nuclear family.

These factors tend to suggest that to conceptualise the nuclear family as the basic central kinship unit and to analyse the kinship system from the point of view of the nuclear family is to mislead for several reasons.

Firstly, it is apparent from the discussion of Thai residence rules (see footnote on previous page) that whilst the nuclear family

1. /footnote continued from the previous page: the husband, more often than not, spends two or three years with his wife's family and works their land....

Residence is permanently matrilocal in those cases where there is only one daughter, or there are only daughters in the family. Residence is semi-permanently matrilocal if husband and wife have fields of equal size but there are fewer members in the girl's family. In those cases where the girl's family is much wealthier than the husband's, the residence is also permanently matrilocal; they may construct a house of their own, but it will be in or near the compound of the bride's family. When the husband's family is much the wealthier, the period of matrilocal residence is shortened or even eliminated.

These diverse statements as to residence patterns in Thai society suggest that Radjathon overgeneralised and that in fact the degree to which the residence rules are defined and the form they take varies from area to area, from being undefined in Ku Daeng to being rigorously defined in Ban Ping. But what is very significant is that even in such villages as Ban Ping where the rules are clearly defined they are adapted to the needs of the situation. This is certainly so in Bangkhuaed as Kaufman states. Thus it does seem reasonable, given that expedience is such an important factor, to agree with Wijewardene and state that in Thai society residence rules are 'flexible'.

may be the ideal household composition for young couples in some areas such as in Bang Chan, it is not the ideal for young couples in villages such as Ban Ping who expect to go and live with their in-laws for several years, during which period no doubt the young couple themselves will have children. Moreover, the nuclear family is certainly not the ideal for aged parents who expect one of their children and their family to remain at home permanently to look after them in their old age, or for that matter of the child who does stay at home permanently. Wijewardene's statement therefore that the nuclear family is the expected composition of the household is inaccurate; it is the expected composition only for individuals in certain areas, incertain stages of their life cycle.

Secondly, whilst it may be true that the nuclear family may be the most frequent statistical norm for Thai society as a whole, the data on Ban Ping, although not explicit, tends to suggest that in Ban Ping at any rate the nuclear family will not be the most frequent statistical norm. Moreover, concentrating on the nuclear family alone leads to neglecting the frequency of other types of household composition. In fact, in Bang Chan, according to Evers (1969: p120), thirty five percent of all households were extended family types. In fact, as Evers (1969: p120) points out if the composition of Thai households is seen in a comparative perspective, that is in comparison with the composition of households in other South East Asian societies, then the frequency of extended family households tends to rank high. As he says:

If we see Thai social structure in comparative perspective. If we order 23 recently studied Southeast Asian villages according to the frequency of extended family households, at least two Thai villages including the famous Cornell village of Bang Chan, rank at the top of the scale.

Thus by neglecting the other forms of household composition those who stress that the nuclear family is the central basic unit are underestimating the importance of these other permutations.

Thirdly, since the Thai normatively accept and expect variation in household composition and the nuclear family is the expected

composition of the household for only certain couples in certain areas, to see the nuclear household as being more clearly defined normatively and as being in some sense more socially significant is misleading. Thus since the nuclear family is not the expected norm for all Thais and an analysis from the point of view of the nuclear family underemphasises the importance of other types of household composition and since the Thais tend to accept anybody into their houses, it does not seem worthwhile to attempt to conceptualise Thai kinship relations into the form of the nuclear family or to study such relations from the point of view of the nuclear family for it is misleading and moreover is an inaccurate description of the situation.

Both Kaufman (1960: p22) and De Young (1955: p21) avoid this misleading conceptualisation by orientating their analyses around the household which Kaufman maintains is a kind of 'family group'. Although it has been shown that it is misleading to stress the nuclear family as being of more primary importance than other kinship units, is it any more useful to analyse Thai kinship from the point of view of the household and to conceive of it as a family group as does Kaufman? To what extent are patterns clearly defined and to what extent do they serve to demarcate and stress the social unity of the household?

Kaufman himself when using the term household does not distinguish between the single household and a group of households situated in one compound but refers to them collectively as 'household'. Wijewardene (1967: p66) however argues that:

The compound group, however, is clearly made up of people with very close ties who frequently cultivate a single farm, and may even work from a common domestic budget. Despite this, I would prefer to treat the compound group as a transitional group separate from the household, with a wide variety of arrangements being possible between the separate households in the compound.

Here again it is obvious that Wijewardene's dichotomy is due to his desire to differentiate between the family of procreation and other groups. But since, as has been shown, there are no clear cut

rules for determining who lives with whom, it is no more analytically worthwhile to differentiate the household from the compound group of households than to differentiate the nuclear from the other types of household composition. The primary household does not have different rules of membership and, since households may break up, is no less transitional than the other households in the compound. They all stay together at their convenience. Thus in this discussion of the social organisation of the household, the compound group will be studied as a whole although, if necessary for the issues discussed, it will be differentiated.

The Thai household is not a corporate¹ land owning unit as is the Japanese ie. Land is owned by individual members of the household. It belongs to the individual who inherited it, cleared it or bought it, and he can dispose of it as he chooses. For instance, according to Soontornpasuch (1963)^{pp 147-150}, if a young couple while residing at their parents' house manage to get together some land it is considered their own, not communal property. Similarly, according to Hanks and Hanks (1963: p 436), if a wife inherits land or goods it is hers and if she separates from her husband she retains her own property. Moreover nowhere in the literature is it mentioned that land is registered in the name of the household, in fact it is generally agreed that land is registered individually. Although occasionally, as Kingshill (1965: p26) remarks, some small plots may be registered jointly by two or more persons, in most cases husbands and wives and siblings. But this is by arrangement. It is not the outcome of the jural rules.

1. It is true that Moerman (1968:pl00) points out that in the past in Ban Ping:

married siblings remained together in a single longhouse; the house and its land were administered by the oldest resident.

The longhouse, then was a corporate group....

But these no longer exist and from a close examination of the literature similar cases have not come to light.

Not only is the Thai household not a land owning entity like the Japanese ie but it has none of its social unity either. Although the Thai family is conceived of by the Thais as the 'group that eats from a single hearth' (Hanks and Hanks 1963: p434) and may have a household Buddha image at which members may make offerings, there is no sense of family solidarity of the type found in Japan. Moreover the household is not conceived as a unit by the Thais or as having continuity over time. In fact it is only in the last half century that Thai families have been named. Nor is the family considered sacred as it is in Japan. As Phillips (1965: p86) says, and significantly there has been no attempt in the polemic to contradict him:

there are no institutionalized attempts to sanctify the solidarity of the family....That is, unlike China and the West, there is nothing in traditional Thai folk belief and ritual, or in the literature of the indigenous "Great Tradition", that alludes to the sacredness of the family as a social unit. All moral aphorisms concerning family relationships are phrased in terms of dyadic relations between individuals, not in terms of affiliation with the family unit as such.

This stress on the primary importance of the individual is reflected in the fact that personal shrines are considered more important than the household.

Moreover marriage rules do not symbolise and demarcate the household boundaries as they do in Japan. Not only are residence rules flexible, as has been said, but in Thai society a wife on marriage is not cut off completely from her natal family, nor does she lose all her rights. She may later inherit lands and goods from her parents and if she leaves her husband may return to her natal home.

The Thai system of inheritance in fact is a very significant point in this discussion of the household. For whereas in Japan the patrilineal ideology provides the means by which property is handed on intact over the generations, in Thai society the bilateral system of inheritance whereby property is inherited equally by all

children regardless of sex tends to lead to the fragmentation of land and the break up of households (see Wijewardene 1965). According to Janlekha (1953), this seems especially so in Central Thailand among the poor. Although there is bilateral inheritance, as has been stated previously, the youngest sibling remains at home and receives the homestead on the death of the parents. The Thais say this is a reward for looking after the parents in their old age. But as Moerman (1968: p94) points out, this is very probably the result of circumstances rather than jural rules:

One formal qualification of the rule of equal inheritance concerns the house compound. It is inherited by the oldest child among those still living at home after both parents had died. His share of the remainder of the estate is diminished proportionately. Since a couple normally lives to see their older children established in their own households, not infrequently it is the youngest child who inherits the parental home. I suspect that this circumstance, rather than a formal rule of "ultimogeniture" (cf Blanchard 1958:424; Kaufman 1960:22; Kingshill 1960:54), conditions the inheritance system of the parental house and its compound throughout Thailand.

The choice of marriage partner in Thai society tends generally to be a matter of individual choice. Although Kaufman (1960: p 154) has pointed to two cases of arranged marriage in Bangkhua in the past and Bramley (1969: p 22) has pointed to the existence of arranged marriages in the Thai elite where the parents are friends; both Moerman (1969: p130) and De Young (1955: p64) state that parental approval is needed. But as Hanks and Hanks (1964: p434) state 'the brides consent is as necessary for marriage as the grooms. Indeed a woman may prefer to remain single.' The nature of marriage in Thai society is neatly summed up by Wijewardene (1967: p66):

Marriage itself, in rural Thailand, conforms to the pragmatic nature of Thai rural social structure as a whole. It is nearly always based on personal choice with few marriages arranged to cement political alliances or consolidate property holding.

From the literature the only exceptions to the latter seem to be the two arranged marriages referred to by Kaufman (above). However, De Young (1955: p 151) states that:

everywhere encourage their children to marry into families of similar economic status, but points out that there is only one actual reference in the literature (made by Sharp 1953) to this infact happening.

As Wijewardene (1967: p66) says:

It is striking - in view of the prevalence in Asia of marriage alliances of families for political or economic ends - that in Thailand individual choice in marriage is everywhere reported as widespread. A couple who wish to be married and meet opposition from their parents have almost institutionalised means of forcing their parents to give recognition to a fait accompli.

As far as divorce is concerned the data is extremely sparse and uninformative. Official figures are of little use for only if a marriage were registered would the divorce be registered. The monographs are not very informative on the subject, although Wijewardene's (1967: p68) figures on divorce in South Village, a village he studied in Northern Thailand, tend to 'Indicate a high incidence of divorce'. But from the limited data that is available it seems reasonable to agree with Wijewardene (1967: p68) that:

As a general statement one may say that divorce is easy, and if a marriage has not been registered, even mutual consent may not be necessary.

Thus divorce, like residence and marriage patterns in many areas, is not clearly defined and, like residence and marriage patterns everywhere, is flexible.

From this discussion of household normative patterns it has become apparent that normative patterns which serve to demarcate and foster the social unity of the household are generally absent. But although this may be so, to what extent are the rights and duties of individual members of the household defined, and to what extent do they serve to demarcate and stress household solidarity?

Unlike in Japan where there is a strict division of labour, in Thai society it is continuously pointed out in the literature that there is no clearly defined division of labour. For instance, Sharp (1953: p86) states:

While certain activities are usually assigned to men and others to women, the Thai maintain no rigid compartmentalization and are unembarrassed when a woman does a man's job or a man does a woman's.

This lack of division of labour is correlated with the status of women in Thailand (although of course it is debatable which way the lines of causation go). As Bramley (1969: pp20-21) points out:

In Thailand as in other Theravada Buddhist countries women are believed to be the inferior sex, because they epitomise the sensual pleasures, Thai women enjoy a considerable measure of equality both in law and behavioural terms.

De Young (1955: p24) spells out clearly the position of women in Thai society:

The social position of Thai peasant woman is powerful: she has long had a voice in village governmental affairs; she often represents her household at village meetings when her husband cannot attend; she almost always does the buying and selling in the local markets. (It is so unusual for the Thai male to do this that it elicits comment is he does). Through their marketing activities Thai women produce a sizable portion of the family cash income, and they not only handle the household money, but usually act as the family treasurer and hold the purse strings... money brought into the household by farming is usually disbursed by the wife and if she does not actually control the expenditure of the family income, she always has an important voice in the decision concerning its use. There is one exception: in the commercialized delta area where large amounts of money are brought in by the sale of rice, the farmer seems to keep control of this rice income himself.

So to do Hanks and Hanks (1963: 437):

the relationship between husband and wife is a partnership between equals. Their authority over household, children or other matters of common concern outside the household is equal. Although the work divides into areas of special interests, consultation is necessary particularly in the poorer families, in order to allocate funds, arrange working schedules, share workers and render needed assistance.

Similarly, the relationship between parents and children shows the same kind of characteristics: the Father is not the authoritarian figure he is in Japan, he cannot choose his children's occupation, place of residence or their spouses, as has been indicated previously. Nor does he have any normative sanctioning power such as the Japanese father's power of kando (expulsion from the ie). Thus the position of children seems to be strong vis-à-vis their father. In fact unlike their Japanese counterparts, Thai children have a

great deal of say in the more important decisions of life. This strong position of children is reflected in the fact that teenage children are allowed to control their own money. As De Young (1955: pp24-5) says:

The strong individualism of Thai life is seen in the handling of money brought into the family by teenage children who earn shares or a cash wage by working for other farmers. If they come from a poor family, much of their earnings, either in rice or cash, will go to support the family, but even then they are allowed to keep a certain portion for their own needs. In families that are moderately well-off, minor children who work outside may turn their earnings over to mother for safe keeping but they can spend them as they wish.

In fact, Embree had great insight when he stated (p184):

In the family the father is putative head, and children are supposed to obey their parents. But in practice, there is none of the strong sense of duty and obligation to parents which is so characteristic, in diverse ways, of Vietnam, China, and Japan. Even the family precepts in this regard are milder, since the Thai follow the Buddhist rather than the Confucian rules. Chandruang, for example, quotes the following Buddhist rules of family obligations:

These are the duties of parents to their children: giving food, clothing and shelter, forbidding wrong doing, encouraging right conduct, giving education, assisting them in matrimony and transferring property to them in good time.

The duties of children toward their parents are: taking care of them when they are old, helping them in their work, keeping the good name of the family, obedience, trustworthiness, using their properties sensibly, and remembering them after death.

It is notable that these rules include duties of parents to children as well as of children to parents. Also, it is the mother who transmits these teachings to the children, not the father. She transmits them as sage advice rather than as mandatory obligations.

By contrast the Chinese system of filial piety emphasizes strongly the masculine side of the family and the duties of children to parents, especially to the father, and of wife to husband. There is a strong emphasis on a clear-cut system of reciprocal rights and duties which all proper people should follow. "In practice... hsiao (filial piety) is demanded of children toward all the members of the parental generation and above; and ti (respectful obedience) must be shown by young people toward any older person in their own generation. "

Embree hit a crucial point here in the Thai social system for, unlike in Japan where the social obligations are mandatory i.e. it is demanded that individuals fulfil obligations, in Thai society if individuals do not want to fulfil obligations they do not have to; it is up to the individual whether he does so. But this lack of mandatory obligation is not just the outcome of the father's lack of sanctioning powers, it is a normatively accepted rule.

Nowhere in the literature has Embree's view that the Thais parent/child relationship lacks mandatory obligations been criticised. In fact, De Young (1955: p24) agrees with Embree almost word for word:

The Thai ^{farm} family is not a strict, authoritarian one as is the farm family of Japan or China. Thai farm children are brought up to show respect and deference to the family head, but his orders are not obeyed as an absolute command, early in life children learn to respect and defer to their father, but without an exaggerated sense of strict duty and obligation. Within the family it is the mother who inculcates the children with the proper family precepts, but these are taught as the proper way for a child to behave rather than as absolutes, mandatory rules. Breaking of these precepts is not uncommon, and characteristically in Thai culture, the child or adult is forgiven, for early in family life a strong amount of individualism shows up in the peasant child.

Moreover, within the literature, there are many references to the non-^{obligatory} nature of family rules. Piker (1969: pp64-5) for instance states:

there is considerable evidence that the villager views continued association with his families of orientation and procreation at least in part in voluntaristic terms. Our field notes contain numerous examples of individuals allying themselves with opponents of their families in disputes or, in other cases, simply declining to become involved. Similarly, villagers may sever, temporarily or permanently, their relationships with their families as when, for example, one sibling seduces the loyalty of the child of another; or a son outbids his father in competition for a client-employ~~er~~; or when an adolescent goes, completely of his own volition, to stay indefinitely with the family of one of his parent's relatives; or when a child decides to become a wat boy or live with an urban relative for educational or occupational advantage. Husbands not uncommonly leave the burden of financial

support of their families to their wives and spend much of their time elsewhere, while ordination later in life provides for some men an escape from family obligations that enjoys full cultural sanction. The fears, freely verbalised by parents, that their children will abandon them to an unsupported old age reflect among other things the conviction that in fact the children will themselves choose in this matter and that there is nothing over and above the choice itself to bind them to their parents.

Whilst Phillips (1965: p26) states that in Bang Chan:

a family breaks up simply because the husband has an inclination to work for a particular person whom he likes, a wife ("she is a touchy woman") runs away every time she has a minor disagreement with her husband (minor by village standards).

In fact not only is loose obligation apparent but Embree had great insight when he pointed out that the adjustment of family relations to the desires of individuals is not uncommon. He (p184) says:

The father is head of the family and inheritance is through him. Various members of the family are expected to respect his word. If the father dies, the eldest son is supposed to look after his mother and siblings. For example, Chandruang writes, "Father, as the eldest son, was obligated to look after his mother and his younger brother and sister." He wanted, however, to go to Bangkok for further education, and so, "he consulted with his mother on the idea.... She naturally refused, for she needed him to work on the farm." Nonetheless, he left for the city. Later he revisited her, and when he begged her forgiveness, she gave it. This kind of loose obligation and adjustment of family relations to the desires of individuals in it is not uncommon. In another family with which first hand contact was had in Bangkok, the father, a governmental official, had left his family to marry another woman and the first wife looked after the children. One of her sons, also married, left Bangkok for political reasons and left his small son with the grandmother. The man, in his place of exile, married another woman. When informed of this development the mother and sisters were interested but not surprised; and one sister remarked, "He always liked to have a lot of women around him."

Although Embree's ethnography is wrong when he states that inheritance is through the father, nevertheless it is true that whereas in Japan the individuals life is very much mapped out for him by the rules of his society, in Thai society social relationships

tend to be adjusted to the needs of the situation and to the desires of individuals. This normatively enables the individual to have a wide choice of action open to him. In the light of this factor it is easily understandable why the normative patterns and structure of the household are not clearly defined.

Phillips (1965: p52) has made a study of the lack of obligation and loose structure in the kinship relations in Bang Chan and puts forward a reasonable argument that the actual behavioural orientations of individuals are motivated by economic self interest. Significantly nowhere in the literature has Phillips' hypothesis been criticised. In fact, it is corroborated by Kingshill (1960: p47) who stresses the utility theme as the basis for kinship relations. In fact, an examination of the literature in general tends to suggest that Phillips' view of kinship relations is applicable to Thai society as a whole. As he (1965: p52) says:

Over and over again, the informants viewed their relationships with other people, particularly kin, in terms of the other's economic value to themselves. However this mode of dependence was not so much an overriding compulsion as a basic postulate about human relationships: the measure of another person's love was explicitly the degree in which in material terms he served the self.

and

People say that they marry for wealth or because of the productive capacities of their spouses, spouses stay together because of the economic cost of a split would be too great; most important of all people are keenly aware of their economic interdependence. Father says that they need children to work in the fields and care for the buffaloes, that a family needs a mother so that its members will be fed, that siblings are useful because it is easy to borrow from them. Many villagers extend this economic transactional type of thinking to other aspects of the kinship relationship. Thus they say that the purpose of marriage is to have a companion who will take care of you when you are sick or very frequently that "my parents went to the trouble of bringing me up so that they would have a person to make merit for them when they die." (p32)

Even the relationship between parent and child is not considered intrinsic in the sense that parent and child are not expected to exchange goods and services because they are parent and child, nor

is the parent and child relationship considered sacred. Given the Thai belief in karma, this is understandable because the Thais believe that a child is a separate soul and potentially of the same value as themselves. As Phillips (1965: p85) says:

The practical consequences of the equalitarian notions are manifold. For one thing, with the child defined as a separate and equal soul, the relationship between parent and child takes on a highly instrumental flavor; that is, rather than expressing love toward the child as an end in itself or otherwise treating him in ways that require no further justification (it is assumed that love is characteristically an absolute sentiment, not a means to any other satisfaction) villagers explicitly see the relationship between parent and child in contractual terms. Thus villagers say that they "are going to the trouble" of bringing up their children and "doing good things for them" (just as their own parents "went to the trouble" of bringing them up and "doing good things for them") so that they will have someone to care for them in their old age and make merit for them when they die. Similarly they say they love their parents because they are indebted to them for bringing them into the world. The language of the "contract" is poignantly explicit; "When I think of my mother, I think of the debt I owe her for bringing me into the world and feeding me so I would survive."

Similarly, the Thais view marriage in terms of self interest. The concept of the sanctity of marriage found in the Christian world view is not part of the Thai system of belief. Thais enter into marriage for what they can get out of it "The purpose of marriage is to have a companion who will take care of you when you are sick." (see Phillips' quotation on previous page). The Thai view of marriage throws light on actual marriage relations. The ease of divorce and the freedom of the individual to choose his or her own marriage partner being natural correlatives of such a world view.

This is not to say that sentiment such as love plays no part in kinship relations but as Phillips (1965: p93) points out, love is estimated in economic terms:

I love my father because he gives me presents....of all my daughters, the one who gives me the greatest pleasure is the one who sells things. When she gets money she gives it to me. Friends are very useful because it means that you have people who will do you favors. And when they need help, you will take care of them. This is love.

From a normative point of view this stress on the pursuit of individual self interest combined with the lack of mandatory rules and the acceptance of non-fulfilment of obligations may result in unstable and unreliable social relations within the household. This is clearly reflected in the normative structure of the household which tends to be amorphous. It has become apparent from this discussion of the Thai household and the rights and duties of members in it that the household does not form a corporate group as does the Japanese ie. It is only a group in a very limited sense. The categories of individuals who make up the households may vary and individuals will only stay in the household as long as it is in their interests to do so.

Although members of the household live in a physically demarcated homestead, it is not a landowning entity and the household does not have an institutionalised normative structure. There are no normative patterns which serve to demarcate its boundaries or stress its social unity. Thus although the father may represent the household at social activities, it is not as the legitimate head of an institutionalised corporate group that he officiates, as does the koshu. Rather this previous discussion tends to suggest that it is more reasonable to conceive of him as being the generally accepted delegate of the adult members of the household. Thus unlike the Japanese ie, the Thai household does not transcend the lives of its members and has no continuity over time outside the existence of the members who make up a household at a particular time.¹

1. Since the homestead is inherited by one of the children, it must be pointed out that the household could be conceived of as having continuity if the concept 'stem family' were used to categorise this inheritance pattern. But to do so would be misleading for the concept which was evolved by Davenport (1958) to deal with the transfer of landholdings in non-unilineal societies. He wanted to show that the concept 'descent group' derived from the study of unilineal societies, was applicable to non-unilineal societies. But such a concept as 'stem family', to be meaningful, presupposes that the same piece of land will be handed on over the generations within the same family, albeit on non-unilineal principles. However in Thai society, it is apparent from this discussion, that households frequently break up (Phillips 1965) and land is frequently bought and sold (Wijewardene 1965). Thus it is possible, in fact highly probable, in Thai society that the same homestead will not be handed on over the generations. Given these factors, to conceive of the Thai household as forming a 'stem family' is misleading as it gives it greater continuity than it may in fact have.

But although it is not meaningful to study the individual from the point of view of the structure of the household and his position in it, does the Thai peasant belong to any other groups? In the literature several other kin groups have been pointed to. Kaufman (1960: p21) maintains that two other family groups can be distinguished in Bangkhuaed, namely the 'spatially extended family' and the 'remotely extended family'. Whilst if the reader turns his mind back to Phillips description of the units to be found in Bang Chan, it will be remembered that he refers to ego-oriented kindred.

Kaufman's 'spatially extended family' and 'remotely extended family' have become very well known, have been quoted often and have been used as the basis of conceptualisation of kinship relations by several specialists e.g. Blanchard (1958: p422), Wijewardene (1967: p66) for Thai society as a whole. The 'spatially extended family', Kaufman argues, 'includes all members who grew up together in the same household, plus the affinal relatives of the members'; whilst the 'remotely extended family' includes 'a wide circle of relatives going beyond the range of first cousin and including many who serve no immediate function in the community'. From an examination of Kaufman's argument it seems that the major difference between the 'spatially extended family' and the 'remotely extended family' is essentially one of origin, range and type of goods and services exchanged within the groups, for he (1960: p 23) states that the 'spatially extended family' refers to:

those members of a family who shared a common household during their youth and who have moved away because of marriage or employment and are living in widely separate households, perhaps in different communities.

The members of the 'spatially extended family', Kaufman argues, function as a unit during times of difficulty. It may lend mutual economic aid and it may also support an aged parent or an illegitimate child. A primary function of the 'spatially extended family' is to attend and donate money to life cycle rituals held for individual members of the family. For instance, he (1960: pp24-5) states:

Interaction and cohesion between households within the spatially extended family can best be seen during two major cultural functions, the New Year's Festival and the cremation

ceremony. It is usually at New Year's that the entire spatially extended family will come together at the wat. The same is true during the pre-cremation ceremonies as well as at the actual cremation....At the death of a parent, the spatially extended family is called together in consultation. Cremations are extremely expensive and the financial co-operation of every member of the family is both needed and expected. Contributions come from uncles and aunts, but the great bulk of the cost is defrayed by the surviving spouse and children. However attendance at the services always includes relatives and friends of the deceased, who are counted upon to make small contributions. The spatially extended family will sometimes ^{be asked} to attend and help defray the cost of a wedding. Its members are inevitably counted on to supply food to the young monk after his ordination.

On the other hand, the 'remotely extended family' may include any relatives and its major function seems to be to aid members when they go to another area.

Neither of these two 'family groups' form ^S part of the 'conscious' model of the Thai, nor, from the literature, do the social relationships within these groups seem clearly defined normatively. They are essentially observer's models. But, as has been stated previously, the term 'group' is usually used to refer to a set of people who all interact socially. As De Young (1955: p25) points out, individuals are quite likely to lose contact with each other if they move outside the locality:

A
The looseness of the kinship relation can be seen in the ease with which a person loses contact with his immediate family if he marries outside the village or moves to a new locality. Within one generation kinship ties among villagers tend to be broken, and contact is rarely maintained among family members in neighbouring villages unless they are of the same generation.

Even if they do maintain contact this does not mean that either members of the 'spatially extended family' or the 'remotely extended family' will necessarily interact socially; it is up to the individual whether they do so and what goods and services they decide to exchange. Moreover, as Wijewardene (1967: p 66) himself states:

Marriage creates links with non-kin, which are not shared with other households in the compound group. It is highly probable, therefore, that even in the situation that Kaufman

is describing, links between brothers and sisters who are spatially extended are not in practice equal.

Given these factors it seems reasonable to assume that the 'spatially extended family' is unlikely to act as a unit. Kaufman states that one of the most important functions of the 'spatially extended family' is to participate in the life cycle rituals of its members. But, if the literature is studied closely, it is apparent that to conceptualise those who support life cycle rituals as the 'spatially extended family' is to mislead for it is not the 'spatially extended family' as a unit that functions at these rituals; it is the bilateral kin of the individual whose life cycle it is, that play the crucial parts. This is clearly apparent in Tambiah's (1968: p96) discussion of mortuary rights in Ban Phran Muan, for he states:

it is the close kin of the deceased and his or her spouse who play the crucial roles - notably children of both sexes, sisters and brothers and their spouses and wife's siblings.

By focusing on the individual rather than the group one gets a different picture of those who attend life cycle ceremonies. It seems reasonable to infer from the literature and from the previous discussion of the rules governing kinship relations that individuals will support these life cycle rituals not because they are part of a family group but because of their dyadic self interested relationship with the individual whose life cycle ceremony it is.

Given these factors, to conceive of either the 'spatially extended family' or the 'remotely extended family' as a functional interacting family group, as a social unity, is misleading as a categorisation. In fact, neither the 'spatially extended family' nor the 'remotely extended family' are functional social groups in the generally accepted sense; they are categories. But even as conceptual categories they do not make any positive contribution to the understanding of Thai kinship behaviour which might outweigh these errors, for they tell us little about social relations between members of these groups or the principles underlying them. In fact, they are misleading for they obscure the social significance of the

Moreover as Tambiah(1968:pl17) points out contributions to life cycle rituals are made on an individual dyadic basis, for when a donor holds his own ritual the recipient of a life cycle contribution will donate a similar amount.

individual and the individual's dyadic relationships with others. Ego's relationships within these categories are based on dyadic principles; they are not the result of group membership. Given these considerations, it does not seem worthwhile to conceptualise Thai kinship relations into either the 'spatially extended family' or the 'remotely extended family'.

The other kinship unit, the ego orientated kinship mentioned by Phillips as being present in Bang Chan, consists of ego's relatives reckoned bilaterally outwards from ego. As with other units discussed so far, the rights and duties of ego's kindred are not clearly defined and there are no concomitant sanctions. As Tambiah (1968: ppl06-7) points out for villagers in Ban Phran Muan, and it holds for other areas too:

There is no particular complex of behavioural attributes associated with, say, mother's brother as distinct from father's brother, father's sister as distinct from mother's sister. Close kin are naturally more important than distant kin, but which of the close kin outside of ego's families of procreation and orientation depends on situational circumstances and not on jural norms.

The situation as far as kindred is concerned is neatly summed up by Piker (1969: p64) who states, when discussing Central Thai peasantry:

The kindred is voluntarily constituted within ascriptively defined limits. Although membership is recruited almost exclusively from genealogically close kin (usually no more than a depth of two generations), most villagers do not consider the majority of kin within this range to be members of their active kindred. There are, in short, no precise genealogical criteria for recruitment to this often nebulous group. Rather, the villager selects from among those genealogically close to him a small number with whom he happens to have an active kin relationship. The remaining kin of this degree are for him socially equivalent, for the most part, to neighbors or casual acquaintances. The composition of an active kindred, moreover, often changed within the lifetime of the individual - not primarily as the result of death and new recruitment but as the result of the atrophy of once active ties. The kindred, in short, is not a corporate group whose existence normally transcends the lives of its members. It much more closely approximates a voluntary association the persistence of which depends upon continuing, mutually satisfactory validation by participating parties. One seldom

finds families joined together in this manner for as much as two generations; and it is not uncommon for kindred members to drift apart, and the association to dissolve, within a short time of its informal initiation.

Thus the kinship is open ended and gravitates around ego. Certainly, as Piker states, it is not a corporate group, or a functioning social group of any sort. Even to see it as a 'voluntary association' is semantically slightly misleading, for it is a category, the extra genealogical connections which determine who 'voluntarily associates' with whom being up to the anthropologist to determine. In fact, such a study would be a fruitful line of investigation for little has been done on this subject.

So far in this discussion of groups and institutions found in rural Thailand it has been shown that those that have been mentioned, are either absent or simple in structure or are the product of misconceptualisation.

However, anti-loose structurists such as Moerman (1969), Mulder (1969) and Evers (1969), as was stated in the introduction to this chapter, have pointed to other institutions which, they argue, contradict the loose structurists' argument. They argue that groups and institutions such as the Sangha (the Buddhist monastic order) and the bureaucracy¹ cannot be dismissed as irrelevant or unimportant for they state that they have clearly defined rules and sanctions for enforcing conformity and as such these institutions are not loosely structured and serve to refute the loose structurists' hypothesis.

Certainly the bureaucracy and the Sangha are formal organisations which are found throughout Thailand and they certainly do have clearly defined rules, with sanctions to enforce them. The traditional Thai bureaucracy which governed the country has, since

1 As the police and military are considered part of the bureaucracy by the Thai they will be discussed under the heading 'bureaucracy'. As there is no reliable evidence available Buddhist associations and insurgents will not be able to be discussed.

the 1870's, gradually ^{been} supplanted and a modern Weberian legal rational type bureaucracy has been introduced, patterned on British lines. The rules governing the modern bureaucracy are codified and promulgated by a Civil Service Commission and include specific sanctions for offenders who break this code.

Similarly, the Sangha has a bureaucratic organisation parallel to the bureaucracy. As Evers 1968: p27) says:

The Thai Sangha is highly organised, it has a clear structure, lines of authority are clearly defined and centers of decision making and control well institutionalized. The whole organization is described and regulated in the Buddhist Ecclesiastical Law of December 1962, which substituted for a previous document (the Ecclesiastical Act of October 1941).

Moreover the priest's role is clearly defined, as Ingersoll (1966: p68) states in his discussion of the priestly role in Central Thailand:

Conformity to a very elaborate set of norms and proper procedures is a central attribute of the priest role. To be a priest is to observe the rigors of the discipline of the Sangha. This discipline is stated mainly in the form of proscriptions against unacceptable behaviour, the most formalized statement being the 227 Patimokkha rules in the Winai section of the Tripittaka or Pali Buddhist Canon.

These rules for instance prescribe relations with women, the handling of money, they define his conduct during Phansaa, his relations with other monks and laity, the clothes he should wear and the type of bed he should sleep on and the articles he should possess. Moreover these proscriptions are accompanied by various penalties for their infringement.

Certainly, such formalisation and clear cut rules as govern the bureaucracy and the Sangha seem to bear out the anti- loose structuralists' contentions. But high normative formalisation in these organisations does not necessarily contradict the view that Thai society is loosely structured. As Evers (1968) argues in an article he wrote comparing the organisation of the monastic orders in Thailand and Ceylon, such formal organisations are concomitant with a loosely structured society as the loose structuralists depict, one in which rights and duties are not clearly defined and institutionalised groups

are minimal. He maintains that where formal organisations are present in a loosely structured society then they will need to be highly formalised, for he says(1968: p32):

formalisation of organizational structure by explicit rules and regulations is only necessary where appropriate formal principles of organizing individuals for the attainment of common goals are not attainable. It then follows that less formalized and loosely structured societies require a higher degree of formalization in organization than highly formalized and structured societies.

From this deduction, Evers (1968: p32) postulated the hypothesis:

The more formalized and strict the structure of the society the less formalized and strict is the structure of formal organizations whose organizational goals are compatible with the norms and values of ~~That~~ society.

This seems a very reasonable hypothesis on the surface, and certainly applicable to the Thai Sangha as he suggests. But if the structure of the Thai Sangha is examined it will be realised that his hypothesis is not relevant for in actual practice the Sangha is not highly formalized.

Firstly, as has been pointed out previously in the discussion of rural wats, wats in both town and country tend to be simple structures with little internal organisation and an absence of a strong authority structure. Moreover as far as the presence of sanctions are concerned Bramley (1969: 51) points to:

the reluctance both of members of the lay community and of the ecclesiastical authorities to take the responsibility of bringing disgrace upon any bhikkhu - and by extension to the Sangha as a whole - where it is at all possible to avoid it.

Furthermore, in comparison with some other Buddhist countries Graham (1924: p238)¹ maintains:

The daily life of the Siamese monks, though governed by routine is not so minutely ordered as is the case with those of some other Buddhist countries where a rigid observance of the letter of the "law" is regarded as more meritorious than any action; however truly in accordance with the spirit thereof, not in the closest adherence to ritual. Clearly defined actions are demanded of them, but for the most they are allowed to dispose of their time as they like.

This analysis would tend to suggest that the Thai Sangha on the operative level does not have the organisational formal structure that it would seem to have from an analysis of the norms (such as the pattimokkha rules) out of context. It would also tend to suggest that the organisation of the Sangha is a simple normative structure which tends to reflect the values of Thai society as a whole; as such Evers hypothesis is not applicable to the Thai Sangha or to Thai society.

It is significant that Evers did not apply his theory to the Thai bureaucracy, (he in fact points out that modern bureaucracies that have been introduced into alien cultures may be exceptions) for an analysis of the organisation of the bureaucracy reveals that the organisation is not as formal or normatively clear cut as it might at first appear, either.

1 Unfortunately for the discussion of Evers comparative hypothesis Graham does not state which countries he is referring to.

2 Evers (1968: p32) argues that:

The second part of the proposition excludes cases in which structural formalization is necessary because of the organizational goals are in conflict with basic values of the society out of which the organization recruits its members. This might happen when the subordinate value system of the organizational sub-value system is not the immediate social environment. This is the case in many transitional societies where the formal organizations, like government bureaucracies, or industrial firms serve as focal points of a new and foreign value system, which might have to be enforced by strict and highly formalized regulations.

Traditionally the bureaucracy was not a functional and occupational orientated system, but was highly personalized. At the top was the King, below him was an appointed strata of officials, below the officials were freemen and at the bottom of the social hierarchy were slaves, both redeemable and non-redeemable. This system as several specialists (e.g. Mosel 1957; Riggs 1966, 1961; Siffin 1966; Hanks 1962) have pointed out was articulated by a patron-client system.

Traditionally the Thai world view did not orientate the Thais to conceptualise the bureaucracy in terms of function, goals, output and occupation. Rather the world view fostered diffuse roles.¹ When the goal-orientated legal rational functional modern bureaucracy was introduced, the Thai bureaucrats as several specialists (e.g. Riggs (1966; Sutton 1962; Siffin 1966; Shor 1960; Mosel 1957) have remarked, rather than changing their behaviour to fit in with the new norms have tended to assimilate these new norms to fit in with the traditional normative diffuse system.

1 As Riggs (1961: p62) states:

Siamese administration consisted of the procedures used by the king and officials in ruling and presiding over their society. In doing this they received tributes or offerings in goods and labour services from their clients, and in turn made redistributions and governed the affairs of those below them. The redistributive structure, in other words, was a unitary system which cannot be divided neatly into discrete "economic" and "administrative" structures. It had, certainly, economic and administrative aspects, but this is like saying a coin has two sides - yet the coin remains a unit and the sides cannot be separated from each other. Hence what ever characterized the redistributive economic system also characterized the redistributive administrative system. Every act was totally a whole. The actors could not have thought, "Now I am performing an economic act, now an administrative." They must have thought, "Now I am acting", and only the visitor from a different kind of society could interpret this act as a synthesis of two kinds of action.

And later Riggs^(p73) elaborates on this theme:

This way of viewing the world made no provision for dividing life into separate categories, for economics, religion, politics, administration, etc. Everything as a whole, the king and court nobles, although administrators, were no more specifically administrators than they were politicians or merchants or priests. We can analytically split up these-and other aspects- of their total roles, but in their minds they were acting parts which could not be partitioned. That a patron should differentiate between the "public" and the "private" aspects of his behaviour could not have been imagined, nor could a have distinguished in his mind the functions of a court ceremonial as a religious, or a political, or a personal event.

Thus as Shor (1962: p68) says:

While government is formally bureaucratized, the contemporary role structure in its administration is only imperfectly differentiated. In large measure functional relationships are diffuse and highly personalized. While occupational specialization is far advanced specialized assignments frequently are based on more on personal factors than on expertise. Formal status is typically superseded by social status; an individual's personal stature rather than official position determines his influence. The power structure is only superficially institutionalized, and the exercise of power is subject to few universalistic limits,

Moreover as he (1962: p78)¹ also points out the explicit sanctions promulgated by the bureaucratic code to enforce conformity to the modern bureaucratic rules are rarely enforced:

Thai officials are singularly reluctant to invoke disciplinary action against erring subordinates. Superiors generally avoid such measures except in serious cases, and, where punitive action is inescapable, they tend to minimize the charges and impose the mildest penalties permitted. Minor breaches often are dealt with simply by threats to withhold annual merit increases. In view of the generally acknowledged high incidence of misconduct, the total of 2519 cases of disciplinary action recorded in 1957 indicates considerable disinclination to employ disciplinary powers.

This description by Shor of the present day bureaucracy clearly reveals that the actual operative normative rules are diffuse² and reflect the general tendency of the Thai normative rules. In fact

1 Shor (1962: p79) attempts to explain this leniency as follows:

High level officials have explained such leniency by characterizing themselves as "softhearted". But this apparent tenderness may well reflect more practical rather than sentimental factors. Superiors are sometimes inhibited by the difficulties or political risks that disciplinary action may entail. The disciplined official may use informal channels to bring the case to the attention of the Administrative Inspection Department whose intervention is dreaded. The justification of punishment imposed for some offence may require evidence that is frequently difficult to produce. The probability of political reprisal may similarly deter warranted disciplinary measures,

The widespread failure to apply the rules of discipline is notably consistent with the more general societal tolerance of relatively minor misconduct. The flexibility of Thai moral standards not only condones, but may elicit sympathy for the underpaid civil servant who accepts bribes to supplement his meager income.

This seems a reasonable interpretation as far as it goes as to why sanctions are rarely invoked in the Thai bureaucracy. His reference to the political risks involved are of special significance. For it is continuously pointed out in the literature that a patron-client system underlies the normative bureaucratic structure. An official will certainly fear to apply sanctions to a client of a political superior either in his own or in the clients of opposing factions.

on the normative level the bureaucracy does not contradict the loose structurists as the ant-loose structurists seem to think. Rather it tends to support their hypothesis.

But Punyodyana (1969) maintains that these loose structurists' studies are micro-societal in nature, being studies of the interpersonal level of analysis and essentially specific and concrete. He argues that if Thai society is studied on a more general and abstract macro-societal level, what he calls the level of the 'institutional norms'¹ then (1969: p87):

an entirely different conception of Thai society and its structure is possible.

He analyses the institutional norms in Thai society with reference to the bureaucracy and peasantry and comes to the conclusion (1969: p103) that:

as a social system Thai society does have its organization and structure, which is sufficiently established (i.e. well-defined), known, recognized, and accepted by its members and is sufficiently stable and efficient. If it were not so, Thai society could not possibly exist as a system. In the analysis, the relationships and interaction between the peasants and the bureaucrats, two essentially important social (status) groups in Thai society, were given special attention. This was done with the purpose of demonstrating and elucidating the existence of social institutions (namely institutional norms) and their "working" which underlie the structure as well as process of Thai society. However, besides these norms (overt or covert) which provides sanctions for these two social groups in their interaction with one another, institutional norms can be investigated from the standpoint of any other department of Thai social relations.

But let us look at some of these examples of institutional norms that he says reflect system, organisation and process in Thai society. He maintains that if Thai society is studied in terms of the institutional norms it is revealed that the peasantry and the

1. He defines institutional norms as (1969: p86):

The institutional-structural analysis considers as social norms only those socially significant elements which, according to Williams, are: (1) widely known, accepted, and applied; (2) widely enforced by strong sanctions continuously applied; (3) based on reversed sources of authority; (4) internalized in individual personalities; (5) inculcated and strongly enforced early in life; and (6) classifiable as objects of consistent and prevalent conformity. Williams calls such norms "institutional norms" and explains (1960: 31) that "insitutional norms differ from other cultural norms primarily in the intensity of social sanctions and in the degree of consensus with which they are supported and applied. In other words, cultural norms are insitutional (i.e. social) insofar as they are made obligatory by effetive social agreement"....

bureaucracy have an ideology which is the result of the social reality in which both status groups find themselves. They also interact on very definite ideologies which are causally related to their social circumstances. Peasants, he maintains, may be conceived of as either a mass, a class, or a status group. They share a common life situation and their mode of existence is based on common sociocultural and socioeconomic conditions, and they share the same mode of thought and ideology. They lack regional or interregional communication, especially among themselves. They lack national unity or a national political system which binds them together. Similarly, they share a common life situation and view of social reality and common fate with respect to their relations with non-peasants, particularly with government officials. By virtue of their status the bureaucrats occupy the position of masters over and above the peasants. They share a common situation of subordination to traditional authority. The bureaucrats lead and command, peasants follow and obey. An indicator of the lack of group institutions and the continuation of system over the generations, he maintains, is reflected in the fact that although the bureaucracy has undergone change, innovation is still introduced from the top down.

These actual institutional norms relating to the peasantry and bureaucracy which Punyodyana describes are a valid description of these institutions on a macrosocietal level (although his determinist viewpoint that each group's ideology is the result of their social situation is, of course, open to question). But these institutional norms that he describes are self-evident truisms. The description of institutional norms that he gives us is so simplistic that it could be applied to virtually any peasant society. It tells us little about the actual structure and process of Thai society per se. But then a study of Thai society based on institutional norms as defined by Punyodyana could be little else, for his view that the institutional norm level of analysis is different from the interpersonal level, as far as Thai society is concerned at least, is based on a false dichotomy. Firstly because in Thai society most

of the factors which Punyodyana says define the institutional level (see footnote two pages back) are also applicable to the interpersonal level: Thus in Thai society the 'loose norms' which govern the 'interpersonal level' are also widely accepted and applied, are based on revered sources of authority,¹ internalised in individual personalities, inculcated and enforced in early life and classifiable as objects of consistent and prevalent conformity.²

Basically the fallacy as far as Thai society is concerned lies in the fact that he associates the 'institutional norm level' with 'law norms' which (1969: p87) 'require a certain course of conduct' and the 'interpersonal level' the analysing of which, he states, concerns itself with 'moral' or 'cultural' norms which 'recommend' a course of action and by their nature do permit variation in social (interpersonal) behaviour. But in Thai society at any rate, it is not valid or analytically worthwhile to differentiate between laws and moral norms. For it is apparent that in Thai society there are few 'law norms' operative. Even where they are operative sanctions, and this is a crucial argumentative factor, are generally absent. This is so within the peasantry and the bureaucracy; sanctions to enforce conformity are largely absent, as is obvious from the previous discussion of these groups. Since it is true that the peasants are the followers and the bureaucrats the leaders, it seems reasonable to suppose that bureaucrats will probably act towards peasants in an arbitrary fashion. However, in general they rarely come into contact with each other and it practised it seems reasonable to suppose that the bureaucracy have little influence on the lives of the peasants. Thus, since so few of the norms are 'law norms' any study within these terms will necessarily result in a very basic and simplistic analysis of Thai society, for once these

1. The source is Buddhism, as will be discussed later.
2. 'Loose norms' are inculcated early in life and the Thais do conform to these norms.

basic structures are studied more intensively than the analyst is confronted with the fact that the great majority of the norms governing both the peasantry and the bureaucracy are diffuse and lack sanctions. A stress on institutional norms in Thai society therefore can tell us little about about the structure and process of Thai society. Nor does such a study make the concept of loose structure 'irrelevant' as Punyodyana seems to think. Rather because a study of institutional norms can only be simplistic and very basic in nature, it does tend to emphasise to the observer how all pervading and socially significant are the 'loose' moral and cultural norms and lack of sanctions for Thai society as a whole.

In fact, this chapter has clearly revealed that as far as the norms are concerned, the loose structuralists have a point. Although there are exceptions, such as clear cut rights and duties involved in the exchange of agricultural labour, in general, rights and duties in Thai society are not normatively clearly defined and concomitantly sanctions are absent. Permanent groups also tend to be absent. But even where there are groups and institutions such as the bureaucracy and Sangha, they seem only to minimally regulate the behaviour of their members and certainly very rarely attempt to enforce conformity. As such, individuals do not, unlike in Japan, have to conform to the formal patterns of social relations. Rather the Thai, vis-a-vis the social structure does normatively seem to have a wide choice of action open to him.

This is not to suggest that the Thai do not have explicit standards of conduct: much the opposite as Phillips(1965:p40) points out:

There exists for all Thai, a relatively explicit and unquestioned set of standards of what is proper, desirable, or appropriate behavior.

But an examination of the literature tends to suggest that these standards are not particularist like the Japanese, but tend rather more towards what Parsons(1952) would call universalism : they do

1 Tirabutana's discussion of bad behaviour and gratitude in the classic work 'My Girlhood in Siam'(1958) is a clear example of the application of of a universalist standard. She states:

If we did something that did not please them, they would say we had no gratitude. Anyone who knows Thai people who are Buddhists well, would know how much that comment hurt their feelings. I remembered when I was a child, I used to quarrel with my sister about the giving business. "Yesterday when I had candy I gave you half but today you have it you don't give me any. Remember, next time you'll get nothing from me." Grandmother heard that, she called us both together in to sit in front of her and said, "Listen, darlings, when you give things to people you must not remember it. But you must remember when you have got things from people and must try hard to return their kindness. Buddha saw that the nobleman was happy when he had the chance of giving, just rascals or bad persons who were happy to get things from other people and then forget about it. You don't want to be a bad person do you? Almost every Thai was bred that way.

not define the particular rights and duties expected of a specific status holder, but are generalisable categories which are applicable to and define a whole class of activities.

Thus as in kinship relations, Thais, in general, are orientated by economic self interest. Social relationships in general too, are neither obligatory or reliable. They may be broken at any moment. Social relationships are unreliable because the maintenance of the relationship is dependant always on what the individuals involved in it can get out of it. Infact Phillips ^(1965: p 80) points out that Bang Chaners (and from the rest of the literature it seems applicable to Thai society/as a whole) do not expect social relationships to be reliable:

Bang Chaners faced with the breakdown in the fulfillment of commitments can of course point to the individual who directly caused it. But there is no satisfaction to be gained from this. The person who broke his obligation must have had his own good reason; and beyond this, there were probably other factors, unknown to both parties, that caused the breakdown. For most Bang Chaner's, all human relations are forever set within a framework of cosmic, and particularly moral, unpredictabilities. If things do not work out the way one expects, it is most likely due to the inauspiciousness of the time, place and persons involved... Whereas ^{most} Occidentals would point exclusively to the actions of the other persons as being both the necessary and sufficient cause of the interactional breakdown, Bang Chaners, who have considerably less confidence in human capabilities, would really not be sure. To them human volition represents only one of several indeterminate and uncontrollable factors giving rise to events. Who knows what accident, change of heart, sudden windfall - particularly one occasioned by something done by one of the parties several lives earlier might intervene to alter what had been originally been planned and agreed upon.

Infact even where rights and duties and clear cut standards are present individuals are not forced to conform. There are continuous references in the literature to the Thai tolerance for non-conformity, Phillips(1965: p 67) in Bang Chan points to the:

Extraordinary tolerance for non-conformity, personal deviance, failure, or the inability of individuals to live up to standards. In effect, the villagers seem to be saying that if another person is poor, weak, stupid, or naive, that is essentially his own business (or problem), not cause for ridicule or even amelioration. People are publicly accepted for what they are, despite their shortcomings.... no matter what an individuals status or personal qualities may be, he can generally expect to be well treated by others.

Certainly such an attitude as the Thais have is very different from that found in Japan and would certainly normatively allow the individual in Thai society a wider choice of action than his Japanese counterpart would have in general.

Yet although the formation of social relationships very much depends on the inclinations of individuals, nevertheless it is inevitable that people will co-operate and organisations will be formed for certain activities such as harvesting and transplanting as several specialists have pointed out e.g. Phillips (1965); Wijewardene (1965, 67); Piker (1968, 1969); Bramley (1969). But such collections of individuals, will, as these specialists point out tend to be of the non-binding type of relationship. As Wijewardene (1967: 83) says:

Organizations arise to fill specific tasks, but

there is no tradition of on-going associations which may be called on to fill any task that may arise.

Wijewardene (1965: p255; 1967: p67) coins the phrase 'pragmatic' to describe this type of social organisation which, from what has been discussed so far seems a very apt description

But although rights and duties tend predominantly to be diffuse these 'pragmatic' social relations operate within a clear framework: that of a patron-client system, i.e. the exchange of goods and services between individuals (see Mosel 1957: p292, Wilson 1960, 1959, Hanks and Hanks 1963: p433, Hanks 1962, Piker: 1968: p780, 1969: p65, Bramley 1969: p17 and Landon 1939: p147). This patron-client system provides a clear frame of reference for action.

One of the most continuous references made in the literature on Thai society is to the status system: to the presence of a status hierarchy, to the Thai sensitivity to status, to its pervasiveness throughout the system. As Phillips (1969: p30) himself admits:

There is no doubt that the Thai ranking represents one of the most clearly and tightly structured phenomena of Thai life. This is evidenced by, among other things, Thai speech patterns (pronouns, titles, honorifics), wearing apparel (including uniforms), decision making processes, and the fact that almost the first thing that any Thai learns about another Thai is the latter's status.

In such a society as the Thai where rights and duties predominantly are not defined, the individual is faced with the problem of whom he should have commitments with. The patron-client system provides the basis for such commitment. As Hanks (1962: p1249-1250) states:

The coherence of Thai society rests largely on the value of becoming a client of someone who has greater resources than one alone possesses, a person is ill-advised to try to fight one's own battles independently. Security grows with affiliation and the crowning moment of happiness lies in the knowledge of dependable benefits distributed in turn to faithful inferiors.

This is corroborated by Piker (1969: p65) who maintains that:

patron-client relationships play an important, perhaps dominant, role in village social life. The relationships to be sure are no less brittle in individual instances than other types of relationship. But the astute villager manages to cultivate them in sufficient number, and with sufficient safeguards to make total disaster unlikely. This poses less of a problem for the rich - who rely upon poorer

villagers to perform various services - than for the poor, for the latter vie for a chance to receive patronage benefits. Even the poorer villagers, however, normally inveigle their way into the good graces of a number of wealthier families - by helping nominally for free, with ceremonial work, farm labor, construction, or lesser tasks and, in a few instances, simply by being good company - so that in times of critical shortage a bucket or two of rice, or a cash loan repayable by labor in a subsequent farming season, can usually be obtained. Only the brashest or most inept villagers fail to protect themselves in this manner.

From an observer's point of view, an individual may have several clients and several patrons.¹ But to conceive of a patron and his clients as forming a group, as does Hanks (1962) is misleading for ~~not all~~ a client's relationship with his patron is dyadic and thus not all a patron's clients will necessarily know each other or interact with each other. Moreover, the patron himself will possibly be a client of a still more powerful patron(s) and they may neither know or interact with his clients. All such individuals would have in common is their dyadic relation with the central ego. Given this situation, the concept of 'action set' evolved by Mayer (1964) seems a more valuable way to conceptualise the individual's relationships with his patrons and clients. Obviously ~~the~~ action sets

1. This patron-client system is part of the conscious model of the Thais, the patron being called phuu yaay (big man) the client phuu nooy (little man). But it must also be borne in mind it is essentially an observer's model too. As such it may be applied to and has been applied to, the exchange of goods and services between varying types of individuals. On the one hand it may be applied to the relationship that coincides with the conscious model of the Thai i.e. the exchange of goods and services between a wealthy 'big man' and a poorer 'little man'. But it has also been possible to construct a purely observer's model of patron-client relations as Bramley ^(1964: 210) seems to do when categorising relations between kinsmen:

Like most dyadic relationships in Thai society, that which exists between older and younger kinsmen of the same or of different generations, takes a very generalised patron/client form; the senior member is expected to provide counsel and moral guidance, as well as material assistance when the need arises; whilst the the junior parteners should in turn pay heed to this advice, and give more tangible evidence of his deference as general factotum for his superior.

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will overlap and if the patron-client system is looked at from the point of view of Thai society as a whole it will be seen that these action sets, based on dyadic social relations between individuals of varying statuses, link up to form a complex network of social relations which serve to link up Thai society as a whole. Relationships, which it must be born in mind, however, are essentially 'pragmatic' in character.

Conclusion

This discussion of Thai society clearly demonstrates that if looked at from the point of view of the norms alone, both Embree and the loose structuralists have a point. Both in comparison with Japan and from the perspective of Thai society alone, although there are, of course, exceptions (as with every generalisation) such as the exchange of harvesting and transplanting labour, generally normative patterns and rights and duties tend not to be clearly defined. There are few groups and institutions present and where they are present, such as the wat, they tend to be simple structures which minimally regulate the lives of individuals, or organisations like the bureaucracy which reflect the central values of Thai society. Moreover, where they are present, individuals do not have to conform to the formal patterns of relations, and sanctions tend either to be absent or not used. In fact, to apply the term 'sanction' to Thai society tends to create the wrong impression. Social relationships in Thai society tend, therefore, to be highly flexible and easily adapted to the desires of individuals. Thus if Thai society is viewed from the norms alone, it is easily understandable how Sharp came to the conclusion that social relations in Bang Chan were amorphous and Phillips that social relations were unpredictable, as was mentioned in the introduction to this chapter.

2) Explanations of loose structure

How can the type of normative social structure found in Thai society be explained? Several specialists, e.g. Embree (1950), Wilson (1959, 1962) Phillips (1965) and Bramley (1969), primarily loose structurists, have attempted to explain it in various ways. Ecological, demographic, economic, social structural and world view factors have been used. But how valid are these explanations? Unfortunately, owing to the lack of 'hard facts' some of these explanations can only be examined and criticised on a very general and superficial level. As such it might be argued that such an analysis is not very profitable. But such an attempt does have a positive aspect, in that it will not only enable the reader to see some of the explanations in perspective but it will also throw further light onto the structure of Thai society and will also provide some fruitful lines of analysis for future research. For these reasons an examination and criticism of these explanations will be attempted.

Embree has his own view as to the reason for loose structure. He (1950: pl88) maintains that:

At the ^{local} group level, while the people live by wet rice agriculture, there seems to be a less closely woven pattern of co-operative organization for accomplishing agricultural labor as compared with, say, Japanese society. In considering this, and perhaps the family structure, too, it must be borne in mind that the number of people per square mile is not nearly so great in agricultural Thailand as it is in agricultural Japan or Vietnam. Dense population may enforce more carefully laid out modes of interpersonal conduct. Group pressures and set patterns of behaviour become more important for harmonious life where men live in little space.

But Embree's view that demography determines behaviour patterns is open to question. For examples can be cited of societies such as England which have a high population density but have a 'permissive' social structure! This tends to suggest that population density is

not a decisive cause and there is not a positive correlation between population density and the 'modes of interpersonal conduct'.

On the other hand, Wilson (1962: p48) not only argues tEmbree's point but also maintains that:

a factor of importance is strengthening Thai individualism has been the very substantial luxury of resources in which Thai society has developed..... Since their arrival in the valley of the Chao phraya River in the thirteenth century, the Thai people have had a surplus of land resources, the fundamental form of economic wealth. To this day population density in heavily cultivated areas of Thailand is below comparable areas in China, Japan, Vietnam or Java. This surplus had encouraged something of the pioneering spirit and economic self reliance among the Thai. Land surplus and low population density are correlated with loosely organized villages and geographic mobility....

However, the fact that Thai society has a surplus of land cannot be considered either a necessary or decisive factor in causing the aspects of Thai behaviour so far described. For examples can be cited of societies where there is a land surplus (and low population) such as Medieval England, under the feudal system, which have clearly defined normative patterns of behaviour and clear cut sanctions for attaining conformity. Moreover, if Thai society is examined, if Wilson's hypothesis were valid one would expect to find less clearly defined patterns of behaviour in the North and more clearly defined patterns of behaviour in the centre for the Central Plain is highly intensively cultivated, unlike the North. Yet, as the previous description of Thai society has shown, it is in the Central Plain that patterns are less clearly defined than in the North.

Bramley however, on a more specific issue, that of the existence of groups in Thai society, suggests that (1969: p313) there is little pressure upon individuals in Thai society to form permanent groups because there is no permanent need, arising from economic or political need. She states that there has been no need for permanent groups with political functions because they have primarily been restricted to the aristocratic families and they have resided in towns, thus there has been no ^{La} local land lord system. But,

as with other explanations studied so far, these factors cannot be considered decisive factors for examples can be cited of societies which have a similar situation, e.g. areas of China and Vietnam where bureaucrats and landlords live in towns and the peasants are cut off from national political life, but which, nevertheless, have political groups and a clearly defined political structure at the local level in rural areas. Her argument (1969: p309) as to why there is no economic need for permanent groups is similar to that of Wilson, although rather more sophisticated:

For our purposes Leach's study of the Singhalese village "Pul Eliya" provides perhaps the clearest analysis of the factors which prompt individuals in such a society to enter into co-operation. In Pul Eliya for example, social groups are formed to protect individual interests in scarce property holdings and, to ensure the day-to-day co-operation which is necessary to maintain the irrigation system. The same factors are however not operative in village Thailand where neither technological specialization, nor economic need, make group formation necessary to ensure present co-operation and to protect the interests of the next generation....Thailand's natural resources are very plentiful, a fact of which the Thais themselves are well aware. As the pressure on land increases, a situation not unlike that described by Leach (1961) may become operative, but as yet one can only speculate.

But Bramley's view that technological specialisation or economic need determine group formation is open to criticism. Not only because one can point to the existence of groups in societies where there is neither technological specialisation nor economic need, such as age-grade groups in some African tribal societies. But also in Thai society Wijewardene (1965) attempted to apply Leach's model to the land situation and residential community in South village. He argues that although the channelling of water in the fields involves a heavy investment of labour and capital, the basis of association in South village between the residential community and the village fields was not similar to that formed in Pul Eliya. It can be inferred that permanent groups did not evolve to protect common interests. Rather he came to the conclusion that 'the invariant aspects of landed property are matched by equally invariant aspects of law and morality'. Although this is only one

example and South village is rather unique in its setting, nevertheless, this suggests that economic need or technological specialisation is not a decisive cause. In fact, even if pressure on land increases, as Bramley suggests, it is very conceivable that permanent groups will not form if the lack of success of the modern co-operative organisations introduced by the government is anything to go by.

Lastly, Phillips referring to Bang Chan argues that (1965: p81):

Much of the non-conformity is undoubtedly made possible, in the first instance, by the sociologically simple and relatively undifferentiated nature of Ban Chan society; that is, the actual number of functionally specific tasks and roles, those that require special competencies are few, and any number of different individuals can perform them. Thus, when a Ban Chan employee walks out on his boss or when a wife walks out on her husband, their actions do not from a functional point of view disable the system. Since the requirements of the role of house servant or farm hand are characteristically simple and understood by all, the departing employee can usually be replaced by another individual. Similarly, since any adult - aunt; grandparents, older siblings - can and often does rear another's children and since there is always sufficient fish in the canal for an abandoned spouse to feed himself, the departure of a wife or husband need not from a functional point of view and the point of view of most villagers, work any great hardship on the individuals involved. This suggests that not all social systems are equally demanding in their functional requirements for people to conform.

But this argument of Phillips is essentially tautologous. However, he goes on to say (1965: p 82):

It is recognised of course, that the sociological simplicity of Bang Chan represents a necessary, but not sufficient, condition for the conformity found in the village community. There undoubtedly are many cultures which are functionally and sociologically less complex than Bang Chan but where culturally defined requirements for interpersonal conformity are considerably greater. I would suggest that the loosely structured nature of the relationships in Bang Chan is due primarily to psychological and philosophical (world view) factors and is permitted expression by the relatively undifferentiated social system. A more complex, highly differentiated social system, one whose functioning is completely dependant on the technical competencies of its members and on their meeting each other's expectations (a factory system) for example, obviously could not afford this luxury.

A discussion of the relationship of psychology to loose structure is beyond the scope of this thesis, but to what extent is the loosely structured nature of relationships in Bang Chan due to philosophical 'world view' factors?

Several other authors support Phillips contention (e.g. Wilson 1962: p47, Hanks 1962, and Piker 1968, 1969) and have attempted to explain loose structure in terms of world view. Wilson (1962: p47) sees the 'characteristic personal avoidance of regimentation by the 'Thai' as being supported by the world view - by Hinayana Buddhism. He says:

This conception of the cosmic role of the individual certainly reinforces the flexibility of permitted behavior and mitigates feelings of social obligation. The significance of any relationship between the cosmic outlook and social behavior is neither easily measured nor demonstrated. Nevertheless, the persuasive case made by Max Weber for the interdependence of cosmic view, religious interest and social behavior makes analogues wherever observed worthy of note.

Mulder (1968: p7), however, considers interpretations of Thai behaviour in terms of Buddhism spurious. He maintains:

Buddhist cosmic hierarchy or metaphysics have little to do with empirical social reality; too often the Buddhist cloak of charity has been used to cover the most unlikely phenomena.

The relationship between Buddhism and social behaviour has been a source of controversy since the time of Weber, if not before. But Mulder's view reflects an extreme empiricist position. To state, as he does, that Buddhism has little to do with 'social reality' is open to criticism on the count of being a false dichotomy for ideas are as much a part of 'social reality' as the individuals who hold them. Individuals do not exist in an idea-less world. As Weber has pointed out, the world view or belief system gives meaning to activity for it acts as a frame of reference to which the individual orientates his behaviour. Thus it is reasonable to argue that Buddhism, like all systems of belief, is very much part of 'social reality'.¹ But this is not to say, of course, that individuals act

1. Although of course, whether the anthropologist includes the system of belief depends on his a priori assumptions.

according to specific beliefs. As anthropologists have continuously pointed out in the last two decades, the actual relationship between the idea system and actual social behaviour is a matter for empirical study.

Bearing these factors in mind, to what extent can loose structure be explained in terms of Buddhism?¹ Phillips (1965: p88), the chief and most famous protagonist in this argument, discusses the major issues involved in 'Thai Peasant Personality'. He states:

Without going into a lengthy discussion of the subtleties of Buddhist doctrine, it is imperative to point out that the principle tenet of Hinayana Buddhism is the complete psychological freedom, isolation, and responsibility of every person. This is not the Occidental idea of "freewill", but rather the notion that every person is a free agent, responsible only to and for himself, and that he inevitably reaps the fruits of his own conduct. Buddhist canonical literature is replete with references stressing the centrality of this doctrine. The last words of the Lord Buddha before he left this world to achieve the sublime state of nibbhaan (nirvana) are said to have been: "Work out your own salvation with diligence." A frequently quoted passage of the Dhamapada reads: "By oneself is evil done; By oneself one suffers; By oneself evil is left undone; By oneself one is purified", The whole complex cosmology relating to the accumulation of merit and demerit is phrased in terms of the individual's lonely journey through cycles of interminable existences working out his own moral destiny. Who his progenitors were, what kind of environment he was born and reared in, what social advantages or disadvantages he was exposed to, are considered all secondary, and in some cases even insignificant, in influencing what he is and what he does. The life and career of Gautama himself is perfect testament to the essential irrelevance of these factors. (On the other hand, the attention given to these considerations in Western ontology

is a perfect expression of our "sociological bias". In our system, even our original moral state is determined by what someone else - Adam and Eve - did.) In Theravada Buddhism, an individual's worldly and cosmological condition - the former essentially a temporary, special case of the latter - is for the most part self generative, although because one never knows when the effects of one's kam may emerge it is also unpredictable.

These formulations translate and function on the level of workaday behavior in an extremely subtle manner. Every time a Bang Chaner is about to do something he does not ask himself whether it is in his own best moral interest... However, these formulations do impart a fundamental legitimacy to the pursuit of individualistic self-concern. More important, they establish - in a diffuse, unreflective, but nonetheless highly meaningful way - a definition of social reality that assumes the ultimate reference of ever person's act is himself. In those terms, social relationships become defined as either artifacts of, or media for, the attainment of one's own ends.

Bramley, however, contradicts Phillips' point of view. She (1969: p32) argues that:

Theravada Buddhism in practice, serves to promote social co-operation between individual actors, and that the Buddhist emphasis on the primacy of the individual action and individual responsibility does not, as Phillips would claim, constitute a 'major source of loose relationships' (Phillips 1967p363-4). It is certainly true that the Khammic actions of each actor are believed to determine his future status, and that no Saviour can intervene on his behalf. But the contention made by Phillips that 'The whole complex cosmology relating to the accumulation of merit and demerit is phrased in terms of the individual's lonely journey through cycles of interminable existences working out his own moral destiny.' (Phillips 1967 p363) bears no relationship to the situation on the ground.... the emphasis in merit making is not upon renouncing ones' ties and material possessions, but rather upon giving for a specific return, whether tangible or intangible; the phrase tham dii:dai di (Do good:receive good) is given a very literal interpretation on a practical level.

Certainly, Bramley shows quite clearly in her thesis that Buddhist beliefs have a practical implementation and tend to maintain and strengthen social ties. In her analysis of the role of the monk, their attributes and functions for the laity and the Sangha's appeal for different social strata she certainly shows that

as far as the social implications of Buddhism are concerned, it is very much a 'this worldly' religion. For instance, she (1969: p64) points out that the concept of merit sanctions reciprocal exchanges at life crisis rituals:

the necessity of holding ^{personal} life-crisis rituals, of which ordination is one of the most important, gives rise to a system of reciprocal exchanges between laymen, which is sanctioned by the ideology of merit-making; that is to say that if individual X contributes 100 baht to the cost of a cremation ceremony sponsored by individual Y, who may be a kinsman or merely a friend or business associate, - then Y should reciprocate by bringing an equivalent amount when X's son enters the Sangha the following year.

Other specialists have also made similar observations as to the social implications of Buddhism. Tambiah (1968) for instance studies the concept of monk and its relationship to ritual reciprocity between generations in Ban Phran Muan. Mosel (1967), in his study of the Thai bureaucracy points out that the view of the world as being unknowable fosters the emphasis on 'personal' relationships prevalent in the bureaucracy and the quid pro quo as a major basis for exchange. Mulder (1968) has discussed the relationship between the concept of merit as a motivating factor and social and economic change and comes to the conclusion that the practical effects of the concept are no bar to such change. Lastly, Moerman (1966) discusses the social implications of the wat in Ban Ping.

But although Buddhist beliefs have social consequences and do serve to promote social co-operation between individuals as Bramley states, this, therefore, does not mean, as she seems to think, that Phillips' emphasis on the primacy of the individual's action and the individual's responsibility as a major source of loose relationships is inaccurate. To view the significance of Buddhism as a matter of either/or is the product of confused thinking.

In the previous discussion it was demonstrated that from a normative point of view the loose structurists have ~~a~~ point when they stress the lack of normative rules and clearly defined rights and duties and the consequent stress on the individual. If loose structure is conceived of as referring to the normative level alone then it is axiomatic that the lack of clearly defined normative patterns and rights and duties is derived from and the product of the content of the world view. Since the world view is a structurally and functionally interrelated mass of Buddhist, Brahmanist and animist beliefs, Phillips' view that Buddhism is a 'major source of loose relations' from a normative point of view is very relevant. His reference to the importance of Buddhism attaches to the individual, to the fundamental legitimacy it imparts to the pursuit of self concern and his view that Buddhism postulates a definition of social reality that assumes that the ultimate reference of every person's act is himself, seems a reasonable explanation, as far as it goes, of the relationship between the content of ideas and the norms, as to why the normative rules are not clearly defined.

Obviously, there are no doubt a great many other aspects of the content of ideas that foster the lack of clearly defined rights and duties and lack of sanctions. But there is neither the literature nor the space available to go into them intensively. However, it is worthwhile to point to a few other aspects of Buddhism which tend to foster 'loose' norms for this will throw greater light on the subject and will give greater credence to Phillips' interpretation.

Theravada Buddhism, or the Lesser Vehicle (as it is sometimes known), provides the basic framework for the Thai belief system. Buddhist beliefs act as standards in assessing the value, propriety and significance of human actions. Those beliefs provide a corpus of knowledge for rationalising and sanctioning certain types of behaviour and disapproving of others.

But such a world view as Buddhism does not favour clearly defined specific particularist normative rules which either root the individual permanently into a social category or position and/or

into carrying out clearly defined rights and duties, or the presence of sanctions. Concepts such as 'the world is in flux', the Buddhist stress on timelessness, the belief that man cannot control the world and that his position is the result of his karma, do not favour - in fact, are incompatible with - a clearly defined mandatory particularist normative rule system. Rather, Buddhism tends to foster a diffuse universalist achievement orientated normative system.

Buddhist beliefs only give a general broad outline of existence and guide to behaviour; they cannot be used to explain all aspects of everyday affairs that the peasants consider important. The Thai belief system does not give answers about specific ends and choices and it does not solve some of the problems that it raises. It does not postulate where and to whom one should fix one's commitment. Buddhism offers no guidelines, except on the most general universalist level, which individuals could use to evaluate their behaviour. Unlike in the Japanese world view, there are no moral rules prescribing how individuals should act towards each other which could be used as the basis of rights and duties. Even the concept of merit, although it provides a standard for judging behaviour and prescribes acts which are meritorious, stresses the individual achieving his own salvation. Such a world view as this would not favour - indeed, would mitigate against - the derivation of rules defining how individuals in certain statuses ought to act towards each other.

The Buddhist emphasis on the individual seeking his own salvation is also incompatible with the derivation of ascriptive rules, for, according to Buddhist thought, as Phillips points out, who a man's ancestors were, what kind of environment he was born in, what social advantages or disadvantages he was exposed to and what colour his skin happened to be, were of secondary importance to his karmic status. Such a world view would rather favour emphasis on status than on role. According to the Buddhist world view an individual's actions are graded as meritorious (bun) or sinful (bab).

An individual's position and effectiveness in this world, after death and in the next life depend on his balance of 'pluses' and 'minuses', that is his karma. Thus the concept of karma fosters a status system, for the Thai view of the world ranks men according to what they consider their karmic status to be. In fact, Parsons (1952: p183) states that:

Universalism favours status determination i.e. the allocation to personnel of facilities and rewards, and role treatment on the basis of generalised rules relating to the classificatory qualities and performances independantly of relational foci.

Putting the onus on the individual does not favour the development of collective identification. It makes it difficult for a Thai to identify with a group or institution or even a role in an abstract way. Certainly, this is Mosel's (1967) contention for the lack of identification with the bureaucracy on the part of bureaucrats. Moreover, the stress on the individual seeking his own salvation does not favour the presence of group sanctions or formal normative sanctions of any kind. Since Buddhism postulates that a man will reap the fruits of his actions it does not favour concepts of group responsibility. Rather it tends to foster the idea that it is up to the individual how he ought to behave and he will reap the rewards of bad actions anyway. Even where individuals do interact, Buddhism, as Phillips pointed out when discussing family relationships, tends to foster the assumption that relationships will tend to be unreliable, for Buddhism postulates that there are two levels of reality - the level of phenomenal reality, that is the world we live in, and the underlying reality, the karmically conditioned. The former is dukkha (sorrow), uncontrollable and in a state of flux. The karmically conditioned is the 'real' level which 'explains' all the appearances of the phenomenal reality. Such a view of the world would be unlikely to foster mandatory obligations. Moreover, this belief in the unreliability of relationships is strengthened by the belief that individuals should pursue their own salvation for it leads others to believe that individuals will pursue their own

self interest and be exploitative when dealing with them. Thus Piker (1968: p778), a staunch supporter of the view that Buddhism is an important factor in explaining Thai 'loose' social relations, argues:

Believing that the intentions of others vis-à-vis himself are callous, indifferent, or exploitative, the villager is reluctant to involve himself emotionally with others lest he be rebuffed. As a result, interpersonal relations of all degrees beyond a minimally extended kin group exhibit little acknowledged mutual involvement or obligation; and even within the family interpersonal relations often manifest a structural looseness which reflects the same set of attitudes.

This description of how Buddhism fosters the lack of clearly defined normative rules and sanctions in Thai society demonstrates that Bramley's statement, in seeing Buddhism as a source of loose relationships, at least as a source from which the normative rules are derived is unfounded. But there is more to the significance of Buddhism than that of being a major source of loose norms. The

significance of Buddhism and society is not a matter of either/or, as Bramley seems to think. Rather, it seems reasonable to argue that it is the very fact that Buddhism stresses the unknowableness of the world; stresses the individual, the ultimate reference for every individual's act being himself; and that it does not state who an individual should have obligations and commitments to, that pushes the individual into interacting and co-operating with individuals and results in clearly defined patterns.

Phillips (1965: pp92-3) himself was very aware of the social implications of Buddhism, unlike Bramley seems to think, and states that 'what keeps the social system running relatively smoothly', given the definition of reality that assumes that the ultimate reference of every person's act is himself, 'is the assumption that every person is acting on precisely the same basis, and the realization that one's own purposes are best served by acts of reciprocation.' He goes on to say:

The entire Thai social system is ultimately dependent on it.

Individuals become involved with others and do things for them because they consciously expect others to respond in kind. This applies to the relationships existing between family members who live together because such an arrangement is most advantageous to each; to the father who gives his son an ordination in order that the latter will make merit for him and feel obligated to care for him when he becomes old; to the friends and relatives who make merit for the departed soul because of the good things he had done for them during his lifetime; to the adults who feel obligated to their childhood teacher because of the knowledge, and thus power, he imparted to them. It might well be, as Mauss (1954 (originally 1923-1924), translated by Cunnison) and Homans (1961) have argued, that human relationships everywhere are based on just such a consideration, usually concealed by ethically palatable amenities (such as in American culture, from which most of Homan's empirical materials come). However, what is so intriguing about the Thai case is that quid pro quo factors are for ever in mind as justifications and explanations of why people relate to one another. Although villagers, because they are such polite people, rarely say to others, "I am helping you because I know the day will come when I need your help," or "Do this for me because you owe me a favour," they do use such arguments to explain the basis of their ties: "Of all my friends I love Lek the most because she has done me the most favors (bunkhuns)"; "The purpose of marriage is to have a companion who will take care of you when you get sick"; "Of all my daughters, the one who gives me the greatest pleasure is the one who sells things....When she gets money she gives it to me"....

Similarly, Mosel, in his article 'Fatalism in Thai Bureaucratic Decision Making' (which has just been mentioned previously) bears out this interpretation for he points to aspects of the world view which foster loose normative relations as resulting in highly personalised relationships in the Thai bureaucracy. He argues that unlike in the West where bureaucrats base their decisions on anticipated outcomes, for the Thai, given their world view that the world is in flux, unknowable and the future uncontrolled, the perceived probabilities which link alternatives to various outcomes become quite unclear and difficult to determine. Such a view as this makes planning ahead difficult for Thai bureaucrats. Instead they tend to rely on coping or planning within a very limited timespan, within the temporal limits of predictability. This

view results in the Thai bureaucrat operating diffuse norms. He plays situations by ear. He prefers to remain loose and uncommitted and thus free to take advantage of situations as they occur. But these loose norms foster a system of reciprocity within the bureaucracy, for, as Mosel (1967: p197) says:

An essential ingredient in this coping is the use of the social manipulations as a means of goal accomplishment. And here one of the most universal of culturally prescribed techniques is the quid pro quo. One gains action and support by virtue of expectations arising out of reciprocity. The calculus of reciprocity allows a quid to be repaid by a quo of a very different kind. Thus there can be considerable uncertainty concerning the nature of the quo that one may request to provide in return for a previously received quid. So wide spread is this practise in administrative circles, that virtually any quid, whether solicited or volunteered, will be seen as validating the donor's request for a quo at some future date.

Thus the content of ideas which fosters 'loose' rules which pose problems in terms of goals, commitments and obligations for the individual, also provides the answer for solving these problems: The loose normative rules derived from the Buddhist world view result in co-operation.

Thus too with the concept of merit: Certainly the 'whole complex cosmology relating to the accumulation of merit and demerit is phrased in terms of the individual's lonely journey through cycles of interminable existences working out his own moral destiny' (Phillips 1967: p363) and it does seem reasonable to assume that this belief is a major source of loose normative rules; but, although it might seem a contradictory statement to make, it is only through interacting socially and doing meritorious acts that the individual can pursue his lonely journey. Buddhist beliefs are the source of both loose norms and social co-operation on the ground level. The actual significance of Buddhist beliefs for actual social organisation on the ground level, however, is a matter for investigation by the anthropologist, the studies previously described, it is hoped, are but the first of many.

3) Coherence in Thai society

From the discussion in this chapter so far a reader used to viewing social behaviour from the point of view of what might be called 'the collectivity bound' conception of the social order might come to the conclusion that coherence as a subjective category is lacking for the Thai and might also come to the conclusion, as did Sharp, that Thai society is amorphous and, with Phillips, that behaviour is unpredictable. For as Piker (1969: p69) says:

The collectivity-bound conception of ~~the~~ social order implies that coherence as a subjective category, depends largely on a mutuality of expectations among interacting individuals and that this in turn depends upon cognitive mastery of the definitions of situations - prescriptions, proscriptions, and sanctions - that describe formal role and/or group membership both for ego and its opposite numbers. Since individual behavior in Thai society, however, often is not collectivity bound in the strict sense, the individuals sense of coherence as a participating member must derive at least ^{in part} from other factors.

But since coherence for the Thai is not derived from clear cut particularistic rules and sanctions, what are these other factors from which coherence is derived?

There is not the material evidence to study this problem intensively but it is worth pointing to a few factors that seem to perform this function and contribute to the subjective coherence of the Thais, which could be used as the basis for future intensive study. Hanks (1962: pl247), in a highly influential article, 'Merit and Power in the Thai Social Order', postulates that:

Instead of presenting a vista of persons occupying fixed positions in the social order, I emphasize persons moving in their fixed setting, like players with their rules and tactics on a football field.

This framework, he argues, is the Thai social hierarchy. This hierarchy, he states (1962: p1253), 'and the movement of people in it have been derived from the single function of merit'. He maintains that the concept of merit is reflected in the ordering of the Thai social hierarchy and the hierarchy is articulated by a patron-client system based on reciprocity. Although Hanks' hypothesis is open to criticism on the ground of being far too simplistic in interpretation alone, and in the next chapter several fallacies in the crucial assumptions in his hypothesis will be discussed, nevertheless, as far as the particulars of his argument are concerned, he has a point. For the concept of merit, status, patron-client relationships and reciprocity do seem to contribute to providing a coherent frame of reference for the Thais.

Sensitivity to the concept of phayng (~~dependence~~) which forms the basis of the patron-client system, seems to be all pervading in Thai society and acts as a clear cut frame of reference for the Thais, the concept of merit validating these relationships. For, as Hanks (1962: p1247) points out:

As good Buddhists, the Thai perceive that all living beings stand in a hierarchy of varying ability to make actions effective and of varying degrees of freedom from suffering. As actions become more effective, beings suffer less; the two vary together; such is the nature of existence.

This view certainly legitimises status and the position of the patron and client. Moreover, it reinforces the coherence of the patron-client system for it results in individuals who want to validate their positions as patrons acting 'noblesse oblige', thus reinforcing the patron-client system. As Bramley (1969: p17) points out:

It is incumbent upon a wealthy individual to support numerous clients and other dependants, some of whom may be poor relations. Such expenditure not only serves to validate his social status but also brings ^{speculated} benefits in that charitable actions of any kind are felt to be highly meritorious in religious terms.

Furthermore, the concept of merit, in pushing individuals

into actions with others in order to achieve merit, and the concept, of reciprocity, discussed previously, no doubt serve as a coherent frame of reference for the Thais. Certainly, reciprocity is repeatedly referred to in the literature (e.g. Moerman 19966: p158, ~~Parker~~ 1968: p778-9, Hanks 1962: p 1249, Phillips 1965, Tambiah 1968) for all areas of Thailand and it does seem a major principle of coherence. The significance of reciprocity for the villagers is clearly summed up by Moerman and Tambiah. Moerman (1966: p158), in describing reciprocity in Ban Ping, states:

The society of Ban Ping operates in terms of something got for every soemthing given. This is not merely an analytic device which predicts a predictive, if crass, view of any human society. It is the way in which the villagers explain and evaluate their own behavior. Favor for favor, visit for visitt, meal meal for meal, one should return what he receives. 'We help our kinsmen because they help us. If a kinsmen, however close, didn't help me, I wouldn't help him'.

Whilst Tambiah (1968: p117) says:

Reciprocity is a conspicuous social norm in the village. It is expressed in mutual aid, in economic tasks in which the notion of equivalence of giving and receiving is explicit. It is also expressed in household rites and ceremonials at which the guests make gifts of cash, the amounts given are scrupulously noted down and the equivalent value (or a little more) is given when the donor stages his own ceremonial.

In fact, as Moerman (1966: p159) points out, reciprocity tends to be articulated in terms of merit.

This discussion, albeit brief and highly generalised, does tend to indicate that coherence as a subjective category is present in Thai culture, but it tends to suggest that it will be found not in clear cut particularistic rules and sanctions but in clear cut universalist standards such as merit, reciprocity and respect; factors that were not taken into account in the original article by Embree.

Moreover, the discussion tends to suggest that it is reasonable to speculate that if the social implications of merit, reciprocity and the patron-client system in general are analysed and a study is made of the principles underlying them, organisation and system in Thai society might be revealed.

Chapter 1V

Loose Structure: Normative and Pragmatic?

In the previous chapter some of Embree's views as to the difference between Thai and Japanese society and the major ideas of the loose structurists were examined. But as yet two important, in fact two crucial, issues in the argument have not been discussed. These are Embree's actual definition of 'loose structure', which is 'a culture in which considerable variation of individual behavior is sanctioned(pl82),' and also his statement that 'While obligations are recognized, they are not allowed to burden one unduly. Such as are sanctioned are observed freely by the individual - he acts of his own will, not as the result of social pressure.(pl84)'¹

But to what extent is Embree's definition and latter view valid? What he means by 'a considerable variation of individual behavior' is obvious, but the word 'sanctioned' has a less obviously clear meaning. According to Murray's Shorter Oxford Dictionary (1933:pl786), 'sanctioned' means 'to ratify or confirm by sanction or solemn enactment; to authorize, to countenance (a law etc) by attaching a penalty to transgression.' Obviously the Oxford Dictionary is not infallible and cannot always be considered absolute, but in this case, assuming that Embree does mean to use the term 'sanction' in the general way, it can be inferred that he means that in Thai society a considerable variation of individual behaviour is countenanced or authorized. But countenanced or authorized

1. He makes this statement with reference to family social relationships but it is reasonable to infer from the way in which he states it that he meant it to be applicable to the whole of Thai society.

countenanced by whom? From the emphasis Embree places on normative patterns and normative rights and duties in his article it seems justified to assume that he means normatively sanctioned. That is, Embree expresses his definition of loose structure in normative terms. When he makes the statement 'a considerable variation of individual behavior is sanctioned', he in fact means that in Thai society a considerable variation of individual behaviour is sanctioned by the normative rules. However, although Embree's definition is in normative terms, his statement that individuals act 'according to their own ~~free~~ will, not according to social pressure' and a close study of his article as a whole¹ reveal quite clearly that he does not differentiate between the normative

1. Embree's implicit assumption that Thai society is loosely structured on both these levels can be inferred from some of the examples he gives to prove that Thai society is loosely structured. For instance, he says (p182-3):

The first characteristic of Thai culture to strike an observer from the West, or from Japan or Vietnam, is the individualistic behavior of the people. The longer one resides in Thailand the more one is struck by the almost determined lack of regularity, discipline, and regimentation in Thai life. In contrast to Japan, Thailand lacks neatness and discipline; in contrast to the Americans, the Thai lack respect for administrative regularity and have no industrial time sense....When two or three Thai walk along the road together there is no attempt to keep in step or to swing the arms in rhythm. On the contrary, each individual walks along as if he were alone.

Embree also refers to the weak military tradition of the Thais, to their little aptitude for soldiering; to their unreliability and art for diplomacy; to the complete physical insecurity of property and the difficulties Thai students have of adjusting to Thai life on returning home from a period abroad. Such examples as these are not referring to normative rules, the terms in which he defines his theory, but to what actually happens. They are examples from an observer's model. In fact, the great majority of his examples are instances of what actually happens.

'conscious' level and the pragmatic level, the level of what actually happens.¹

Similarly the major supporters of Embree's theory such as Phillips (1965), Sharp et al (1953), Wilson (1959, 1962) and Hanks (1962), who have been responsible for its diffusion and present day popularity, in their own interpretations of Embree's theory do not differentiate between the normative and pragmatic levels either and implicitly seem to assume that he is applying it to both levels. Their implicit assumption that Embree is applying 'loose structure' to both analytical levels can be inferred from the fact that in their descriptions of Embree's theory, they all describe the emphasis he placed on individualism, and at the same time, in describing the reasons he gives to support his theory, give examples that refer to the pragmatic level. Piker (1969: p61), a supporter of loose structure, albeit a late comer, for instance states:

Embree's exemplary materials, moreover, indicate that he construes "variation in individual behavior" largely with reference to the patterns of mutuality and obligation one might suppose to be entailed by formal role or collectivity membership; in other words, in Thai society such patterns are widely abrogated in practice.

Moreover in their own work, Phillips (1965), Sharp (1953), Hanks (1962) and Wilson (1959; 1962) generally either do not differentiate between the normative and pragmatic levels or, especially in the case of Hanks, apply it to both levels. Phillips, for instance ~~on the other hand~~, states (1965: p60):

Siamese first and foremost, ^{are} free and independent souls. Much of the time they fulfill each others expectations, but this is only because they want to, not because others expect it of them, or because the social situation demands it. It is the individual that is primary not the social relationship.

Whilst on the other hand in 'Thai Peasant Personality' (1965: p78-79).

1. For the sake of clarity and short hand, I am going to use F.G. Bailey's term 'pragmatic' for the model of 'what actually happens'.

he explains 'loose structure' in pragmatic terms:

While Embree's formulation is by definition phrased in social structural terms, it inevitably directs our attention to an underlying motivational issue; the nature of the villager's disposition to conformity. Conformity to the expectations of others - whether such expectations are shared, complementary, or emergent - is of course a basic requisite of all effective social action. It is perfectly clear, as was demonstrated in the earlier discussion, that Bang Chaners are highly motivated to conform while in the presence of others. Often there is over-conformity when in such situations villagers become overtly solicitous to what they think are the needs of others. However, the hall-mark of Thai social relations is that there never is any certainty that such face-to-face contacts will take place, or if they do take place, that the conformity which exists during the direct encounter will be sustained once the contact has ended. The overriding inclination of the Bang Chaner is to separate the encounter itself from that which precedes or follows it; psychologically they are independent and unrelated experiences. The typical Bang Chaner excels at the art of indicating agreement with people - responsiveness, co-operativeness, and compliance with their verbal requests and orders - and then once the situation has been concluded, doing precisely what he wants, often the exact opposite of that to which he had agreed.

The fact that Embree and his supporters in their studies of the loose structure of Thai society do not make clear which level they are referring to must be considered a major criticism of the loose structuralists' school of thought, for it results in ambiguity and, as will become apparent in the following analysis, conveys a misleading picture of Thai society on the pragmatic level. Since, however, they apply 'loose structure' to both analytical levels, the validity of applying 'loose structure' to both levels will now be tested.

1) Normative level

It is apparent from the discussion in the previous chapter that the loose structurists, from a normative point of view, had great insight when they pointed to the lack of clearly defined normative patterns, rights and duties and to the unimportance and absence of groups. Even where they are present sanctions are absent or not used and the individual generally does not have to conform to the rules if he does not want to. This tends to suggest that the individual has a wide choice of action open to him vis-a-vis the normative social structure.

But actual face-to-face relationships tend to be the exact opposite, being normatively clearly defined and actually conformed to. When interacting with others, individuals are expected to be polite, co-operative, flattering and self-effacing, to deal with all problems in a self controlled manner and to assume an attitude of indifference and non-involvement in periods of stress and to avoid situations of violence and conflict at all costs. As Phillips (1965: p79) says of Bang Chaners and, from the literature, it seems applicable to Thai society in general:

It is perfectly true that Bang Chaners are highly motivated to conform and even to over conform in face-to-face relationships.

But these modes of interaction tend to be highly ritualistic. In fact, Phillips refers to them as 'social cosmetics'. As such they do not prevent the individual having a wide choice of action. Rather it could be argued that in such a society as this where relationships from a normative point of view are liable to be unreliable and difficult to determine - "unknowable" - such ritualistic forms of interaction function to smooth over what would otherwise be difficult social relationships.

2) Pragmatic level

But in actual practice does the individual have such a wide choice of action open to him as the loose structuralists imply? Are the choices Thais make based on their own will alone? Do they in actual practice act of their own will, not according to social pressure? Are there really no constraints on the Thais behaviour as the loose structuralists would have us believe? Moreover the loose structuralists convey to us a picture of irregularity, amorphousness and lack of organisation in Thai society. But is Thai behaviour so random, chaotic and unpredictable as Phillips would have us believe; or as amorphous and unstructured as Sharp suggests?

Certainly from a statistical point of view, Thai behaviour is anything but random. It is possible to categorise Thai data into statistical regularities. Infact Moerman (1966: p167) comes to the conclusion that in Thai society:

the regular patterns of social life are... more statistical than ~~juridical~~ jurual.

X The fact that behaviour can be categorised into clear statistical patterns tends to suggest that constraints and incentives on individuals' choice of action tend to foster most individuals in similar situations to choose the same course of action. Certainly the previous discussion of coherence in Thai society suggests that the patron-client system, reciprocity and merit which tends to orientate behaviour in certain ways will be reflected statistically in patterns of behaviour. Moreover, looking at the actual organisation of Ban Ping it appears that the villagers can be highly organised. Moerman (1967: p419), in his description of Ban Ping's response to the threat of guerilla invasion, commonly known in the literature as the 'Great Meo Panic', maintains that the villager's response to this threat was not loosely structured, but highly organised:

Those for whom rural Thailand means only the central plains are likely to be surprised at Ban Ping's reactions to the attack announcement. The native organization of a sentry force, appeals to village history and to village pride, the feeling that the village should act as a unit the fact that no single household took solitary refuge, the mutual concern of kinsmen, neighbors - all this seems foreign to the alleged "loose structure" of Thai society (Embree 1950).

Although this does not of course establish that Thai society is highly organised it does show that the loose structuralists theory is inadequate to explain social behaviour in all areas of Thailand and tends to suggest that if organisation is sought within a different framework it may be found.

But although these factors tend to suggest that further enquiry along these lines would reveal that choice of action in actual practice is more limited than the loose structuralists imply, it is impossible to test the loose structuralists' hypothesis positively i.e. determine how much choice the Thais actually have, for, given the infinite number of decisions the individual makes, it is neither methodologically sound nor is there enough material available to do so. But although it is impossible to determine positively the amount of choice of action the Thais have in actual practice, it is possible to analyse the constraints and incentives (if any) that affect the choices individuals make in a limited number of situations. It is continuously pointed out in the literature, especially by loose structuralists, that the Thais are geographically and socially mobile. Infact some loose structuralists e.g. Wilson (1959,1962); Hanks (1962) and Embree (1950) see it as a concomitant of loose structure. Wilson(1962: p48-49) clearly sums up this view when he states:

The fluidity of social status characteristic of both traditional and modern Thailand appear to be a natural correlative of the individualistic type of personality. Both social mobility and geographic mobility are clear aspects of the society. Mobility and its relationship with individualism contribute to the weakness of group and community institutions... Geographic mobility goes hand in hand with an idealized tradition of mobility up and down the scale of social status.

'Social mobility' in Thai society has become a crucial issue in the polemic and as Kirsch (1969: p51) points out some measure of mobility is at least implicit in the loose structure hypothesis and infact Embree's supporters seem to have accepted this view. As such the degree to which the Thais are socially and for that matter geographically mobile can be considered a valid test of the loose structure hypothesis on the pragmatic level. For if in Thai society individuals

do act 'according to their own will, not according to social pressure' then, logically, in such a normatively 'open' society one would expect to find both geographic and social mobility. If there is no geographic or social mobility, or it is minimal, then it is reasonable to infer that there are factors present which restrict such mobility, and that it is reasonable to conclude that as far as geographic and social mobility are concerned individual's choice of action is constrained and they do not act according to their own will but according to social pressure. If there is limited choice in such a crucial area as geographic and social mobility, then it seems reasonable to assume that such constraining factors will also be found in other social spheres.

In the following pages therefore, in order to test the applicability of the loose structuralists' hypothesis at the pragmatic level, a study of geographic and social mobility in both the past and the present will be carried out.

Geographic Mobility

In the literature, especially amongst the loose structuralists, there is a large body of opinion (Embree 1950: p185, ~~Kinstadter~~ 1967: p372, Wijewardene 1967: p69, Wilson 1962: p48-9, Hanks 1962: p1257, Sharp 1953: p23) holds that the Thais are geographically mobile and always have been. By geographic mobility is normally meant a movement away from the original place of residence.

The history of the Thais is obscure and there is little actual evidence to back up any statement made concerning the geographic mobility of the Thais prior to the censuses of the last fifty years. Any statement made concerning the geographic mobility of the Thais prior to this period must necessarily be conjecture and therefore highly tentative. Although this thesis is primarily concerned with the present and near past it is worth analysing the past geographic mobility of the Thais as far as it is possible as this will throw light on, and help to dispell some of the myths which surround, the present day geographic mobility of the Thais.

In the literature there is a large body of opinion, including Embree (p181), that argues that the Thai peoples originally migrated in vast droves from China in response to Han Chinese pressure during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. This theory as to the origins of the Thais has become firmly entrenched. In fact it has become one of the 'sacred cows' of Thai history.

Wherever the Thais may have originated from, and this is still a source of controversy, to what degree were the Thais actually mobile during this period?

It has been suggested by Solheim (1964: p46) that:

The biological ancestry of the present day Thai is probably found, as much in neolithic and later prehistoric populations of Thailand as in the population of the Thai-speaking peoples of southwestern China

Solheim's theory is backed up by a seminar, held in 1965, organised

by the Faculty of Archaeology at Silpakorn University on 'Who are the ancestors of the Thais'. Dr. Sood Sangvichien, a participant physical anthropologist, who has studied skeletons dated about c.1500 B.C. found by the Thai Danish Prehistoric expedition at Ban Gao in the Kwae Noi River valley, Kanjanburi Province, is willing to state that the significant physical characteristics of the neolithic population of Ban Gao can also be found in the present population of Thailand. Hiram Woodward reporting on the findings of this seminar in the Social Review (1965: p22) stated:

This suggests but does not prove two things: that some of the inhabitants of Thailand can number the neolithic population among their lineal ancestors and that after about 1500 B.C. there was no great ethnically distinct migratory wave that either killed off the existing population or set them off in search of a new homeland.

Solheim's, Sangvichiens' and Woodward's statements tend to suggest that even in prehistoric times Thai society was not very geographically mobile. Instead of mass migration of Thais from Nan Chao (and it is open to debate that Nan Chao ever had a large Thai-speaking population)¹ during the twelfth and thirteenth centuries Thai migration probably involved, as DeBaro (1964: p187) says, the infiltration southwards of small Thai-speaking ruling military elites who gradually assimilated with the indigenous population; this assimilation resulting in the Thai-isation of many aspects of the indigenous people's culture.²

If the assumption that the Thais, as a whole, were not a very mobile people is possibly inaccurate, is it accurate to say that in historical times (that is since the time of Ram Kam Heng, c.1276 - 1317) and in the present day the Thais have been geographically mobile?

1. See Credner (1935)

2. This theory would also help to explain why the Thai peoples vary in physical appearance and why there is a diversity of beliefs and institutions at the local level. For instance, as Ayabe (1961) points out, unilineal kinship patterns are predominant from northern Laos as far as Tonkin whereas to the south and west, including the Shans of Burma, bilateral characteristics are more noticeable.

If Quaritch Wales was right in his assumption that during the Sukodhaya period Thai society was organised on the basis of territorial and kinship principles along feudal lines¹ it seems probable that such a form of social organisation would not foster geographical movement.² In such a feudal society rights over land would be defined by residence factors. Unless an individual resided in the domain of his lord he would have no rights to cultivate land. In a subsistence society such a factor would restrict geographic mobility. More importantly, even if an individual could get rights to cultivate land in another fief of his lord, the lord would be unlikely to allow an individual to move outside his fief since the maintenance of his position would depend on retaining as many followers as possible who could fight and cultivate land for him.

Although this is pure inference and it cannot, of course, be stated conclusively that the Thais were or were not geographically mobile during this period, from the available facts it does seem reasonable to infer that the mobility of the Thais during this period was limited at least to their natal fief.

However during the Ayuddhia period (c.1350 - 1765)³ according to Wales during the reign of King Trailok (1448 - 1488), Thai society was reorganised, being altered from a territorial basis to a personal basis. Previously an individual had owed loyalties to his feudal lord, then he owed them to the state⁴ on a personal basis. Supposedly, from the literature, this re-organised social system remained with some later modifications until the 1890's when the bureaucracy began to be modernised along western lines.

1. See Wales 1934: p44 for further information.
2. He also agrees with the idea that there was a system of territorial restrictions on movement during this period.
3. There is a controversy as to when these changes took place, whether they were the result of the law of the Civil Hierarchy of A.D. 1454 (see Wales 1934) or whether they were introduced gradually over a longer period, prior to this law.
4. 'State' here being defined in its loosest sense, of course.

um / In this re-organisation during the Ayuddhia period Thai society was still organised hierarchically. At the top was the king and royal family, below the king was a strata of officials who administered the country in his name. But, unlike previously, official's positions were not hereditary and based on territorial rights. They were appointed by the king and retained their officials' status, offices and concomitant power at the king's will. If they retired or were dismissed by the king, they lost both office and power. Beneath the strata of officials were freemen and beneath the freemen were slaves, both redeemable and unredeemable.

In this new system the country was divided into two sections, civil and military. All Thais were appointed to one of these, a client being attached to the division of his patron official. As Quaritch Wales says (1934: p46):

Instead of drawing his men from a well-defined area of land which was his fief, they were within the limits of the territories immediately surrounding the capital, widely scattered and were also permitted to change their habitation.

In this new system each individual was given a number, his sakdii naa, which determined the amount of land he could cultivate and, if he was an official, the number of clients he could control. A freeman had a sakdii naa of 25 and had the right to cultivate 25 rai of land, whilst a high official, such as a minister, might have a sakdii naa of 10,000. Officials were expected to live off their office (kin muang) and the degree to which they could do this was determined by their sakdii naa grade since it controlled the number of clients they could have and from whom they could receive goods and services. For instance the lowest grade official appointed directly by the king had a sakdii naa of 400 which gave him the right to have eight freemen who each cultivated 25 rai as his clients. What was significant about this re-organisation as far as geographic mobility is concerned, is that in principle, as Quaritch Wales (1934: p53) points out, individuals could change their patrons and places of residence if they so chose.¹ In such a system a change of

1. As he says:

They probably only sought to change their patrons when they were being oppressed, but they had the right of doing so.

of residence would not necessarily mean a change in a man's patron, his obligations and his right to cultivate. Such a social system would not restrict geographical mobility. Much the opposite since one would expect that individuals would move to areas that best served their interests.

Yet to what extent was geographical mobility a frequent pattern of behaviour during this period? There are no statistics available to tell us, but it can be inferred that although the social system in theory did allow social mobility, there were other factors present in the social system that tended to restrict such mobility.

Firstly, for certain sections of the population, the possibility of a change of residence was highly restricted. As Wales (1934:) himself points out, in the provinces the clients could not leave the province of their masters. Thus the possibilities of geographic mobility of provincial peasants were severely curtailed. Moreover the bottom strata of the population consisted of slaves. Pallegoix (185) the bottom strata of the by the nineteenth century one-third at least of the population were slaves of one sort or another. Although they often had a better way of life than the freemen since unredeemable slaves were exempt from corvée, never the less it seems reasonable to infer that their masters would place restrictions on their movements. Thus the mobility of a very large section of the population in traditional Thai society was restricted.

Even freemen in areas around Ayuddhia, where Wales states that individuals could change their place of residence, it can be inferred from the evidence, must have been restricted. Wales points out that although an individual could on theory change his patron he had to get the king's permission. Since the patron generally would not want to lose a client, and since in the Thai 'personal' system of social relations one would need one's patrons help to get such permission, in practise it would be very unlikely that an individual would very often get the king's permission to change his patron. Obviously, the

1 Les esclaves font au moins le tiers de la population.

practical inability to change one's patron would not limit geographical mobility per se, but it would prevent the individual from moving to an area where he could not keep up his contacts with his patron. In traditional Thai society where communications were so difficult, this would mean in practice that few Thais could move very far, be they peasant or official.

This conjectural analysing of the mobility of the Thais in both prehistorical and historical times tends to suggest that prior to the present day, it is unlikely that geographic mobility was very frequent, or if it took place that individuals moved far out of the local community. Certainly, as Hanks points out (1962: p125), if one's patron became oppressive or the obligations of the corvee became too harsh, then no doubt some peasants would flee into the forest (pay paa). But this analysis suggests that this was the exception, not the rule. Moreover, it is true that during wars whole populations were captured and moved by force to other areas to be used as labour, as (Wales (1934: p108) points out. But the latter were forced migrations, not the result of individual choice and thus do not conflict with this conclusion. Much the opposite as it reinforces the view that the individual's mobility was restricted, for in these circumstances individuals were forced to move even if they did not want to. From the available evidence therefore, it does seem reasonable to infer that in historical times the Thai population, as far as geographic mobility is concerned, was fairly stable.

This is borne out by the demographic structure of the Thais, at least during the second half of the nineteenth century. If the Thais present in the Central Plain, especially around Ayuddhia and Bangkok, had been able to move about the country as they pleased and this was a frequent and accepted form of behaviour, then one would seem justified in expecting that very fertile areas around Bangkok and Ayuddhia would have been populated. But, as Ingram (1955) points out, in the second half of the nineteenth century when rice came to be grown as a cash crop for export, many fertile areas in the Central Plain had to be populated! This seems to suggest that geographical mobility was restricted, for if people had been free

to move one would assume that they would move to fertile areas such as these. But what factors did restrict movement?

If Quaritch Wales (1958: p53)⁴⁷⁻ is correct when he states that when the organisation of society was changed in the fifteenth century clients were assigned to the same division as their feudal lords, and if he is correct when he states that:

Normally the clients followed the ancient custom of serving under their parent's patron.(p53)

this seems to suggest that certain factors might have restricted action. Firstly it tends to suggest that very possibly since as individual was assigned to the same division as his feudal patron, this would not involve a disruption of the relationship with his lord. It seems very likely that the re-organisation did not affect the ordinary peasant very much, or the low level bureaucrat for that matter. He simply continued his former relationship with his lord under a new guise. Secondly, since patron-client relations tended to be hereditary, an individual would inherit a complex system of social relations which would make it difficult for him to move away from the immediate area.

As far as present day Thai society is concerned, and it is with this period that this thesis is primarily concerned, there is much more literature available on which to base a judgement as to the geographical mobility of the Thais in the present day. This abundance of literature, especially in the form of statistics, will enable me to take this analysis out of the realms of conjecture and into the realm of 'fact' and so make it possible to arrive at a more valid conclusion.

The previous description of the Thai world view and rural social structure shows quite clearly that, in theory, as Ronald Ng (1968: p5) points out, there is nothing in Thai society:

that stands in the way of spatial and occupational mobility should it be deemed desirable by the individual.

Geographic mobility is not restricted by residence factors as it is in Japanese villages. There are no ascriptive rules which determine an individual's place of residence. Nor are status and rights based on and determined by residence in a particular piece of territory. Nor do individuals belong to extended families or other local groups or organisations which might restrict or prevent geographical mobility. In fact the world view, with its emphasis

on the individual and self salvation fosters such mobility. As Ronald Ng (1968: p6) says:

One would no doubt expect a high degree of internal mobility. Yet to what extent are the ¹Thais geographically mobile in the present day? Has the traditional pattern been radically altered?

In the literature there are various views as to the present day geographic mobility of the Thais. On the one hand, stress is laid on the frequency of both migration and emigration amongst the Thais. For instance, Kirsch (1966: p375) points to the custom of pay thiao (going around) as an example of the geographic mobility of the ¹Thais:

individually or in small groups, (young men) leave their home villages, often going to urban areas or to the Central region to obtain wage labor or some sort, or occasionally to engage in intermittent, wandering trade.

Emphasis is laid on the emigration of the Thais from the poor north and northeast areas to Bangkok. Textor's study (1962) of the northeasterners who migrate to Bangkok and become pedicab drivers is often referred to when this point is postulated. It has no doubt helped to foster and perpetuate this view. Stress is ^{also} laid on the general movement of the peasants away from the countryside to the towns, especially Bangkok. Wilson (1962: p48) for instance states:

Geographic mobility takes two forms, urbanisation and rural migration. The population of Bangkok, the only genuine metropolitan center of the country, has increased substantially in the past thirty years. The increase is statistically large enough to indicate considerable movement from the country to the city. This evidence is supported by the impressions received in the city. Many people of all social classes who were born and raised in the provinces have come to the city for education and to seek their fortunes.

Blanchard (1958: p56) on the other hand holds the opposite point of view. He postulates:

There has been no tendency among the Thai peoples to transfer readily from one section to another; to shift radically their occupational interests, or to seek work beyond the borders of the country - Bangkok is unique in its growth. The vast majority of the people prefer life in rural areas, but occasional drought or economic distress drives some men to

find temporary work in the cities, primarily Bangkok. Once such a man has saved the necessary money to solve his immediate problems at home, he returns.

This is corroborated by Felthousen (1965: p16) who points to:

the present lack of disposition by the Thai to move from one section to another.

Evers (1969: p125) also points out that as far as migration from the town to the country is concerned:

migration which anthropologists have judged to be extremely high in actual fact has been relatively low in comparison with neighbouring countries. Between 1947 and 1960 Thailand's towns absorbed little more than one-sixth of the total inter-~~general~~ ^{general} population increase, while those of Malaysia absorbed the entire increase.

These two polar points of view sharply contradict each other.

Who's view, if any, is right? The opposite points of view are primarily the result of different frames of reference: Wilson, Kirsch, Phillips and Piker's conclusions being predominantly based on personal observations and the study of particular areas whereas Felthousen, Blanchard and Evers' are based on the literature of the subject of geographic mobility and is a study of the general data.

Obviously, cases of special long and short distance emigration and migration can be pointed to but this does not mean that this is a general pattern. It is true that pay thiaw is a relatively frequent young man's custom, although there are no statistics to support this conclusion, but as Kirsch himself points out, most are likely to return. As such it is misleading to consider it an indicator of ~~social~~ ^{geographic} mobility, rather it should be seen as a rite de passage prior to accepting the responsibilities of adulthood. If Thai social mobility is looked at from the point of view of statistics a totally different picture emerges of Thai geographical mobility.

Sternstein (1965: p22-27) has attempted to reconstruct the pattern of population distribution for the last forty years and has shown that during this period the population was fairly stable. For purposes of analysis he divided the country into eight reasonably homogeneous regions and was able to show that during this period

the percentages of population in this region changed very little. The outer central plain increased its share of the population from 12 to 14 percent, the inner central plain from 15 to 16 percent, the northern ranges fell slightly from 19 to 17 percent and the southern coastal plain from 9 to 8 percent, whilst the eastern plateau up to 1940 actually increased its share slightly from 33 to 34 percent. This as Sternstein says of this period:

(There) have been no mass migrations or seepages of population to or from any particular region. (1965: p20)

Sternstein's conclusions are also borne out for the period 1955 - 1960 by Chapman and Allen (1965). They point out that although 11 percent of the population moved during this period:

three quarters of ^{all} ~~those~~ who chose to move to a new changwad and were still resident there in 1960 had chosen to stay within the limits of their native region. (p5)

Moreover Chapman and Allen have shown that statements like Wilson's which suggest that there is a great deal of movement from all parts of the country to Bangkok, including movements over long distances, is inaccurate and misleading, for they show that intraregional movement is as yet much more important than interregional movement and is at its greatest in the Central region where there is considerable movement to Bangkok. Thus movements to Bangkok are usually short distance movements not long distance movements. Furthermore, they have been convinced that the northeast and the Central regions have been the largest exporters of population to other regions and the central regions and the north regions the largest importers. Only the northeast has shown a net loss.

But not only does the data show that the majority of movements are within the region, but more importantly, as Ronald Ng points out:

The census data shows that less than four percent of population five years ^{and} over changed their changwad (district) of residence between 1955 and 1960. Indeed, not a single changwad experienced a population gain or loss through internal interchange by an amount greater than the natural increase over the period. (1968: p6).

These statistics reveal ~~reveal~~ as Caldwell(1967: p49) says:

Internal migration has as yet been on rather a small scale in Thailand.

Where movement has taken place, it has primarily been within the local area as Ng's figures demonstrate. If Punyodyana's (1969: p90) interpretation of Kickert (1961) is accurate, then Kickert's personal observation in the northeast tends to support this, for he states that Thai peasants in a northeastern village in which he resided for over a year:

Lived and died within the radius of not more than fifty miles of where they were born.

But if the Thais can normatively chose their own place of residence and there is no obvious impediment to movement in the social system: much the opposite it encourages it. As Ng (1969: p5) says:

One would no doubt expect a high degree of internal mobility. Why are the Thais not more geographically mobile and why don't they move to more distant areas? If certain aspects of the social structure, ecology, environment and world view are studied, it can be seen that there are certain factors present in them which inhibit and constrain the individual's movements.

Firstly, as has been pointed out, in Thai society an individual's social relations may be conceived of as forming a complex network of dyadic relations. A basic principle of dyadic exchange is reciprocity, both explicit and implicit. This system of reciprocity involves the individual in a complex system of deferred obligations and expectations which inhibits the individual's movements. Not only will an individual probably owe services to his patron(s) and possibly labour to other farmers, but also he will be owed obligations such as contributions to expensive life-cycle celebrations, for example funerals, which he might hold and which he alone could not afford to pay for. Consequently, even if an individual is willing to break his obligations he is unlikely to want to relinquish the goods and services that are owed to him; If however, the individual moves to a distant place it will be very difficult for him to continue to operate his former complex system of reciprocal relations and it will be very difficult for him to collect his dues. This factor will either constrain an individual from moving at all or limit him to moving to an area in the immediate vicinity where he can continue to carry on his previous system of social relations. As Bramley (1968: p10) points out:

The system of deferred obligations suggests that the traditional type of kin based community has always been fairly stable. In a very mobile community such a system would be impossible.

Secondly, in societies where rights and duties are clearly defined and where kin groups such as lineages, castes, age grades, or local organisations and groups which are found throughout the social system, exist, it is fairly simple for an individual to move from area to area, to towns, and even to move to foreign countries. In such a system it is fairly easy for an individual to slot out of one community and into another one, for in any community the individual goes to he will have a recognised place in it, a clearly defined role and recognised rights and duties. He will know what is expected of him and what he can expect from others and vice versa. Thus, for instance, if an Indian wants to go and live in a city he

can utilise his local subcaste ties to help him settle into his new environment. He can look up his local subcaste fellows in the town and, whether they know him or not personally, they will help him find a job and settle down, be the town Bombay or Delhi, because of his rights as a member of the local subcaste.

In Thai society however, with its absence of defined rights and duties and groups, there are no such possibilities. With the emphasis on personal relationships, the patron-client system and reciprocity, if an individual wants to move to another area it is unlikely that he would move to that area unless he had contacts there and a personal introduction.

As Jane Richardson Hanks (1963: p97) says, referring to individuals in Bang Chan who want to go to Bangkok and it can be inferred from the literature that her statement is applicable to Thai society in general:

There was the problem of finding an experienced escort, i.e., someone who 'knew the way'. More was involved than just inconvenience. In all walks of Bang Chan's life, no one ever presented himself to a school, to a household, anywhere, without a personal introduction from someone who had been there before, and ^{so} was 'accustomed to it'.

For a Thai to move to another area without first having established contacts in that area is to court disaster. If a Thai is to survive both economically and socially in a new area, he must find himself a new patron(s) and establish a network there. As Sharp (1953: p32) says of Bang Chan:

In order that the new resident and members of his family may become really integrated into the Bang Chan community social system it is necessary that he establish mutual respect relationships (4) nab (5) thyy (1) kan). Without these he will remain an isolate, without any social leverage without means of obtaining help in the ordinary crises of life or in unexpected disasters (except of a charitable sort which will jeopardize his self - respect as a free and independent person).

But to get entree into a new environment and to form a new network is difficult. This is not only because, the world view fosters suspicion of others and unco-operativeness and peasants will not help strangers, but also because patrons, whom it would be assumed would

want to attract as many clients as possible, will not set up reciprocal patron-client relations with strangers. As L. Hanks (1962: p1255) says:

Because of unseen dangers, a leader ordinarily avoids giving benefits to strangers, and a potential member of a group must be introduced by a known person.

Thus if an individual is going to be able to live successfully in a distant community and set up a new network, he must have contacts there who can give him entree and vouch for him. This fact therefore narrowly restricts the choice of movement open to the individual. His choice of movement will be determined by where he has contacts and since it is generally unlikely that he will have many contacts outside his home vicinity it is equally unlikely that he will be able to move outside his immediate locality.

Without overemphasising the importance of the world view, nevertheless, there are aspects of it that might act as constraints on movement. Despite apparent similarities of language and social structure, there is a variety of cultural background in Thai society. Kunstadter (1967: Vol 1: p372) observes that:

even within regions that give the outward appearance of uniformity, there may be... differences which are important in the minds of the people involved.

As Ng (1968:p6) says:

It is very conceivable that owing to cultural factors some economically attractive areas may prove to be rather unappealing to many intending migrants from other parts.

Moreover there are ecological reasons such as the fact that different types of crops are grown in different regions which may inhibit geographical movement of Thai peasants. As Ng (1968:p6) says:

Specialisation in particular cash crops as supplementary sources of income has given rise to marked regional variations in the land use pattern. The lack of experience in certain types of supplementary crops may often be sufficient for dissuading a farmer from taking up residence in another part of the country.

Even though the previous pages have shown that there are factors in the social system, world view, and ecology which constrain movement, nevertheless one would think with the three percent

natural increase per annum (the highest in the world) that the Thais would be forced to move their place of residence to distant parts, especially in highly populated areas such as the Central Plain. Yet, as the statistics show, the Thais have not done this; they have preferred to absorb the population increase locally. Ng (1968: p6) holds that Thai peasants may have been able to do this by means of greater intensification of land utilisation and as he says:

The overall and even the physiological density of Thailand is still much lower than most rice cultivating countries. There is more than a mere possibility that the farm acreage in most parts of the country can still be increased by clearing new plots in the virgin forest even in the relatively densely populated areas. The crop yield of existing land can still be raised through improved farming techniques... It is therefore likely that the present population growth has been accommodated locally without generating mass migration even from the hard-pressed areas.

The fact that Thais prefer to absorb the increase of population locally rather than move to less congested areas, gives further support to my thesis that factors exist which restrict geographic movement. Rather than break up their networks and complex systems of reciprocal relations and venture into the unknown, they prefer to manipulate the system locally.

Conclusion

This study of the geographic mobility of the Thais has shown fairly conclusively that the Thai peasant's 'free choice' of movement is restricted by various factors - structure, world view, ecology and environment. It has shown that Embree and his supporters have exaggerated the geographic mobility of the Thais in the past, and, as far as present day mobility is concerned, have both over-exaggerated and been misleading. Geographical mobility has been limited and where it has taken place it has been limited to the local area or has been for a short period of time^{only}. Thus it seems reasonable to suggest that the Thai population is fairly stable.

Obviously, since the rate of mobility is a qualitative concept, it could be argued that, depending on how 'high' and 'low' are defined, even this limited amount of mobility is high. But as Evers points out, in comparison with Malaysia, mobility into the town is far less. This tends to suggest that although there is no generally accepted mobility scale that could be applied to Thailand, the frequency of mobility in Thai society should be considered low. But even so what is important is that this analysis has shown that the Thais, far from exercising freewill as far as geographical mobility is concerned in the past and present, have been restricted in their choice of movement.¹

In the future, however, as Sternstein points out, if the population trends continue as they have been doing, then no doubt there will be mass migration of the Thais off the land. But such migration will not be the result of 'freewill' alone; it will be the result of population pressure.

1. It is interesting to speculate as to the origins of the assumption of the geographic mobility by many specialists. It can be accounted for partly by personal observations of actual people moving. But one wonders to what extent its roots were in the 'sacred cow' of Thai history, the belief that Thais moved in large droves to Thailand. It is very probable that this belief, which has been very popular and influential, coloured specialist's views of the later mobility of the Thais.

Social Mobility

Within the literature there are many references to the social mobility of the Thais. In fact a polemic has evolved around the issue recently, some specialists arguing that the Thais are socially mobile whilst others have stated that they are not.

As has been stated previously, the 'loosely structured' hypothesis implicitly assumes some degree of social mobility. Although Embree himself did not explicitly or categorically state that Thai society is socially mobile, nevertheless such an hypothesis as he assumes it. Certainly Embree's supporters accept such an assumption and see social mobility as a concomitant of 'loose structure' as Kirsch (1969: p51) points out:

Embree cites a number of features e.g. geographic mobility, declining descent for royalty, power of the king to confer rank, etc., which might be taken as evidence for a high degree of mobility in Thailand. But he did not flatly claim that loosely structured systems are characterized by an unusually high degree of mobility as contrasted to tightly structured systems. However, if the underlying pattern revealed by Embree's evidence is correct, i.e. that individuals in loosely structured systems are not necessarily bound to particular robes and collectivities in which they are involved, then some measure of mobility is at least implicit. In fact Embree's supporters seem to have accepted this view (e.g. Hanks 1962, Phillips 1965).

The protagonists for 'social mobility' generally argue that Thai society, both normatively and pragmatically, is basically socially mobile and always has been (e.g. Graham and Graham 1958: p11, Blanchard 1958: p50, Embree 1950: p185, Hanks 1962: p1252, Hanks and Hanks 1963: 431-2, Phillips 1969: p38, Mosel 1957: p291, Wilson 1959: p35, 1962: p47, Kirsch 1969: p51, Piker 1968: p780, 1969: p71, Ladd 1962: p9, Punyodyana 1969: p99, Young 1900: p125).¹ It is

¹ Although not all of them would consider themselves supporters of the loose structure concept.

usually argued by them that Thai society is a fixed system of ranks and within this system movement up and down this hierarchy is not restricted by birth or other factors. For instance Hanks (1962: p1252) in what is probably the most often quoted and (until recently) the most influential article on Thai social mobility, says:

Like an army, Thai society has a hierarchy of fixed ranks-ranks which determine occupations, but one moves freely from occupation to occupation up and down the hierarchy. The king might grant titles to commoners as easily as a master could free his slaves. On suffering defeat, kings could become slaves with little to comfort them for having once held power.

This is corroborated by Ladd (1962: p9) who states the case for mobility clearly:

This society is marked by its openness, by the considerable mobility of movement within and between classes. Anyone can aspire to higher class status; there is no social bar to a peasant's son rising to become a powerful and well-to-do government official and, as a matter of fact, many of the present higher officialdom came from extremely humble social circumstances. This was true as well in ancient times.

Moreover it is often argued that social mobility is sanctioned and fostered by the Buddhist value system. Buddhism postulates that a person's status is the product of religious merit derived from his actions in this and previous lives. (e.g. Hanks 1962: p1248, Textor 1961: p44), Wilson 1962: p46-8, Piker 1969: p71). Since everybody is able to achieve merit by doing good actions so they may rise in karmic status and this will be reflected in

their social position in the phenomenological world and conversely if they do bad acts they will lose status in the karmic world and ultimately in the phenominological world too. Thus it is argued that Buddhism fosters the assumption among the Thai that social position is not fixed by birth, but that social mobility both is possible and takes place.

This point of view which relates the world view to social mobility is neatly summed up by Hanks ^(1962:pl248) when he says:

u/ As with cosmic hierachy, the Thai social order roots individuals in no permanent rank. To be sure, depending on merits accumulated from past experiences, one is born to the advantages or disadvantages of a given social position, but one need not remain a peasant until the end of his's days. Peasants have become ministers of state, just as powerful kings have become slaves. Social life is a continuous process of changing station by earning and validating a higher one, or falling to a lower one. At any moment the lowest man may catapult himself to a position effectively superior to the king, he need only take the vows of a priest. As long as he submits to the discipline of selflessness required by the rules of the order, he may remain in this lofty position.

However, in recent years, scepticism has arisen in some quarters as to the validity of the idea that the Thais are socially mobile. Evers (1966,1967,1969) has attempted to show that the Thai elite in recent decades have consolidatdd and that the rate of mobility into them has infact declined over this period. Mulder (1969: pl9) points out:

Ten relevant field studies (Boesch 1962; Evers 1966; Hanks 1958; Kaufman 1960; Kingshill 1960; Moerman 1966, Pfanner and Ingersoll 1962; Sharp 1953; Skinner 1958; and Textor 1961) do not indicate any exceptional rate of vertical mobility. Studies by Boesch (1962), Hanks (1958), and Phillips(1965) have shown that motivation to rise is low and weakened by Thai education and that self-restraint, and self-limitation are emphasized in literature and verbal statements.

These findings of Evers and Mulder seem to indicate that the 'loose structurists' assumptions are open to question, for they imply that social mobility in Thai society is both difficult

and infrequent. Who is right - the 'loose structuralists' or anti-loose structuralists such as Evers and Mulder? How much mobility has there in fact been in both traditional and modern Thai society? In fact, is it valid, both methodologically and empirically, to say that social mobility in Thai society is 'high'?

In the following pages an attempt will be made to determine the degree of social mobility in Thai society and the factors which restrict social mobility. However, before beginning, while not wishing to become involved in the heated controversy surrounding the concept of 'social stratification', nevertheless it must be clear as to what is meant by the concept of social mobility and to what dimensions of social behaviour the concept is being applied. For, as will be seen, the definition of social mobility and the dimensions of social behaviour to which the concept is applied, is crucial to the whole issue since it very much determines the resulting conclusions. As will be seen, the way in which some specialists analytically conceptualise their data is partially to blame for some of the loose structuralists' conclusions as to the mobility of the Thai.

The meaning of the term 'social mobility' is clear and unambiguous and has a generally accepted meaning amongst anthropologists and sociologists. As Barber (1968: p295) says:

Social mobility consists of the movements of individuals up and down along any one of the dimensions of social stratification.

Obviously it is possible to determine whether there is social mobility in a society. But difficulty arises in attempting to determine whether the rate of social mobility in a society is 'high' or 'low'. To be able to determine whether social mobility in Thai society is high, as Punyodyana for instance says it is (see Punyodyana 1969: p99), it would be necessary to construct a scale of social mobility, a continuum ranging from high to low. But to construct a scale of social mobility it would be necessary to postulate criteria that could be used to evaluate whether the rate of social mobility in Thai society was high or low.

Moreover as Kirsch (1969: p52) states: ~~lower~~

Even the same objectively determined rate of mobility might be open to dissimilar interpretations on the basis of the different values and normative standards of the societies under consideration. For example, a mobility rate of ten percent in traditional India might be deemed very high, while the same rate might be deemed very low in modern industrial society.

However, no generally accepted standard for evaluating the rate of social mobility exists. Thus, as Kirsch says:

In the absence of some generally accepted objective standards which can be applied cross culturally, it is not clear how one would determine what is 'high' or 'low' rates of mobility.

Since 'social mobility' is therefore a relative term, given the absence of a generally accepted standard for evaluating it, it does not seem meaningful or methodologically sound, given the present situation, to categorise social mobility in terms of 'high' or 'low'. Kirsch, however, suggests (1969: p52):

In the absence of some generally accepted objective standards, comparative studies of social mobility are likely to lean heavily on impression, however well founded that impression may be. On such a basis, there is considerable evidence which suggests Thailand has been characterized by a high measure of mobility.

Most of the studies of Thai society so far have been 'impressionistic', including Embree's, and as is being shown, they have not got the study of Thai society very far, rather they have given a misleading impression of Thai society. Moreover, given the fact that a polemic has arisen around the issue of social mobility in Thai society, an 'impressionistic' account will no longer suffice. What is needed is an intensive 'hard fact' study. If only an 'impression' of the rate of social mobility is possible, given the present situation, then it is better not to attempt such a study of the rate of mobility.

Even if a scale of mobility did exist from which the rate of mobility in Thai society could be evaluated there is not, as Kirsch seems to think, 'considerable evidence available' at all. As

Evers (1966: p481) says:

No special study on this subject (social mobility) has been published so far, and relevant field studies do not indicate an exceptionally high rate of status mobility.

There is neither the factual nor statistical evidence available¹ on which a comprehensive and conclusive study of the rate of social mobility could be based.

Nevertheless, although it is not possible to study social mobility in a 'positive' manner, it is possible to study it in a 'negative' manner i.e. it is possible to study the factors which inhibit social mobility. Not only is there enough evidence available on which to base such a study but also it is possible to logically infer such factors, even though relevant statistics are not available.

Since the aim of this chapter, primarily, is to determine the accuracy of Embree's statement that (p185):

The individuals ~~achieve~~ acts of his own will,¹ not as a result of social pressure.

i.e. in this case, to determine what factors, if any, restrict an individual's choices as far as social mobility is concerned.

This negative method of studying social mobility seems a fruitful way of studying such mobility since it is an approach which is not based on impression.

A second crucial issue that must be made clear is the dimension of stratification to which the concept of social mobility is applied. For the way in which the analysts categorise the dimension of stratification will, to a certain extent, determine his conclusions as to the social mobility of the Thais.

Firstly, one must be clear as to which model of social stratification is being used i.e. whether it is the 'conscious'

1. (1969, p71) Piker, however, disagrees with this. He states that 'abundant historical and institutional evidence....however, is readily available.' I beg to disagree with this. I would be very pleased to know what these sources are for he does not quote them in his bibliography.
2. This is surely improbable as which people act entirely according to their own ~~free~~ will?

model of the Thais or an 'observers' model. Obviously it is ~~not~~ possible to construct a model of the social stratification of Thai society based on either model. But such models should not be confused with each other, for a model based on the conscious model of the Thais may not co-incide with that of an observer's model. Each model may give a totally ^{different} ~~same~~ impression of the system of stratification and the concomitant social mobility of the Thais.

It is certainly true that the Thais have a model of the stratification of the Thai social system: they see their society as being highly stratified and see social mobility as being legitimate. As Evers (1969: p124) says:

Thais tend to believe that ~~social~~ mobility is ^{very} high in Thai society.

But this is not the same as saying that an observer will see Thai society as actually being stratified in this way and will conceptualise it in this manner, or that in practise the Thais are actually socially mobile.

Both Evers and Mulder accuse Hanks of confusing this world view with social reality. Evers, for instance, says that Hanks argues along the lines:

Mobility is sanctioned in the Thai Buddhist value system, according to which a person's status derives from the religious merit acquired in previous lives. Since everybody may be good, acquire merit, and rise to a higher social position, social status is not fixed by birth, social mobility is thought to be quite natural. Hanks therefore speaks of "a built in social mobility of Siamese society" but this confuses ideology with social reality. (1966: p481)

Whilst Mulder (1969: p20) states; as was mentioned previously:

Buddhist cosmic hierarchy or metaphysics have little to do with empirical social reality; too often the Buddhist cloak of charity has been used to cover the most unlikely phenomena. (Mulder 1967A, 1968)

From a close study of Hanks' article 'Merit and Power in the Thai Social Order' (1962) in which he states his case, it seems more logical to agree with Evers and Mulder. No where does

Hanks state which model he is using and it can be inferred that he does confuse the observer's model of social reality with the conscious model. Hanks states that Thai society is a 'fixed system of ranks which determine occupation' but no where does he state from where he derived this model. However, it can be inferred that it is an observer's model rooted in the traditional sakdii naa system. Yet at the same time he ^(1962: p. 1248) attempts to explain stratification and social mobility in Buddhist terms:

Such is the nature of ^{the} cosmic hierarchy where effectiveness in action and freedom from suffering vary with the degree of merit, yet no being is fixed to any special position. Only the stations are fixed, while the metamorphosing individual beings rise and fall in the hierarchy. In accordance with past merit, one ^{may} be born a snake to crawl helplessly in darkness while another may be born an angel free to move unhampered by matter. After death their positions might be reversed.....The same laws apply in the human social order which is but a segment of the cosmic hierarchy.

This quotation clearly reveals his confusion. He is attempting to explain what actually happens in terms of the ideal model. Yet, as has been consistently stressed, the world view and social reality may be very different. Thus it must be made clear which model is being used, and the same model should be followed consistently in any analysis.

As this chapter's primary aim is to study social mobility in actual practice, what is needed here is an observer's model of social stratification and social mobility. In an observer's model the anthropologist conceptualises the stratification system of society. It is up to the anthropologist to determine the system of stratification. He usually conceptualises the system of stratification according to certain criteria that he thinks relevant, such criteria usually being generally accepted social science concepts such as class, status, position, rank, etc. Difficulty arises in determining what criteria should be used to rank the hierarchy. How should it be determined whether one particular class or status is higher or lower than another? As

Kirsch (1969: p52) says:

Presumably such (normative) contexts play some role in determining when and if a change in status is, in fact, 'mobility' and whether it is to be seen as 'upward' or 'downward' (for example, does 'mobility' from a merchants role to a bureaucrats role represent an upward or downward move).

But in the last resort it is up to the anthropologist how he constructs the system of stratification. Such a model of stratification will necessarily be based on several preconceptions and as such will be more than usually open to conceptual error.¹

Certainly if Hank's model of stratification is studied it can be seen that the way in which he conceptualises the system of stratification is misleading. He ^(1962: p1252) states that:

Efforts to depict social classes in Thai society founder because of misconstruing the nature of this social order, which resembles a military organisation more than an ^{essentially} class type of society. Like an army, Thai society has a hierarchy of fixed ranks which determine occupation, but one moves freely from occupation to occupation up and down the hierarchy.

But is it 'misconstruing the nature of the social order' to categorize Thai society into classes? Hank's statement is an overgeneralisation, for Skinner (1958: p19)¹⁸ points to the existence of social classes in Bangkok and this is further supported by Ever's theory (1966, 1967, 1969) that a class based bureaucratic elite is forming. Moreover, Hanks seems to be implying that concepts such as 'class' actually exist 'out there' in society. But to hold this point of view is to confuse a concept with the data. Any concept may be used as an 'analytic tool' to aid analysis; it is not a matter of 'misconstruing the nature of the social order'. In fact two totally different concepts such as status and class may be used to categorize the same data. Thus as

1. Obviously all hypotheses are based on preconceptions but some are based on more, less well based empirical preconceptions than others. Also others by their very structural nature, like Hanks', are open to error.

Punyodyana (1969: p96) points out is possible to conceptualize the Thai peasantry, who make up 85 percent of the population, as a class in Marxist terms. But to do so would not be useful and would give the wrong impression for the Thai peasantry, although they mostly have a common occupation i.e. rice growing, do not have a common organisation, political structure or identity of interest; rice growing does not induce in them unionism and cross regional interaction. Rather I would agree with Punyodyana (1969: p97) that as:

conception of Thai peasants in terms of a status group seems most relevant and useful.

(1969: p 97)
As he says:

It is clearly evident that Thai peasants, not only in Chienkham but all over the country, find themselves sharing a common status situation. It is a situation of subordination to traditional authority.

Not only is Hanks' attitude towards class in Thai society an overgeneralisation and the result of analytic confusion but also the way in which he ranks the 'fixed system of ranks' gives a false impression of the system of stratification in Thai society and this leads to an exaggeration of the degree of social mobility in Thai society.

(1962: p 1249-50)
Hanks sees the 'fixed system of ranks' as determining occupation and sees the social process of rising and falling in the hierarchy as being based on a system of patron-client relations.

The coherence of Thai society rests largely on the value of becoming a client of someone who has greater resources than one alone possesses....At the top stands the gracious king meeting with his courtly officials. Below them, with mounting uncertainties and smaller benefits to distribute, follow the ranks of deputies and assistants down to the clerks and sweepers. Some of the merchants and artisans may surpass the lower governmental positions in wealth and power, but in the paddy fields, existence becomes more isolated and precarious. At the bottom is the forest where some lone, uncouth hunter, deserted by his wife and children, stalks his prey.

Hanks' equation of the patron-client system with his fixed hierarchy

of ranks which determine occupation is invalid for two reasons. Firstly, the patron-client system is not a correlate of the fixed hierarchy of ranks which determine occupation, for some patrons may have lower occupations than their clients. For instance, as he himself says, some low level artisans and merchants may surpass low level government officials in power and wealth, even though they may rank lower in the traditional ranking system. Secondly, and most important, the patron-client system does not form a fixed hierarchy. Status in the patron-client system is relative, it is not fixed.

Secondly, the actual way in which Hanks constructs the hierarchy leads to an exaggeration of the degree of social stratification found in rural areas and this conceptualisation gives the impression that Thai society is more socially mobile than it in fact is. Hanks's statement that Thai society is a system of fixed ranks which determine occupation is a conceptual mis-statement of what he actually in fact has done. What he in fact has done is to rank the occupations in Thai society! For instance, he ranks a 'lone uncouth hunter' as at the bottom of the hierarchy and it can be inferred¹ that he considered a headman as having higher rank than an ordinary peasant. But such ranking of occupations is a confusion of occupation with status: term which nowadays is generally defined, following, Linton (1936), as a ranked position in society.

As Wijewardene (1967: p74) in his neat summing up of internal stratification in Thai society says:

Clearly this is universally low in Thai villages. Respect and status accrue to individuals on the basis of wealth, age; education, piety and occupation, but there is no report of anything like the stratification of Indian

1 Hanks (1962: p1250) when discussing patron-client relations states:

A village headman can, perhaps through his own resources, hold his kinsmen, but to hold the entire village may require his rendering services to the circle headman (kamnan) and perhaps also to the district officer (naaj amphoe). The additional benefits received from these higher officers, for instance as work opportunities for his villagers, can be distributed by the headman to secure his position.

villages, nor even China's former differentiation between landowning gentry and peasantry. The traditional ranking system does not appear to have created status differences within ~~the~~ villages, and though there are now signs of the emergence of a wealth-based elite, particularly on the Central Plain, Thai villages must be characterised as egalitarian. Though Thais look for status indicators in their personal relations - so that every relationship has a dominant and a subordinate component.

Thus to rank occupations in rural areas is to mislead when it is done in terms of a hierarchy for it implies that the Thais are more highly stratified in rural areas than they in fact are. In fact they are an egalitarian status category. It is certainly true that some people have more prestige than others. Prestige being based on such categories as wealth, occupations such as headman or shaman¹ etc., but to see this prestige as forming a fixed system of ranks is to give the wrong impression for the individuals all have the same egalitarian 'fixed position'. Secondly, such prestige would not form a fixed system of ranks for such prestige is relative not fixed. Even so, it is true that rank, in the sense of being a peasant, does determine occupation to some extent, but these occupations do not form a ranked hierarchy.

Moreover, by emphasising the system of stratification in rural areas Hanks has given the impression that the Thais are more socially mobile than they in fact are. It is true that ideally individuals can move from occupation to occupation with ease and there is no ascription. Thus by structuring these occupations in the form of a hierarchy, since the Thais can move from occupation to occupation, gives the impression that they are socially mobile.

This discussion of the meaning of social mobility and the dimensions to which it is applied and especially Hanks' theory have shown how easy it is to construct a misleading picture of social mobility in Thai society and how open an observer's model is to error. However, instead of

imposing a model onto Thai society as Hanks¹ does, and fitting the facts to suit the model, in the following pages an attempt will be made to discover what dimensions of stratification it is possible to conceptualise Thai society into and the factors that restrict movement up and down the hierarchy. The analysis will be in two parts. Firstly, social mobility in traditional Thai society will be analysed, then secondly, social mobility in Modern Thai society.

Traditional Thai Social Mobility

Traditionally, as has been stated, Thai society was divided into broad strata. At the top of the hierarchy was the king and royal family. Beneath the king and royal family in descending order were the bureaucracy, freemen and slaves, both redeemable and non-redeemable. Each strata was clearly defined in terms of rights to cultivate land (sakdii naa) and the number of clients the individual could control (kin muang) and by symbols.

Certainly, as Quaritch Wales and others have pointed out, an individual held his position at the king's will and could move up and down the hierarchy from one strata to another. But in actual practice, to what extent was there social mobility? What factors if any restricted such mobility? Kirsch states that even:

1 Hanks (1967: p2-3) has recently put forward another analogy as to the structure of Thai society. But, as yet, I have been unable to see the article. However Cunningham's (1969: p112) has quoted him as saying:

The Thai social order is like a bundle of fine gold chains of varying lengths. Pulled taut from the end, the chain resists or moves as one, but a finger passes easily between the strands... The Thai social order, as Embree claimed, is 'loosely structured', but its looseness is in lateral directions, not from top to bottom.

But, as Cunningham says:

This is an ingenious metaphor but, when it is again applied at such a broad level of generalization, I wonder what we can do with it. In fact analyses such as Hanks' are stultifying. They inhibit the study of Thai society rather than encourage it for they do not generate hypotheses that can be tested (surely the criteria for determining a good model from a bad), rather they organise the data so that the analyst is restricted to his own conceptual framework.

early Western observers of the Thai scene who seem to have been ^{deeply} impressed with the possibilities for and occurrence of social mobility, both upward and downward (see Gervaise 1685: p35, de la Loubere 1693: p78).

Although early western travellers to Thailand such as Gervaise and de la Loubère may have been impressed with 'the possibilities for and occurrence of social mobility', in fact de la Loubere only refers to the elite and actually states that the official class is hereditary,¹ an argument that aims to show that social mobility has always existed in Thai society cannot base its argument on the impressions of seventeenth century travellers, as does Kirsch (1969).

However, another loose structuralist, Piker, states more specifically that:

Until recently, frontier conditions were prominent in many areas of Thailand and provided abundant opportunities for both individual and family mobility. (Piker 1968) The historical southward push of the Thai people into Thailand as well as the ^{relatively} recent population of the ^{entire} Central Plain by ethnic Thai attest to the readiness of the Thai peasants to respond to just such opportunity. Equally important, the patron client relationships - as institutionalized historically in slavery, the traditional government bureaucracy, and the relationship of peasant freeman to his local lord - has provided ample legal justification and ^{practical} encouragement for clients to shift from one patron to another and to alter their social circumstances accordingly (Mosel 1957, Wales 1924).

Firstly, 'frontier conditions' in Thailand did not exist in many areas and lack of communication, far from fostering social mobility, prevented it for several reasons. Frontier conditions were partly due to difficulty of communication. This difficulty of communication² meant that Thais in outlying regions had very little contact with the central bureaucracy. Therefore it would be difficult for them to achieve social mobility through the central bureaucratic system. Also difficulty of communication tended to foster a hereditary system of rule in the outlying

1. Although it is true that he states that hereditary inheritance of office does not last many generations.
2. For instance, even as late as 1892 it took Prince Damrong nearly three months to travel to Chiangmai in the north!

provinces which prevented the ordinary peasants and low level bureaucrats from attaining the highest office.

Secondly, Piker's view that 'patron-client relationships as institutionalised historically in slavery, the traditional bureaucracy and the relationship of peasant freeman to his lord' are open to question.

As far as slavery is concerned, as Quaritch Wales points out (1934: p59-60)¹ certain categories of slaves were unredeemable and their children were slaves, also, although in certain circumstances they were able to buy their freedom. Thus for the unredeemable slaves there was little chance of social mobility.

Social mobility was more likely to take place into slavery, rather than out of it for the lot of the unredeemable slave was much easier than the freeman for the unredeemable slave did not

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1. According to Wales (1934: p59) redeemable slaves:

were the debt slaves, who had sold themselves or been sold for a portion of their full value, which was fixed according to their age and sex by the law of Compensation, and who could at any time regain their freedom by repaying to their masters the sum that the latter had given for them. On the other hand the non-redeemable slaves were those that had been bought outright for their full value and over whom their masters had absolute power except to kill them, and could sell them or bequeath them as they could their other goods and chattels. Their lot was not always so easy as that of the former group, since it depended entirely on the goodwill of their masters whom they had no means of changing as had the ~~redeemable~~ slaves, though public opinion acted to some extent as a check on oppression. Children whose mothers were redeemable ^{debt} slaves were free, but those of mothers who were ~~non~~-redeemable slaves were also ^{erue} slaves (lukdasa or birth slaves) though they could be free on payment of their value. Prisoners of war were also unredeemable and their children slaves in perpetuity. Although in 1805 Rama 1 gave them the right to buy their freedom.

have to perform corvee. As Wales (1934: p69) says:

The slaves possessed extensive rights and in general it may be said that the condition of the slaves was often better than the freemen, more especially if they were non-redeemable and at the same time happened to belong to mild masters; for they were then completely released from the onerous royal corvees and had only to serve their masters who gave them protection and provided them with the necessities of life. Nor was there any shame attaching to the social status of a private slave. The joint result of the exactions of government officials and the inability of the central power to protect the poorer freemen, especially in the provinces, was their readiness to sell themselves to those who could protect them, even when they were not harassed by creditors.

This is corroborated by Young (1900: p127) who states:

Away in the country the majority of ^{the} people prefer to live as the bond servants of some powerful person, who in return for their labour provides both them and their families with protection and support.

Even if an individual did belong to a category of slave that could buy his freedom and desired to do so, as Young (1900: p128) points out:

It is rarely possible for the serf to obtain the necessary funds, (for buying his freedom) as he is daily employed in the service of his master and so prevented from earning wages elsewhere.

Moreover the choice of master for a potential slave was restricted.

As Wales (1934: p62) says:

The law gave the patron, before others, the ~~privilege~~ of lending money to his clients and in the case of their insolvency, making them his slaves. Only if he were not rich enough could his clients borrow money from, or sell themselves to, others. And even when that was the case the patron was obliged to enquire into the exact circumstances and satisfy himself that his client was really forced into slavery through dire poverty. Thus attempts were made to prevent collusion, but only by infringing the right of the freeman to sell himself as he chose, just as the original right of the freeman to exercise his free choice of patron was in fact infringed by administrative necessities.

These few points show that the movements of slaves and their relations with their masters, far from allowing them to be socially mobile, put great restrictions on their movements. To state as Young (1900: p125) does that:

The serf in Siam today maybe a nobleman of high rank in the future, [^]should he possess ability and ^{sufficient} distinction enough to warrant [^]so great a promotion.

is obviously misleading and a gross exaggeration. Certainly occasionally an individual may have achieved a high position, but, given the existence of these factors just described, it must have been the exception rather than the rule.

As far as the patron-client system and the individual's relationship to the local lord is concerned, it is true that from the fifteenth century onwards individuals, as Quaritch Wales (1934: p53) points out, could in theory change their patron if they so chose. Obviously prior to the fifteenth century there could have been little social mobility on the lower rungs of the hierarchy; it would have been very difficult for the ordinary peasant to become socially mobile for his patron would be ascribed. But from the fifteenth century onwards, since individuals could change their patrons, then, as Piker says, 'they could change their circumstances'. But as was pointed out in the previous section on geographic mobility, in actual practice it would have been very difficult for an individual peasant to move his place of residence or change his patron. Moreover a peasant was prevented from becoming powerful as a patron because he was allowed to cultivate only 25 rai of land which prevented him from attaching a large following (for sakdii naa, as was stated previously, determined the number of followers a patron could control). Only if a peasant moved into the bureaucratic strata could he increase his normative following.

Certainly, a peasant could move into the bureaucracy in theory. According to Punyodyana (1969: p99):

It can be assumed that historically social mobility in Thailand has been great and the upward movement from the peasantry into the bureaucracy has been possible and relatively easy (cf. Embree 1950; Hanks 1962; Mosel 1957; Blanchard et al 1958; 50, 411; Wilson 1962:52).

The fact that officials (low grade) up to 400 sakdii naa were

appointed locally (see Wales 1934) seems to suggest that those peasants who wanted to enter the lower rungs of the bureaucracy would have stood a chance of doing so. But in fact, the requirements of the role and the personal emphasis placed on selection¹ favoured the selection of the sons of officials for these roles, in fact all roles in the bureaucracy. In practice it would have been very difficult for a peasant to become a bureaucrat for, as Wales (1934: p39) points out:

In practice however, children born into families of officials were naturally given more opportunity of learning the art of government and fitting themselves to receive official appointments than those born in families devoted to agriculture, and thus fully occupied in seeking the necessities of life. Moreover the families of officials had more leisure to learn, since, like the officials themselves, they were absolved from the necessity of rendering the personal service to the king which demanded so much of the time of the commoners. They were also used to expecting and receiving respect on account of their parent's position and though as yet without rank, were often addressed as khun, used as a purely courtesy title.

No doubt some individuals did surmount these difficulties and become bureaucrats. But, although there is no evidence to determine what percentage were able to surmount these obstacles, nevertheless it seems reasonable to infer that, given the difficulties involved, such mobility in the lower levels of bureaucracy must have been infrequent: the exception rather than the norm.

Within the higher rungs of the bureaucracy too, social mobility must have been restricted. It is certainly true that the king could appoint individuals, regardless of their social background, to any rank he chose, but in practice, it can be inferred, that the rise of an individual from a humble origin to high office was the exception rather than the rule. Rather the elite tended to form a self perpetuating strata in practice, for several reasons.

1. See next page for a more detailed analysis.

Firstly, recruitment to high office was on a particularist personal basis. Thus the children of high officials, since they were accustomed to the bureaucratic life style and would be more likely to know high officials, stood more chance of getting a high official post.¹ Moreover this personalised recruitment, especially in areas where the central government had little control, tended to foster hereditary official positions. For instance, as Wales (1934: p39) says:

In the provinces there was the special tamhnen of phu ivay rajakara, or general assistant to the governor, the duties connected with which office were not definitely delimited and the holders of which were directly responsible to the governor. The office was usually occupied by the son of the governor, who was thus trained to occupy a high position later (Prince Damrong (2) p125). In this way offices were frequently held by the same family for several generations.

Secondly, for the very highest positions in the bureaucracy, such as the Ministry for the North or South, especially during the Bangkok period, as Evers (1966: p486) states:

The highest officials had to have a further qualification, namely royal blood.

This was no doubt partly due to the fact that to get such a high position an individual had to have the kings' or the 'power behind the throne's' ear and royalty were the only individuals able to do this. Thus as Evers (1966: p486) says, as only royalty became the highest officials 'the higher ranks were virtually closed to other officials'.

But it has been argued by Embree (p185) himself, that the royal system of descent is itself loosely structured and open to social mobility. According to the Thai royal descent rules, commonly known as the 'declining descent rules of rank' (see Haas (1951)), the rank of Thai royalty declines by one step every generation, until after the fifth generation no nobility title is

1 The chief training ground of the young scions of the more prominent official families was the Mahatlek, or corps of Royal Pages, access to which was much easier for the sons of officials who were presented when young to the king. For the ordinary peasant, since entry was on an ordinary basis, it would have been virtually impossible for him to gain entrance to the Mahatlek on his son's behalf.

recognised and members of the sixth generation are regarded as commoners. The openness of the upper levels of Thai society is further emphasized by Benedict (1932: p5) who argues that institutionalised feudal 'great families' did not exist in Thai society because of bilateral inheritance, whereby both sons and daughters inherited, which led to the continuous fragmentation of estates. Benedict says:

This inheritance law holds good for all classes but its effects were the more extreme among princes and officials because plural wives were almost always the rule among them and children very numerous. Though the sons and daughters of lesser wives did not have claims to their father's holdings equal to those of the first wife they always shared in property division. The result was very considerable mobility up and down the social scale and the absence of permanent, entrenched "feudal" families.

As Evers however says (1969: p121):

This rule (declining descent), part of the 'Folk Model' of Thai society, is taken again as proof of the high degree of social mobility and the loose structure of Thai society. No scholarly study is, however, so far available to provide data on the actual rate of social mobility into and out of the Thai nobility. A cursory appraisal of historical studies warrants the contrary hypothesis that after a good deal of social mobility during the consolidation of Chakri power ~~(xxxxxx)~~ the Thai nobility became a fairly closed group maintaining its power and social position through constant intermarriage. In fact the closure of the Thai nobility appears to have been one major contributing factor to the revolution of 1932.

Benedict looked only at the normative rules. She did not take into account the fact that the Thai nobility might manipulate the system. Evers hypothesis is in fact supported by Wyatt¹, at least for the nineteenth century, who maintains that certain great families, by judicious parallel cousin marriage managed to maintain their rank and political status. Until the 1932 coup the highest positions were monopolized by royalty and great families.

Not only do loose structurists suggest that the system of declining descent suggests social mobility, but one supporter, Kirsch (1969: p52) even states:

It is generally agreed that the Thai throne itself has been

1. This information was obtained as a result of personal communication with Dr. David Wyatt in 1967.

open to achievement, thus implying some mobility, and this was not restricted to highly born individuals but was possible for those of more humble background. Some of the more notable of Thai kings who 'achieved' the throne include Prasat Thong (1629-1656), Petcharaja (1688-1703), Taksin (1767-1782), and Rama I (1782-1809); the founder of the presently reigning dynasty.

The fact that some ambitious Thais have achieved the throne certainly implies that a few Thais have been socially mobile. But does the fact that some of the Thai kings achieved their positions imply that there is some mobility in the society at large, as Kirsch seems to suggest?

Firstly, competition for the throne is inbuilt, by their very nature, in monarchies. In all societies ruled by monarchies, be they 'loosely' or 'closely woven' societies, one would usually expect to find cases of individuals who 'achieved' the throne. Moreover if the number of Thai kings from the thirteenth to the nineteenth century on a percentage basis who achieved the throne, is compared with the percentage of British monarchs who achieved their thrones during the same period, it will be seen that the percentage rate of achievement is about the same, i.e. about 10 percent.¹ Yet Britain during this period would, according to Embree's definition, be considered a 'closely woven social structure'. In fact in Britain the period in which the throne was most often 'achieved' co-incided with feudalism, a time when, most people would generally agree, British society was most closely woven!

Thus the very fact that a number of ambitious individuals 'achieved' the Thai throne is no indicator of the degree of mobility to be found in Thai society for in all monarchies one expects a certain number of individuals to 'achieve' the throne. Moreover it is no indicator of the 'loose structure' of Thai society for 'achieved' kinship is just as likely to be found in societies that might be termed 'closely woven' as in 'loosely structured' social systems.

1. The Thai figure is the result of personal communication with Dr. Nigel Brailey.

Conclusion

The previous discussion of factors which restricted social mobility in Traditional Thai society suggest that mobility for all stratas of Thai society below the royal family was restricted by various factors and was difficult to achieve. From this study it seems reasonable to infer that no doubt occasionally some slaves and peasants did achieve high status, even become king, but this was the exception not the norm. In practice social mobility in the three lowest strata must have been difficult and infrequent. In fact these factors which restricted social mobility between stratas, led to each traditional social level becoming a self perpetuating social strata.

Modern Thai Social Mobility

Since the 1870's Thai society has undergone westernisation and modernisation to some degree. Slavery and the corvee have been abolished. A modern legal rational type bureaucracy has been introduced in which theoretically, promotion is based on merit. Thailand has entered the world market and become one of the major producers of rice. The population has also increased enormously and urbanisation has begun. One would assume, in such times of change, that there would be changes in the system of stratification and social mobility. Certainly Lipset and Bendix (1959) argue that with urbanisation social mobility increases. But to what extent in practice have there been changes in the dimensions of stratification and how was social mobility affected?

Although as has been previously stated, the Thai peasants are an egalitarian status category, it is true that in some areas, primarily the Central Plain, there is land differentiation and a wealthy elite based on land is evolving. In the Central Plain according to Janlekha (1955) landlords, tenants, landless peasants and owner-operators are present. In Bangkok for instance as Kaufman (1960: p50) states there is:

a substantial variation in the wealth controlled by different households - a variation that is represented by the fact that some households have no land to cultivate while others have 200 rai or more, 27 percent of households plough no land while 18.5 plough over 50 rai.

Given these large differentiations of land holdings and wealth, it is reasonable to conceptualise this economic differentiation as a dimension of stratification. It already has the seeds of an incipient class structure and will no doubt form a class in the future. Within this system of economic stratification, however, to what extent is there social mobility? The major means by which a peasant could achieve land and thus wealth is either by means of economic effort, by marriage or adoption. But, as will be seen in the following pages, mobility by economic effort is becoming virtually impossible and mobility by means of adoption and marriage unlikely.

Firstly, how easy is it for an individual to become rich as a landowner? Sharp (1953: p31) says:

In these distinctions between the "big man" and the "little man" there is no clear indication of a tendency towards social stratification along class lines, ^{within a peasantry} which traditionally was rather undifferentiated and immobile. Particularly since the war, the small farm operator in Bang Chan, whether owning or renting all or some of his land, may seek to improve his economic position so that he moves upward in the social scales or, if more successful, outward and still further upwards towards an urban center. In a period of good agricultural prices and general productive activity, this may be accomplished with little capital and some initiative if the farmer can acquire more land through purchase or rent. If he can lend money to his neighbours or if he can provide at a profit ~~the~~ goods and services desired ~~by~~ his village community.

This quotation of Sharp's, as is so unfortunately common among Thai specialists, is a statement made on a complete absence of fact. If the available statistical data, however, ^{is} studied a totally different picture of the possibilities for economic mobility is revealed: it reveals that economic mobility is nigh on impossible for the 'small peasant' i.e. for the landless, those who only rent land, and small size owner operators. This is borne out by the statistical survey of rice production in five provinces in the Central Plain by the Land Development Department of the Ministry of the Interior who concluded that:

When the operating and consumption expenditures were deducted from gross income figures only landowners who operated 60 rais of land and partowners on 80 plus rais of land got some surplus.

According to Janlekha ⁽¹⁹⁵⁵⁾ the main reasons why the 'small peasant'

was unable to make a profit was due to factors such as the low selling price of rice, paddy prices, credit system, quality of land, size of business, marketing and marketing differentials, rates of interest and rent. Thus, given the fact that the 'small peasant' could not hope to make a profit which he could use to invest in land and so obtain the farm size he desired, it would be impossible, given the present situation, for a poor peasant to become a rich landowner. The present situation favours the already wealthy landowners, far from being economically mobile in terms of poor peasants becoming large landowners, the system is tending to produce a self perpetuating landowning strata in areas such as the Central Plain.

Secondly, as far as marriage is concerned, although there are no statistics available yet, several field studies point to a tendency for individuals to marry into their own economic and social category. As De Young (1955: p64) says:

Thai parents, like parents everywhere, encourage their children to marry into families of similar economic status, and a prosperous family rarely approves of their child's marrying into a poor one.

This view is also supported by Kaufman (1960: p27) who states that:

Rigid selection of mates based upon the criterion of comparable wealth exists only to a limited extent in Bangkok and cases of economic endogamy seem to be declining in frequency. It is still felt however, that there should not be too great a discrepancy between the wealth of the bride's family and that of the grooms'.

This is not to say that marriages do not take place between rich and poor peasants, but cases cited in the literature tend to suggest that where a poor peasant marries a rich peasant there are special circumstances and he or she either does not achieve full status or there are other social drawbacks to the arrangement. For instance Kaufman (1960: p28) states that:

Several men who had married into well-to-do families said they were always made to feel humble, asserting that their wives ruled their households. When an argument arose, the husband was always reminded by his wife and in-laws that he came into the family with very little, and that if he were to leave, there would be no loss.

Similarly Kingshill (1960: p50) says:

Occasionally convenience marriages or marriages for money take place in Ku Dang. In one case a seventeen year old girl from a large family married a fifty-five year old man who had never been married before and who had once been a

patient in a mental hospital in Chiangmai. The girl had come from a poor family where everybody was crowded into a small hut. This was her chance to leave a poor home. The man owned three rai (๓ ไร่) of land and had a house of his own, all of which he gave to his bride in return for her marrying him.

In fact several cases are cited in the literature of poor girls who became the second wives of rich farmers as a means of alleviating their economic position.¹ Thus although it cannot be stated conclusively (in fact what is needed is an intensive study of marriage patterns) the literature does tend to suggest that mobility by means of marriage is likely to be infrequent, and when it does occur it involves special circumstances which would ordinarily be considered drawbacks.

Thirdly, although adoption is supposed to be common in Thai society, it is not a means of social mobility. As Soontornpasuch (1963: p109) states for the Central Plains and it seems reasonable to infer from the literature that it is applicable to Thai society as a whole:

Some wealthy farmers often adopt an orphan or farmer's child as an additional member of the farm labourers group... a fee is paid when the child is taken. The adopted child in this category is not highly regarded in the family, as Janlekha (1955: 61) has observed the practices in Bang Chan, it can be seen as a "nom de grace" for household free labour. The relationship between the adopted and adopters in this case are largely temporary and little better than that of an employer employee nature. There are cases where the adopted runs away with some cash or property from the parents' home, and the parents take police action against the child.

1 This also seems true of second wives in the elite group. For as Graham & Graham (1958: p39) in what amounts to a study of the Bangkok urban elite system, say:

The woman who becomes a second wife rather than a first is strongly motivated by economic considerations and the status which accompanies it. Usually she has youth and beauty but little formal education or wealth. She becomes a second wife to satisfy a passion to improve her lot and achieve the finer things in life by trading her youth and beauty.

Such a poor girl has very little chance of attaining great social mobility and the concomitant prestige and the concomitant prestige for her chance of becoming a first wife of a member of the urban elite (especially the nobility or royalty) is extremely remote. As Bramley (1969: p19) says: Amongst a few high-ranking Thai families however there is, as might be expected, a greater emphasis on pedigree. Although political power has, since the revolution, passed out of the hands of both royalty and aristocracy individuals from these ranks still form a privileged elite with a background and style of life in common. Within this group many marriages are arranged with a view of consolidating the property interests of the families concerned. The high incidence of intermarriage can be seen both to reflect and to reinforce the internal cohesiveness of this privileged minority.

This brief description of the possibilities of a peasant gaining more land or entering into a rich marriage or being adopted demonstrates quite clearly that mobility within the peasantry is inhibited by several factors and that it seems reasonable to infer from the evidence that such mobility within the peasantry is very infrequent. However, is there social mobility upwards and outwards from the peasantry? There are several possible means of social mobility out of the peasantry, by economic endeavour other than by the cultivation of land, through the education system, through the bureaucracy and through the Sangha. But before discussing the possibilities for social mobility along these lines the actual motivation of the Thais towards social mobility must be taken into account for it will influence the social mobility of the Thais.

Evers (1969: p124) says:

As studies of the Unesco Institute of Child Research in Bangkok show, achievement motivation tends to be very low with Thai children (Boesch 1962: 31-48). Among adults there seems to be no strong feeling that one ought to go ahead and rise in status, position or wealth.

This lack of motivation seems to suggest therefore that social mobility will tend to be low amongst Thai peasants. But does the evidence support this view?

Firstly, the possibility of achieving social mobility by economic means is slight for the ordinary peasant and it can be inferred that it would be unlikely for several reasons. For the first half of the century the Thai economy was in the hands of the Chinese.¹ Although since 1948 a policy of Thai-isation of the economy has been in practice and the Chinese restricted to certain economic spheres, even as late as 1961 Ayal (1961: p 158) was able to state:

Practically all occupations other than rice-farming and government service are dominated by Chinese residents of Thailand.

1 Kirsch (1969: 52-53) argues that social mobility within the Chinese community and movements by individuals from the Chinese community into Thai society should be considered indicators of social mobility per se of Thailand in general. Whilst it is true that Skinner (1957) has pointed out spectacular rises not only within the Chinese community but substantial movements of Chinese at all levels into all levels of Thai society, to include a discussion of Chinese mobility in a study of Thai social mobility not only obscures the issues but is misleading. Firstly because the Chinese community nowadays is according to Skinner a very much enclosed and self-perpetuating system and very different from the Thai and as such a discussion of mobility within the Chinese social system would tell us nothing about the Thai social mobility, which is the issue at hand. Secondly while the Chinese until the first world war may have become Thai-ised and their sons Thais, once they had entered the Thai social arena, then their social mobility potential was open to the same restrictions as the Thais.

Where Thai-ization has been effective is in large scale enterprises. Generally it has not affected the ordinary peasants. Moreover as Ayal points out, there are several factors which have made it difficult for an entrepreneurial class to form who could become mobile by economic means. As Ayal (1961: p161) says:

The developemnt of a Thai entrepreneurial class has been been rather slow in coming, however. Lack of tradition, experience and proper attitudes have been major causes for this slowness, and to this should be added the still embryonic stage of development of the financial institutions. Without adequate facilities it is difficult to channel savings into investments even when there are entrepreneurs willing to invest.

Secondly, even if the Thai peasant (or urban dweller for that matter) were motivated to achieve and could enter the economic sector nevertheless the Thai world view, as Kirsch (1967:) points out, motivates individuals away from achieving in economic spheres and towards achieving in the government hierarchy. As Kirsch says, a job in the government is the most valued role for a Thai male. As the king is head of the bureaucracy and the king is considered to have ongness, so too does the bureaucracy and thus, given the chance, a Thai would prefer to join the civil service, rather than enter business because of this association with ongness. This is reflected in the competition for jobs in the civil service and the fact that many individuals with the right qualifications for high level administrative roles prefer to work not at all rather than accept an inferior role in business.

Even if the roles in the bureaucracy are the most valued occupations, to what extent are individuals of peasant background able to enter it, and to what extent is their mobility up the ranks of the bureaucratic hierarchy possible?

The introduction of a modern legal rational western type administration led to the formation of two types of bureaucracy: local government administration¹ and a national 'Civil Service'.

1. It is controlled by the Minister of Interior in the National Civil Service of Local Government Administrators.

As far as local government administration is concerned it is possible for peasants with minimal secondary education to get low grade positions such as clerks. But to attain the higher rungs of the local government service an individual needs the same qualifications and suffers the same restrictions on mobility as in the national civil service;¹ which, since there is no evidence available on ^{the former, the latter} ~~it~~, will be dealt with in greater depth here.

According to Ridenour (1965: p17):

The easily noted uniqueness of the Thai civil service has been the openness of the system to entry by aspiring men from all strata of Thai society. It has been possible for a capable male peasant from the countryside to initiate and maintain the successful escalation of a civil service career through the route of education and astute manoeuvring of personal relationships.

This view point is supported by several specialists who point to actual cases of such mobility, such as Goldsen and Ralis (1957: p5) who state:

Two or three times in past generations young men have moved from thatched houses in Bang Chan to high government positions in Bangkok through fortunate connections that enabled them to attend leading schools, as well as through their own industry.

Although it is possible in theory for an ambitious young peasant to reach the highest ranks in the bureaucracy, especially as in principal promotion is supposed to be based on merit alone, and no doubt cases can be found of peasants actually reaching the highest rungs of the bureaucracy, these factors of themselves cannot be taken as indicators of a high rate of mobility within the bureaucracy. Rather, as will be seen, mobility up the bureaucratic ladder is highly restricted. Moreover the system does not favour peasant advancement, rather it favours the children of officials.

As Tharamathaj (1963: p56) points out:

The civil service appears to have grown from about 81,000 in 1920 (BE2463) to almost 122,000 in 1957 (BE2500) - an increase of slightly more than 50 percent, during a period

1. As Karnjanaprakon (1962:p188) says of local government administrators:

The provision for recruitment, appointment, rank classification, promotion, transfer, ^{salary} and punishment are identical with those of the Civil Service system of the central government.

of 37 years, during which the total population grew from about 9200,000 to about 23,000,000, or about 150 percent.... over a long period of years the size of the civil service has not increased nearly as much as the size of the total population.

These statistics reveal that competition for promotion in terms of numbers has increased over the years, and that less people, percentage of population have the chance of promotion than formerly.

Secondly, if a study of the structure of the bureaucracy is made it will reveal that the structure restricts mobility especially in the lower grades to a limited few.

The bureaucracy is divided into five regular grades. As Tharamathaj (1962: p22) says:

Looking only at the regular positions we find a broad base of regular 4th class officials, comprising somewhat more than 60 percent of the total sample, a smaller 3rd class, made up of about one fifth of the total, a 2nd class of little more than ten percent of the total, a very small first class, and an even smaller special class.

This structural pyramid means that since the higher class positions are small in number compared to lower class positions only a small percentage of the bottom rungs could possibly reach the top.

As Tharamathaj (1962: p64) states:

The special class is one third of one percent of the total civil service, and the first class is two and one-half times as large. If the annual turnover into the special class is about five percent, then in twenty years the special class vacancies would equal only about 40 percent of the present size of the first class. Chances for promotion from first to special class are, on the average, not very good. The second class is more than four times as large as the first class. With the low annual turnover, chances for promotion are again not very good. The third class, however, is only about twice as large as the second class, so chances for promotion from third to second class, are relatively better. But the fourth class is more than ten times as large as the third class, so average promotion chances are not very good for the fourth class official.

Moreover as Ridenour (1965: p17) points out:

As the civil service has grown in size, newly created positions of entry have almost always been at the third and fourth class levels. Thus, there has not been expansion of the civil service at the higher echelons commensurate with the sizable growth experienced at the lower two levels of the

service. Civil servants tend to stay at their class level of entry into the service, and gradually proceed up the ladder of salary steps within the class level. In all classes of the system, the rate of turnover and change is very low with few civil servants experiencing dismissal, and an equally small number who choose to resign before they reach the age of retirement.

Given these factors, there is but slight chance of civil servants, especially those in the fourth grade, of being socially mobile; especially in achieving the highest offices.

It is very difficult for an individual to enter the third from the fourth grade, as the third grade is the college intake level as Siffin (1962: p211) points out. To enter this grade nowadays it is increasingly necessary to have a college degree, preferably a western one. The latter enables the individual to attain the western acculturation considered increasingly necessary for high administrative office. Thus, the chances of a peasant or poor urban dweller with only primary five education, who by dint of careful manipulation of local contacts has achieved a job of clerk or some similar occupation in the fourth grade, achieving promotion into the third grade are remote, not only because of the structural factors just discussed but also because of lack of educational qualifications. This is not to say that fourth graders (who usually only have primary five or a few years of secondary education) without college degrees cannot enter the third grade, but as Siffin (1962: p211) states:

Fourth class personnel can move into the third class to a limited extent on the basis of seniority and acceptability; but practically all of the second, first and special class positions which make up the top five or six percent of the system are filled by seniority-based advancement from the third class.

This lack of movement between administrative and non-administrative levels is clearly illustrated in the recruitment of police officers, as Blanchard (1958: p196) describes:

Police officers are rarely taken from the ranks; they are transferred from military duty, as were approximately 400 officers in 1952-53, or recruited specifically as officer candidates.

Although it is often stressed in the literature, for example

Graham and Graham (1958: p 11) and Kirsch (1966^b: p 375), that education is a means and channel of social mobility, the chances of a peasant actually attaining the necessary academic qualifications, i.e. a university degree, to jump the barrier between third and fourth class and enter the third class are limited owing to the Thai world view, poor educational standards in rural areas, the cost of secondary and further education and lack of the right contacts.

Firstly, as Hanks (1959) in his article 'Indifference to modern education in a Thai farming community' states, the Thai world view lays emphasis on practicality and substantiality. Knowledge for its own sake, which has no immediate practical benefits, makes little sense to the Thai farmer. The consequence of these attitudes is the fostering of indifference to 'modern' education.

Even those individuals who are interested in education (and surprisingly in Bang Chan, according to Hanks, it was the poor landless section of the population who desired it, for they saw it as a means of getting out of their situation) the chances of them getting a degree or even secondary education were remote owing to the type of schooling in rural areas. The standard of schooling in these areas, especially remote areas, is low, often differing little from the traditional education taught by the traditional temple schools. Such an education does not equip the recipient with the type of knowledge necessary for a secondary 'modern' education. As Blanchard (1958: p446) states:

Owing to poor teaching, crowded classrooms, and insufficient funds to overcome these obstacles Thai school statistics show a very high attrition rate.

Thus he says (1958: p461) 'few complete their primary education still fewer wish to continue their schooling'.

Even if individuals did wish to continue their schooling, they have to surmount massive obstacles, not only because secondary schools are limited in number but also because in many areas they are not free. As Blanchard (1958: p451)¹ says:

Secondary school facilities were intentionally limited so as to prevent the development of an over supply of educated persons and the attendant problems of a discontented white collar group.

¹ Graham and Graham (1958: p11) states for instance:

The current potentials for upward job mobility through education and one's own efforts is quite impressive.

This has resulted in great competition for secondary places and, since secondary schooling is rarely free, this has tended to favour the children of the richer and more successful Thais for they have both the money and the right contacts to secure their children places in the secondary schools. As Bramley (1969: p12) says:

It should be noted that Thai society is still highly stratified in terms of opportunities for education. The state provides for four, or in some areas, for seven, years of free education only. Consequently only those individuals in the upper levels of the socio-economic hierarchy can afford to give their children the secondary education which is a necessary pre-requisite for the most senior civil service posts. These people are also the most likely to have influential contacts who will lend their support to any application.

Even if a peasant does attain the necessary pre-university qualifications, the chances are that he will have to settle for a job in the fourth grade. Even if he does have a chance of further education, he will most likely go to a teacher's training college rather than a university, owing to the few available university places, cost and limited number of scholarships, and on leaving enter the fourth grade of the civil service. As Kirsch (1966: p375) himself, in an attempt to show that education amongst the Phu Thai is a channel of social mobility, admits, the role of teacher (fourth grade mostly) was popular because 'it was simply more feasible for Phu Thai villagers to get into a teachers' college than to get into one of the Bangkok Universities'.

As Evers and Silcock (1967: p91) point out, the selection system favours the officials and sons of officials:

A foreign education, however, is very expensive. The costs incurred for two years study in the United States to receive a master's degree will be close to U.S. \$10,000, a sum even the upper class Thai finds extremely high. Scholarships, the main avenue to foreign degrees, are, however, mostly controlled by the Civil Service Commission. Those best placed to receive a scholarship are either government employees themselves - one third of Thai students studying abroad in 1963 were in fact government officials taking leave of absence....or sons or daughters of civil servants. This is not necessarily connected with nepotism or any kind of irregular administrative procedure, but the importance in the competitive examination of knowing a western language (usually English) gives a far better chance

to members of the Westernized bureaucratic elite socialized into families where a knowledge of English and Western behavior patterns is common.

Evers (1967: p88) concludes from a study of the background of a number of civil servants that:

Though the highest and politically most important positions were held by royal nobility before 1932, recruitment for the lower ranks of the civil service provided opportunities for many ambitious young men from Bangkok and from the provinces to move up the social ladder. Interviews with higher Thai civil servants and the examination of their life histories showed, however, that after the revolution competition for civil service positions became more intense and people from rural areas and low family backgrounds found it extremely difficult to get a civil service appointment.

This decline in social mobility and the difficulty of peasants attaining high positions Evers and Silcock (1967: p91) put down to an incipient class structure in the top levels of the bureaucracy:

the growing importance of foreign academic degrees on the one hand, and the tendency towards monopolization of the ways to attain them on the other, are converting the bureaucratic elite into a relatively closed group with class characteristics.

This bureaucratic elite, Evers and Silcock argue, is a self perpetuating group which draws its recruits from within its own members. Although Evers' sample, as he himself admits, is open to criticism on the ground of being too small, nevertheless logically it seems a very credible argument. Thus, since the elite seems to be forming into a self perpetuating group, the chances of a peasant now and in the future entering this group are very limited. Thus the bureaucracy and its concomitant education, although in theory open to merit, is rarely a channel of mobility for the peasant in practice nowadays.

Paraadoxically however, the national formal institution, the sangha, does seem to be a channel of mobility. Bramley (1969: pp71-77) puts forward a persuasive argument that, for peasants and members of the lower ranks of urban society, becoming a 'permanent' monk opens up a channel of mobility for it enables them to attain access to educational facilities that would otherwise have been unavailable

to them.¹ As she (1969: p76) says:

A period of service in the monkhood may enable a man to re-enter ~~secular~~^{lay} life at a higher position in the socio-economic ladder than that which he originally renounced. This is to say that those bhikkus from farming families who belong to urban monastic communities rarely return to the rice fields should they decide to de-robe but tend to stay on in town, typically entering the lower clerical ranks of the civil service.

Kirsch also argues that (1969: p53) the movement of men into and out of the sangha should be considered an indicator of social mobility:

Field studies generally agree that the status of the monk in Thailand is very high compared, say, to that of the ordinary village farmer, and the high status of monks is reflected in numerous symbolic and practical ways. One might well argue that the monks role is not simply one among others that involves high status but that it is the highest status in Thai society, since even the king and the highest government officials formally acknowledge the monk's "superior" position. Since monks are celibate, no one can be born into the status of a monk. This role must be "achieved". Under these circumstances, the persistence of the Buddhist monkhood since the early historical foundation of Thai society has been predicated on a degree of "social mobility" from some "lower" ranking position into the "higher" ranking position....viewed from Thai notions of social status, Thailand has been characterized by an unusually high degree of "social mobility" both upward and downward.

1. Bramley (1969: p74) supports her argument with a questionnaire survey she ran on 187 bhikkus living in 20 monasteries in the municipality of Ayutthaya. She states that:

The completed questionnaires showed that of the....bhikkus who can reasonably be regarded as permanent, over 68% came from farming families outside Ayutthaya or in another District or Provincial area, whilst the rest came from the lower ranks of urban society occupied by vendors, labourers and some junior civil servants and so on.

Certainly, the Thais' conscious model views the monkhood as the highest status but to see the attainment of monkhood as expressive of social mobility is misleading for several reasons. Firstly, although Hanks confused the Thai conscious model with his own observers model when he discussed the Thai ranking system, nevertheless the polemic surrounding social mobility has primarily been argued within the terms of a western observers model. Thus to include a Thai conscious model of mobility into the argument will confuse the issues, and also it will obscure the aims of this analysis, namely, to determine the restrictions on the individual's choice in actuality.

But even if Thai mobility into, and out of, the Sangha were to be included in the argument it would still be misleading to see such movements as indicators of Thai social mobility, for it does not fit in with the Thais' conscious model of rank or secular mobility. Although as has been pointed out it seems that the Thais are particularly sensitive to status, it seems reasonable to speculate from the literature in general, that although the Thais attribute high status to the monk they do not conceive of the monk as part of, or in terms of, the secular ranking system i.e. as part of the peasant/ bureaucrat/ royalty hierarchy. For the Thai, the monk has high status because he is not part of the secular world. He is conceived of in other worldly terms as having ong (a mana filled substance) and it is because he is the receptacle for ong that he has high status. As such it is unlikely that the Thais themselves would conceive of becoming a monk as a change in social rank, or as indicating social mobility. Thus to see the attainment of monkhood as an indicator of social mobility in Thai society would be a misrepresentation of the Thai world view.

Moreover, in Thai society, although in theory all adult males are expected to become monks at some point in their lives, the great majority who do become monks only do so for the Lenten Season, a period of a few months. To see such a period of temporary monkhood as indicating social mobility in the accepted sense would be highly misleading.

Infact this discussion of social mobility in Thai society has clearly shown that although it is no doubt possible to point to individuals who have achieved high rank from humble origins, in general the possibilities for most individuals in both the past and the present for achieving higher status are very limited, for social mobility is constrained by many factors. Even in spheres such as the Sangha where mobility is possible it seems reasonable to assume that in terms of Thai society as a whole it provides mobility for only a limited number of people

Conclusion

This study of geographic and social mobility reveals clearly that as far as these areas are concerned an individual's choice of action is highly constrained, generally most individuals have little choice of action. Obviously a study such as this involves only a fraction of the total Thai social behaviour but, as was argued previously, if factors act as constraints on choice of action in such crucial areas as social and geographic mobility, then it is very reasonable to assume that such factors will act as constraints in other social situations too. Thus the implications of the loose structuralists' hypothesis that the individual is autonomous, his choice of behaviour unrestricted and his behaviour random and unpredictable, does not seem to be born out by this evidence. Thus loose structuralists' statements such as Embree's (p184) that an individual 'acts of his own will, not as a result of social pressure', and Phillips (1965: p23) statement that 'Bang Chaners really are not obliged to be beholden to anyone but themselves' are misleading and an overgeneralisation. It is the result of confusing the normative with the pragmatic level of analysis. It is this confusion of the normative with the pragmatic level that has led loose structuralists to imply that the Thais in actual practice have more choice than they do in fact really have. Moreover, it has resulted in them giving a misleading and false impression of the nature of Thai society: an impression of social chaos and behavioural unpredictability.

But as can be inferred from this and previous chapters, it is possible for the anthropologist to superimpose order, regularity and coherence onto Thai data. It does not, as Hanks (see page 56) seems to think ('flaunt conventional western requirements for organisation'). Thai society can be ordered in terms of generally accepted present day concepts, albeit in different conceptual terms to that of 'loose structure'. For example, this analysis has pointed to statistical patterns of behaviour, to the significance of dyadic relations and

action sets, and to the importance of reciprocity, alliance and the patron-client system in Thai society. All of which give order and coherence to Thai society and all of which could be used as a basis for analysing Thai society in terms of regularity and pattern. As Mulder (1969: p22) says:

At the village, or peasant level, Thai society obviously misses the ascriptive and formal structural principles that are so evident in Indian caste society or African unilateral societies, But there may be a multitude of non-ascriptive and informal structural principles operating at the same level. In the literature about Thai peasant society there is repeated emphasis on the reciprocal character of social relationships, and such dyadic relationships are open to observation, tabulation and statistical analysis.

Such approaches as these would certainly fit in with present day generally accepted conceptual requirements. Moreover, such ordering would not, as Phillip (see p 56) seems to think, do 'violence in the very process of ordering, to the reality of what is being described'.

Furthermore, despite what the loose structurists seem to think, in principal, Thai social behaviour is predictable. It is possible to predict Thai social behaviour patterns, as can be inferred from the study of geographic and social mobility, if behaviour is studied from the point of view of the factors that act as constraints and incentives on action, e.g. ecological, environmental, demographic, structural, economic, political and social factors. Certainly the Bergen Transactional School of Thought which has attempted this has had some success in this field.

Thus, given the conceptual confusion in the definition of loose structure and the false impression of Thai society it tends to create, if the concept of loose structure is to be used to characterise Thai, or any, society, it must be made clear as to which conceptual level it is being applied: either to the normative or the pragmatic. For the normative system of a society may be quite different from the concrete situation and the relationship between the normative and pragmatic levels may vary from society to society.

Certainly Evers (1969: p123) comes to the same conclusion in the recent Yale symposium. Although I disagree with his division of the 'folk model' into 'normative' and 'perceptive' models,¹ for the 'perceptive' model, by definition, is part of the normative model, nevertheless he makes (1969: p124) this crucial point very concisely and clearly:

The normative structure might be strict whereas the statistical-behavioral structure remain loose or vice versa. Precise statements of informants on how one normally acts or ought to act do not necessarily warrant the conclusion that behavior takes place accordingly and the statistical structure is also strict, nor does the lack of clear prescriptions for action in some areas show that the structure of the total system in behavioral terms is loose.

As far as Thai society is concerned, it is obviously invalid therefore to apply 'loose structure' (as defined and used by its supporters) to Thai society on the 'pragmatic' level, for the individual is not socially autonomous, his behaviour is circumscribed by factors in his environment.

Moreover as far as Thai society is concerned, it is open to question whether it is of value to apply the term 'loose structure' to the 'normative' level for several reasons. Firstly, because, as with all blanket terms, exceptions can be pointed to - in the Thai case to certain aspects of the sangha. Secondly, as has been mentioned (see p20), it is beyond the methodological competence of the anthropologist to describe the structure of society in toto.

Thirdly, as Tambiah (1965: p424) says:

A total characterisation of Thai society as loosely structured suffers from the weakness of all blanket terms. It obstructs any kind of structural analysis of the difference and convergence in the behavior of segments or categories of persons reacting to similar or dissimilar circumstances. It also disallows the weighing of institutional complexes and the examination of their ordering in relationships of

1. He defines the 'normative' model (1965: p 115) as 'based on how members of a system feel their social structure ought to be' and the 'perceptive' model he defines as 'the structure of a social system as perceived by members of the system'.

correspondence and contrast, opposition and complementarity.

Another reason why it is debatable whether it is a useful analytic tool to describe the normative level of Thai society, as 'loose structured', is that it orientates the analyst away from looking at the system of belief as a factor that constrains social behaviour. By stressing 'looseness' of the normative rules the importance of the content of ideas as a frame of reference and thus as a constraint on behaviour, is obscured.

Lastly, the loose structure concept is only minimally explanatory and it is not generative of hypotheses, as such ~~such~~ it has only limited utility as an analytic tool. Thus, given these reasons, it seems reasonable to suggest that even on the normative level there is little utility in applying the concept of loose structure. It obscures crucial factors in analysis: the concept is of little aid to the understanding of Thai society.

In fact, it is debatable whether it is meaningful or useful to attempt to compare societies in terms of loose versus closely woven social structures at all. Certainly, having shown in this thesis that the Japanese generally have more choice of action and the Thais less choice of action than the definition 'tight' and 'loosely structured' would suggest, it is obvious to compare the amount of choice open to the individual using Embree's assumptions would be meaningless. Even if societies were compared in terms of loosely versus tightly woven social structure using a different definition of loosely and tightly woven, then a scale of comparison would be needed to determine whether a society was loosely or tightly structured. But although Embree himself states that 'there is considerable variation in the rigidity of the structures of different societies', he constructs his hypothesis in terms of only two polarities. Such a bi-polar scale of comparison is far too simplistic, for it does not take into account the fact that societies may vary in the degree to which they are 'loose' or 'close'.

If societies are to be compared in terms of loose versus

closely woven social structure, then it would be necessary to set up a scale of comparison ranging from extremely loosely woven at one end to extremely tightly woven at the other. However, if such a scale is attempted, one is automatically faced with the problem of selectivity i.e. of deciding which factors are to be taken as indicators of 'looseness' and which of 'tightness' and then of ranking them along a continuum and Embree's attempt has shown the pitfalls in doing this - of not taking into account all the relevant factors. Moreover, one is also faced with the problem that the selected criteria may have different significance in different societies. Cunningham (1969), in his analysis of the literature on loose structure comparison in South East Asia, pointed the latter difficulty out. For, as he says, the factors Cornell loose structuralists' take as indicators of loose structure in Thai society if applied to Balinese society could be possibly taken as indicators of tight structure. As he says (1969: p109):

I do not believe that we could call Balinese society "loosely structured" in Embree's sense, though Geertz does stress the noncongruence of the various groupings in village organization and their variability in composition. I am confused about which cultural facts can be observed to form the basis for a general characterization of loose structure in social or personality terms. Lucian Hanks said, for example (1967:p3): "We of the Cornell team entered Bang Chan expecting to find an 'organized village' and hunted many a month to find its center, some integrating structure, all without succeeding." Had the team entered a Balinese village, with its plethora of social groupings and complex integrating structure, would they have reached similar generalizations about loose structure and loosely structured interpersonal relationships? Does the "integrating structure" which Geertz presents qualify the Balinese for the "tightly structured" class of societies.

Since there is no general agreement as yet in the literature on comparative studies of South East Asia as to which criteria should be used as indicators of 'looseness' and 'tightness'. I agree with Cunningham's (1969:p110) conclusion that:

I do not feel that we are ready to place the societies of the region on a continuum of "loose structure" because I do not believe that we are agreed upon the elements to be included in the characterization and the weighting to be

given.

In fact, of course, a comparison of societies in terms of loose as against closely woven social structure, like all comparisons of societies, is open to the criticism of being mere classification and as such tautologous. To quote Leach's (1961^a: p15) now famous statement:

Comparison is a matter of butterfly collecting - of classification, of the arrangement of things according to their types and subtypes....arranging butterflies according to their types and subtypes is tautologous. It merely asserts something you know already in a slightly different form.

He (1961^a: p67) argues that:

Our task is to understand and explain what goes on in a society, how societies work. If an engineer tries to explain to you how a digital computer works, he doesn't spend his time classifying different kinds of nuts and bolts. He concerns himself with principles not with things.

Of course it is often argued, especially by methodological individualists that the anthropologist, either for philosophical or methodological reasons, is unable to explain the principles underlying behaviour and that anthropology is essentially impressionistic. But nowadays Leach's view has wide support and it does seem reasonable that, rather than being satisfied with mere classification, the anthropologist should at least attempt to explain the principles underlying behaviour. Thus for such an analytic enterprise, comparing societies in terms of loose as against closely woven social structures has only limited utility, for it is only minimally explanatory and does not generate hypotheses.

Moreover, like all comparisons of societies in terms of social behaviour, the loose structure hypothesis is ethnocentrically biased. Loose structuralists have attempted to explain Thai behaviour in terms of such value loaded concepts as 'individualism' and 'freewill'. But these emotive concepts do not form part of the Thai conscious model. It can be inferred from Hanks (1965), in his comparison of the Thai and American views of freedom, that the Thai view of freedom and freewill differs from the western concept. Moreover, it

is very improbable that the Thais see themselves as being individualistic in the sense that they believe that the individual is an end in himself, and as such ought to realise his 'self' and cultivate his own judgement, notwithstanding the weight of pervasive social pressures in the direction of conformity.¹ Much the opposite, ~~as~~ to say that they are individualistic or act according to their own freewill is misleading. Even if these terms are used as part of an 'observer's model' they tend to mislead. For the westerner the terms 'individualism' and 'freewill' have philosophical and political connotations which, if applied in the Thai situation, tend to create the wrong impression - an ethnocentric impression that is irrelevant to the Thai situation.

To conclude, although loose structure is a reasonable description of the normative rules in Thai society and it makes us sensitive to the need to take them into account in any social analysis, given the drawbacks, ambiguities, fallacies, inconsistencies and confusion in the hypothesis, it seems reasonable to suggest that these drawbacks outnumber the loose structure concept's utility as a description of the normative rules. As such it does not seem a very useful analytic tool and it is suggested that an alternative model, that is descriptive, explanatory and generative, be found for studying Thai society.

1. Individualism, according to Cottrell (1964: p327) also denotes: a political theory which, by emphasizing property rights as a necessary condition of liberty, seeks to set definite and circumscribed limits to the regulatory powers vested in the Government over social and economic processes....

Chapter 5

Individual, culture and society: Empirical or conceptual? - an alternative model suggested.

The analysis of Embree's actual statements and some of the views of his supporters, in previous chapters, has shown some of the invalidities, fallacies, confusions and ambiguities in the loose structuralists' arguments. But the root cause of these misconceptions and ambiguities lies in the loose structuralists' fundamental conceptual and methodological assumptions as to the nature of, and the relationship between the individual, culture and society (social structure).¹

In this chapter, which will be in four sections, an analysis will be made of the loose structuralists' assumptions as to the nature of and relationship between the individual, culture and society in order to show how their assumptions have led them to depict Thai society in the manner that they do, and to show the fallacies in such assumptions. In conclusion an alternative model for the study of Thai society, which will attempt to avoid these pitfalls, will be suggested.

1. 'A society' being defined as the bounded entity which is considered to have a social structure.

1) Individual and Social Structure

Although Embree entitles his article 'Thailand: a loosely structured social system', states his hypothesis in structural terms and uses the terms 'structure' and 'social structure' throughout his article, no where does he state what he means by social structure. This lack of definition of this basic and crucial concept must be considered a major omission in Embree's article, for there are many diverse definitions of social structure.

For instance Malinowski (1931: p627), basing his definition on Tylor (1871), states that social structure cannot really be understood except as part of culture and culture he (1931: p621) defines as 'inherited artefacts, goods, technical processes, ideas, habits and values' of a people. Structural functionalists define social structure in various ways. For example, Radcliffe Brown (1952: p190) defines social structure as a 'complex network...of actually existing relations. Evans Pritchard (1940: p4) in his structural functional days, defined it as (consistent constant groups in society); Firth (1953) sees social structure as 'those major patterns of relationship which form systematic arrangement and which serve to regulate further action. Other anthropologists however, have defined social structure in totally different terms from that of the traditional structural functionalist's approach. Leach (1964: p16-17), for instance, defines social structure as a set of ideal rules, LeviStrauss (1953: 524 -550) as a model of society, Talcott Parsons (1952) as a system of expectations. Kroeber (1948: p325) even goes so far as to say:

"Structure" appears to be just yielding to a word that has a perfectly good meaning but suddenly becomes fashionable and

attractive for a decade or so - like 'streamlining' - and during its vogue tends to be applied indiscriminately because of the pleasing connotation of its sound.

Given the indiscriminate use of 'social structure' and the diverse definitions of it in existence, it is necessary that the anthropologist should state quite clearly what he means by it when he uses it, otherwise his argument will be open to misinterpretation. In fact it has given rise to a variety of interpretations. Certainly Embree's followers, many of whom do not define social structure either (e.g. Hanks 1962, Wilson 1962, Phillips 1965, Piker 1968; 1969, Mosel 1957; 1965), put their own interpretation on what Embree is trying to say, and, as will be seen, are apt to misinterpret him. Moreover it has allowed his detractors such as Mulder (1967; 1968) to impute to him things which, if Embree's article is read closely, it can be seen he did not say or intend to imply.

Although Embree does not state precisely what he means by social structure, nevertheless, the meaning he attributes to it can be inferred from a close reading of the way he uses it in his article. An analysis of Embree's usage of the term 'social structure' reveals that the premises underlying his usage play a large part in creating the false impression of extreme individualism in Thai society.

It is often argued (e.g. Wijewardene 1965: p255, Mulder 1968: p3) (no doubt because Embree at the end of his article alludes to the relationship between personality and social structure), that he was arguing within the terms of the conceptual framework of the American 'Culture and Personality' school of thought. But it is apparent, if both Embree's article and academic background, training and previous work are studied, that Embree's conceptual framework was primarily that of a structural functionalist of the Radcliffe Brown variety. As Kirsch points out (1969: p44):

Embree received his graduate training at the University of Chicago, which in the 30's and 40's was the leading U.S. center of conventional social structural studies. Not only that, but Embree was actually a student of Radcliffe Brown, and it seems likely that the teacher's

interests in things social structural would be reflected in the interests and work of the student. In fact Embree's interest and training in social structural studies is reflected in his work. For example, he devotes twice as much space to social structural phenomenon as to "religion" and the "individual" combined in his (1939) study of a Japanese village. It is also worth noting that Embree's monograph on Japan was published with an introduction by Radcliffe Brown which clearly identifies Embree with social anthropology and a social structural approach. (it might further more be of some relevance that Embree was a member of the sociology rather than the anthropology department at Yale.)

These factors tend to suggest therefore, that when Embree uses 'social structure' he uses the term in the classical Radcliffe Brown manner (see two pages previously). This assumption is also borne out by his article 'Thailand: a loosely structured social system' (1950). In this article Embree defines 'tightly woven social structure' in the classical Radcliffe Brown manner, in terms of rights and duties, conformity, deviance and social sanctions.

He states:

More tightly woven cultures - that is, cultures whose patterns are clearly marked and which emphasize the importance of observing reciprocal rights and duties in various situations to a greater degree than is found among the Thai (p182).;... Where social structure is 'close' that is, where the behavior of the people conforms closely to the formal social patterns of human relations, as in Japan - it is difficult for an individual to deviate, and reciprocal rights and duties are clearly marked and carried out. (p185)

However, although he attempts to explain Thai behavior in terms of the norms and rights and duties, as can be seen from his discussion of the institution of the family and the community, (185-186) at the same time he also orientates part of his article around the individual and emphasises the individualism of the Thai. This can be seen from such statements as have already been mentioned such as:

The first characteristic of Thai culture to strike an observer from the West, or from Japan or Vietnam, is the individualistic behavior of the people (p182).;... In Thai culture a considerable variation of individual behavior is sanctioned (p182).;... an individual acts according to his own will, not as a result of social pressure. (p184).

Moreover, some of his examples are derived from the motivational and personality approach to the individual and from the value system. None of which are usually included in a definition of social structure. Embree's definition of loose structure and the fact that his supporters (see Sharp 1953, Hanks 1962, Phillips 1965; 1967, Piker 1968, Wilson 1962, 1960) tend to stress these factors and the essentially anarchic and unpredictable nature of Thai society, has led some of the anti-loose structurists (for example Wijewardene 1965, Amyot 1965: p163, Mulder 1967: p13, 1968: p 23; Keyes 1966: p934, Tambiah 1966: p 424), to postulate such arguments as that Thai society has never been defined in structural terms, that loose structure says nothing about the structure of Thai society, that it tends to ignore structural considerations and to orientate the anthropologist away from looking for structural regularities.

Mulder (1968^w: p13, 1969: p23) for instance states:

The concept of loose structure has been derived from ill-defined cultural and individual ^{behavioral} premises and refers only to those cultural and behavioral categories. The concept has never been defined in structural terms.

The anti-loose structurists, and Mulder in particular, have overstated their case, at least as far as Embree is concerned. Firstly, since he presumably was a structural functionalist, it seems reasonable to assume that like all structural functionalists at that time he thought it was possible to discern social structure in all societies. It is unreasonable to suggest therefore that he does assume that Thai society is unstructured and does not attempt to explain Thai behaviour in structural terms. This is borne out by the fact that Embree states his hypothesis in terms of social structure i.e. 'Thailand: a loosely structured social system.'

Kirsch (1969: p48) thinks that the reason Embree explained his case and defined loose structure in the peculiar manner that he did was because:

Japanese data did not pose any theoretical or methodological challenge to the conventional social science theory of his

day with which Embree was familiar. But apparently Embree felt that his repertoire of social science concepts, which was adequate for dealing with his Japanese data, was not adequate to deal with the Thai data he offered in his article. For this reason, Embree proposed a new set of distinctions to come to grips with the problems posed by these Thai observations i.e. the distinctions between tightly structured and loosely structured systems. In essence, Embree divided the relevant field of social science theory into two domains. One domain, consisting of tightly structured social systems, could be handled by conventional theory and was non-problematic. The other domain, consisting of loosely structured systems, could not be handled by Embree's conventional theory and was therefore problematic and required special investigation.

From an examination of Embree's article it seems to me that Kirsch's view as to Embree's thought processes is the result of reading far too much into it. The article is riddled throughout with ambiguities, confusions and lack of clear thought, as has been pointed out. It is obviously not a well thought out article. Thus it seems very doubtful that Embree ever reflected on the loose structure concept with the precision and clarity that Kirsch suggests. There does not seem any evidence to suggest that Embree thought the repertoire of social science concepts inadequate for dealing with Thai data or that Thai society was problematic and required special investigation or that Japanese society was normal and Thai society abnormal.

Rather I would suggest an alternative, less complicated, hypothesis as to Embree's implicit assumptions. Namely that Embree assumed Thai society could be handled by conventional theory, that all societies were structured, and that his aim in the article was only to show that the structural form varied from society to society. There does not seem to be any reason to assume, as does Kirsch, that Embree saw Thai society as being in any sense abnormal and problematic. But although Embree tries to explain Thai society in structural terms, he perceived that the individual vis-a-vis the normative social structure has a degree of autonomy and this leads him to stress the individualistic nature of the Thais.

If this hypothesis is accepted it seems unreasonable to suggest that Embree says nothing about the social structure of the Thais or that the concept has never been defined in structural terms.

Embree certainly attempts to state something about the structure - its 'looseness' - and he has attempted to define it structurally but his normative viewpoint led him to stress the individualism of the Thais.

However, the-anti-loose structuralists point out that loose structure says nothing about regularities in Thai society, it does not take into account structural considerations and orientates the anthropologist away from looking for such regularities and patterns in Thai society. This does ~~not~~ seem a reasonable criticism. By definition, the study of structure, whatever phenomena it is applied to, is the study of regularities and patterns. As is apparent from Beattie (1964: p60) if one wants to study the structure of an entity one looks for the orderly arrangement of parts in whatever it is that is being studied. But do loose structuralists look at Thai society in terms of regularities and patterns? Anti-loose structuralists, including myself, often argue that it does not explain Thai behaviour in terms of regularities but because of its emphasis on the individual's autonomy it tends to create the impression that Thai society is unorganised and Thai behaviour random.

Mulder (1968: p2), for instance, holds that:

Of course there is nothing wrong in observing individual behavior or individualistic behavior and to conclude that within Thai culture a considerable variation of individual behavior is sanctioned. But it is strange ~~at least to~~ observe that "the longer one resides in Thailand the more one is struck by the almost determined lack of regularity, discipline, and regimentation in Thai life" (182) if one wants to state something about the structure of a social system. As long as one does not perceive recurrent, regular, institutionalised behavior, it is better to remain silent about ~~these~~ structure.

In his review of a book written by Phillips, probably the most influential of the present day loose structuralists, with reference to 'Thai Peasant Personality: The Patterning of Interpersonal Relations in the Village of Bang Chan' Mulder (1969: p20) remarks:

Pattern of Interpersonal Behavior in the Village of Bang Chan, "is deceptive because no pattern emerges. The almost complete absence of any structural considerations whatsoever is for the sociologist the most striking feature of the study. Little wonder that a picture of 1771 'loosely structured' extremely individualists arises, and one can only guess what keeps them together as a community.

Keyes (1966: p934) in his review of Thai Peasant Personality also shares this view. He says:

Phillips essential thesis is that Thai peasant society... is composed of a group of individualists who relate to one another in more or less ritualistic ways involving little emotional commitment. This characteristic of Thai peasant personality, he claims "lies at the root of what has so often been called Thailand's loosely structured social system." Such a position seems both deterministic and reductionistic, to ignore structural considerations, at whatever level one may study it, tends to becloud certain major aspects of social cohesion.

In an attempt to rebutt the anti-loose structurists' arguments and criticisms of Thai Peasant Personality, Phillips (1969: p34), in the recent Yale Symposium, argues that:

it does not ignore or deny patterns: it does not describe a "patternless" or "structureless" society, if these phrases can be imagined as not being contradictions in terms. On the contrary, it recognizes patterns, describes them, and concentrates on how they are expressed dynamically in behavior. It is absolutely true that in focusing on how they are expressed and, in the very process of expression, changed - and if reality demonstrates, "loosened" - the concept goes beyond merely citing their existence. But I cannot imagine anyone objecting to such additional inquiry. Thus by way of example, in the discussion of Bang Chan kinship arrangements I carefully enumerate the nature and function of five different types of household units that are found in the community plus the nature and function of five different types of kindred units. These various units represent the structure within which kinship relations are patterned in Bang Chan... How this description of the dynamics of kinship behavior could be perceived as absence of pattern or structure is beyond my understanding. The description indicates looseness, sudden change in circumstances, social flexibility and permissiveness, but it does not describe a situation of structurelessness. If the latter were infact the case it would not only preclude analysis but mean that the inhabitants of Bang Chan did not live in a society.

But a close reading of 'Thai Peasant Personality' and his article in the Yale Symposium does tend to suggest that Phillips does imply that Thai society is structureless. It is true that he points to five units in Bang Chan, but his description of these units - his stress on the autonomy of the individual, and to individual choice does tend to suggest this. The stress on the lack of structure in Bang Chan seems very apparent from some remarks he makes. As has been mentioned he stated 'any attempt to bring descriptive order to Bang Chan kinship does violence, in the very process of ordering, to the reality of what is being described' which suggests to me at least that he is implying that Bang Chan is unstructured. But more importantly on page 94 he states that:

the realities of Bang Chan social behaviour are so weighted in the direction of atomistic and essentially non-relational considerations that any coherent discussion of them should be organized in approximately equivalent terms.

This latter quotation with its stress on the non-relational aspect of Thai behaviour clearly demonstrates that however much Phillips might wish nowadays to dissociate himself from this viewpoint, in his discussion of Bang Chan he has been implying that Thai social behaviour is unstructured.

(1969:22)
However Phillips also attempts to dissociate himself from this position by arguing that in 'Thai Peasant Personality'

Twenty-two pages (pp54-76) are devoted to a detailed description of the highly predictable and carefully patterned nature of village face-to-face interaction, a situation which is summarized in the following generalization(p.79):

It is perfectly clear, as was demonstrated in the earlier discussion, that Bang Chaners are highly motivated to conform while in the direct presence of others. Often there is over conformity when in such situations villagers become overly solicitous to what they think are the needs of others.

But as was pointed out in Chapter 3, where this point was discussed, such patterns are essentially superficial behavioural regularities, they are not structural patterns that underly behaviour, In fact as has been mentioned Phillips(1965:p66) himself refers to them as 'social cosmetics' and a concomitant of the individualistic personality. Thus such regularities cannot be considered indicators of a structural approach. To even see such regularities as structural patterns is to mislead.

This brief analysis of Phillips work suggests that he has not succeeded in proving his point that he does describe structural patterns in Thai society.

But, as has been pointed out, it is possible to impose order onto Thai social behaviour and study behaviour in terms of regularity and pattern, if Thai society is studied in other than normative terms. For instance, it is obvious from previous chapters that it is possible to pattern Thai behaviour statistically, in terms of dyadic relations and action sets, in terms of reciprocity, alliance or patron-client relationships.

A major cause of the amorphous and random impression of Thai society that the loose structurists give, is that they orientate their analysis around the individual alone.

Mulder (1968: p2) argues:

If considerable variation of individual behaviour culturally sanctioned or more accurately tolerated (184) individual behaviour is to be the criterion of "loose structure" then one may be suspected of committing the sociological fallacy of deriving a structural definition from individual behaviour and vaguely defined cultural norms.

Although it is a misstatement to say that 'Embree derives a structural definition from individual behaviour' for, as was pointed out, he does not attempt to define Thai society in structural terms, nevertheless, Mulder has a point for Embree and the loose structure school in general stress the significance of the individual will and orientate their analyses around the individual, without attempting to relate the individual's behaviour to others behaviour in context. The loose structurists' analytical orientation around the individual alone possibly stems from the importance they attribute to the individual will in Thai society. Also, at least as far as Piker (1965, 1968) and Phillips (1965, 1967) are concerned, it is no doubt due to the fact that they are interested in describing the personality and character of the Thai peasant. Such an interest would predispose them to orientate their analyses around the individual and his motivations and beliefs rather than on social relationships between individuals.

Obviously, by definition, the basis of all anthropological and sociological studies is the individual. But an analysis of

of social structure which orientates itself around the individual alone are different in kind. As Kirsch (1969: p13) says:

Since characterisation of a social structure is based, at least in part, on observation of individuals acting and interacting, one must recognize that the distinction between 'social' and 'individual' is analytic.

The study of the individual differs from the study of social structure, for the latter, it is generally agreed among anthropologists, involves the study of the relationship between individuals, not just the study of the isolated individual. As Beattie (1964: p60) says anything that can be comprehended at all be it a concrete object or a set of ideas can be said to have a structure. But in analysing the structure, that is, the orderly arrangement of parts one is not interested in the parts themselves, but in the relationships between the parts. Thus the study of the structure of a society can never be reduced to the study of the individual and his personality characteristics, rather as Beattie (1964: p56) says the relationships between the parts must be studied, be they institutions groups or beliefs.

Certainly in Thai society for example, if the individual is studied in isolation from the point of view of choice of action open to him normatively, it would seem that he would have a wide choice of action open to him normatively, But if relationships are looked at dyadically then it is apparent that reciprocity is a fundamental principle, implicit and explicit, in Thai society and structures relations into clearly defined patterns.

Moreover the structural study of social behaviour presupposes individuals and their social relations with others will be studied in context. As Mannheim (1956: p53) says:

To recognize that the individual is the focus of reality is not the same as to construe the self as an isolated entity: to understand his behavior one has to know the constellations in which he acts.

Thus if social behaviour is seen in context, it becomes apparent that although in wide areas of social relations the individual is normatively autonomous, in actual practice the

individual's choice of action is constrained by factors in the environment which result in clearly defined patterns of behaviour (as is obvious from the previous study of geographic mobility).

Thus the study of the individual in isolation and the study of the relationships between individuals in context leads to the emergence of totally different pictures of Thai society. The former orientation leading to an amorphous picture, the latter to a picture of structured and ordered behaviour. Thus Embree and the loose structurists' view of the randomness and unpredictability of Thai social behaviour is the product of their methodology.

Moerman's article 'Ban Ping: The Center of a Loosely Structured Social System' (1966), a study of the loose structure of a northern Thai village, demonstrates clearly how these two different analytic orientations lead to two totally different pictures of Thai society being portrayed.

At the beginning of the article Moerman states that he believes with "perfect faith" in the concept of loose structure. In the first half of the chapter he proceeds to study the individual in isolation and proceeds to the conclusion, typically loose structulist, that in Ban Ping "the individual cannot be made to do what he does not want to do". In the second half of the article he attempts to analyse Ban Ping in structural terms and looks at social relationships from the point of view of the local wat. He concludes that:

In Ban Ping, and probably elsewhere in Northern Thailand, the temple performs few social services and its clergy has low prestige. Nevertheless social age is expressed and complementarity of age groups ritualized by temple attendance. The temple acts to equalize private wealth, to structure voluntary kinship, and to provide an enduring corporate organisation which trains and certifies village leaders and holds village property. The temple, although a focus of village loyalty and a repository of Lue traditions, also binds the local community to the nation. In its ritual and rationale, the temple dramatizes reciprocity the basic principle of Ban Ping's social life. (1966: pl67)

This study of the relationship between component parts in Ban Ping from the point of view of the wat gives a totally different impression of Thai society: an impression of regularity, coherence and order. An impression of a society for which a stress on 'individualism' seems irrelevant. Thus if Thai behaviour is to be understood adequately, Thai society must be studied in terms of the relationship between component parts in context.

But Kirsch (1969: p43) criticises the kind of argument put forward in this section. He states:

Embree's concept loose structure seems to have evoked the specter of 'absence of order', 'randomness', or 'anomie' in some of his critics despite Embree's explicit protestations to the contrary (191).¹ By construing loose structure in this way, the critics have subtly redefined the contrast between tightly structured and loosely structured systems. They have identified the former with the presence of order and regularity and the latter with the absence of order and regularity. Thus they take the demonstration of any kind of order to be contra-indicative of loose structure, implicitly identifying Thailand as a tightly structured system.

If by Embree's 'explicit protestations to the contrary'¹ Kirsch means that Embree held that all societies were structured then this is a valid point.² Nevertheless identifying loose structure with randomness and absence of order is not a subtle redefinition of the loose structure hypothesis for, as can be clearly seen from the loose structuralists' statements quoted in this thesis (see pages 54-56), these are both implicit and explicit assumptions in the hypothesis and it is the impression their works convey of Thai society. Thus a demonstration of regularity in Thai society is contra-indicative of loose structure and is a valid criticism of the loose structure hypothesis.

1. From a study of the article it seems the point of Embree's article to which Kirsch is referring is:

There is considerable variation in the rigidity of the structures of different societies.

2. For, as has been mentioned, the whole Radcliffe Brownian school was based on the assumption that all societies were structured and it was the anthropologists job to study this structure.

But although some antiloose structurists may implicitly identify Thailand as a tightly structured system, (although this point is a matter for debate) it has certainly not been the intention of the author to do so. For the author considers that the whole tight/loose theory is not analytically useful for characterizing Thai society. Thus the author has not attempted to rank Thailand along a loose/tight continuum. The aim has been a negative one, namely to show that the loose structurists' theory is not valid or analytically useful. This aim, it is tentatively suggested, has been fairly successful.

2) Social Structure or Relative Integration of Culture?

In the previous section it was assumed that Embree was primarily interested in characterizing Thai social structure. But in the recent Yale symposium, Kirsch has put forward an alternative hypothesis as to Embree's aims. He argues that Embree was not primarily interested in characterising social structure but in the 'relative integration of culture'. He also points out that if the hotch-potch of examples and anecdotes that Embree gives to support his hypothesis are seen from this point of view, they do form a relatively consistent pattern of psychological and cultural traits.

Kirsch (1969: p44)⁴⁵ holds that:

The discussion of (Embree's^{his}) article has tended to assume that Embree was primarily concerned with characterizing Thai 'social structure'. In some measure, this assumption may stem from the theoretical interests of the subsequent students themselves, but it may also arise from some ambiguities in Embree's article. The widely quoted sentence in which Embree introduces his discussion of loose structure in contrast to tight structure does mention social structure, and this seems to have been taken to indicate Embree's major preoccupation in the article. But let me quote that sentence. Embree states his article is to be concerned with "the question of the relative integration of ~~the~~ culture in terms of loosely as against a tightly woven social structure: loosely integrated here signifying a culture in which considerable variation in individual behavior is sanctioned." (182). Embree contrasts such a situation with "more tightly woven cultures - that is, cultures whose patterns are clearly marked and which emphasise the importance of observing reciprocal rights and duties in various situations to a greater degree than is to be found" in more loosely integrated (or structured) systems such as Thailand.....Although subsequent discussion of Embree's article has tended to assume that his principle focus was on "social structure", and clearly this is an important element, it seems to me that Embree may have been concerned with the more nebulous notions "relative integration of a culture". This latter does not seem to be simply equivalent to "social structure". My suspicion that Embree is actually concerned with "relative integration" is reinforced by the fact that it is to this notion that he returns at the conclusion of his article (191).

In support of this hypothesis that Embree is interested in 'the relative integration of culture' not in 'social structure', Kirsch (1969: p48) goes on to argue that:

Most of Embree's illustrative material is not social structural as such but is more "cultural" and "psychological"..... Classifying Embree's illustrative material in terms of today's distinctions, we might say that his evidence involves general observations about personality and characterological traits, pervasive orientations to the social and non-social world, certain features of the normative order and role expectations, and the patterning of Thai and Japanese commitments. That is, Embree's illustrations fall broadly into the analytic domains of "cultural systems" and "psychological systems", not directly into the domain of "social systems". Since Embree stressed this kind of evidence and failed to stress evidence directly relevant to the social sphere, perhaps Embree was not simply trying to characterize or describe Thai or Japanese social structure alone. Apparently he was concerned with a different sort of problem, that which Embree labeled the "relative integrations of culture".....Despite the initial impression that Embree's examples are a disorderly compilation of ^{unrelated} traits, if we view them as drawn principally from the "cultural" and "psychological" domains, they do combine to form a reasonably consistent pattern of traits for both loosely structured and tightly structured situations.

But how valid is Kirsch's hypothesis? First of all let us look at Embree's examples to see whether it is valid to see them as being 'drawn principally from the "cultural" and "psychological" domains.' If Embree's examples are scrutinised, it is difficult to imagine how Kirsch came to such a conclusion, for virtually all Embree's examples which refer to Japan and many of his Thai examples fall directly into the realm of the social. For instance, in Thai society Embree refers to normative behaviour patterns, family and community rights and duties, including lack of long term obligations and village co-operation. All of which fall into what is generally considered the realm of the social. In fact Kirsch himself refers to these features in his descriptions of the types of examples that Embree gives (see quotation above, lines 7-8). Moreover he also alludes to the existence of organisations ^{e.g. family} in Thai society which would usually be considered a structural functional interpretation. But even so ^{Kirsch} he still

considers that Embree is essentially not interested in characterising Thai society structurally for her argues:

While Embree does note the presence of certain kinds of organisation, e.g. credit associations, in Japan and their absence in Thailand, he does not try to describe role systems nor particular social structural units and collectivities. Nor does he discuss the relationships between such units, e.g. showing how kinship and marriage are articulated with economic, political, or religious roles etc. He does spend some time considering the loosely structured families ^{the tightly structured family} but he does not try to describe the internal structure of these families nor does he even relate the Thai family to "bilateral kinship" (as some supporters have done). Perhaps such descriptions were beyond his empirical competence, given his short acquaintance with Thailand. (1969: p48)

But the fact that Embree does not do as Kirsch suggests does not therefore mean that he is not attempting a structural study or that some of his examples are not dealing with the realm of the social.¹ In fact Embree did discuss the internal structure of the Thai family. For instance he describes the relationship between children and parents, F/Z, M/Z, and H/W, although admittedly superficially and rather briefly. But it must be remembered that it was a short impressionistic article. Thus to see Embree's examples as being drawn principally from psychological and cultural spheres is inaccurate and gives a misleading impression of Embree's aims in his article. For it is apparent that he gives many social examples both for Japanese and Thai society and that these types of examples, which usually form the core of any structural analysis are of crucial significance to his hypothesis.

Secondly, Kirsch's attempt to divide Embree's examples into two categories, "psychological" and "cultural", is open to criticism. To call either a "category" in the generally accepted

1. Different minds of course follow different paths of reasoning and consider some things more important than others.

sense¹ of the term is meaningless. Firstly because the "psychological" category contains so few examples and secondly because the phenomena in the "cultural" category are so diverse in type, that neither of them form a bounded number of phenomenon with a clearly defined specific characteristic in common. For instance the only examples that could be called remotely psychological are the Thais' 'cool temperament', their 'unreliability' and 'diplomatic craftiness' and their 'little aptitude for the life of a soldier'. It is true that Embree continually refers to the 'individualism' of the Thais, but the 'individualism' that he is referring to is behavioural individualism not to the psychological aspects of individualism. Only once does he specifically refer to the personality aspects of individualism when he points to the fact that the Thais do not like to work in organisations (see p.187).

In fact these psychological examples hardly deserve the name 'psychological' applied to them for they are very superficial aspects of the Thai personality.

If 'culture' is defined, as is still common, following Tylor (1872), cultural examples cover a wide range from betel chewing to poetic form, from neatness to Thai walking patterns. In fact, to state as Kirsch does that Embree's examples 'form a relatively consistent pattern of traits' is to make a mockery of the social scientific study of regularities.

Rather than seeing Embree's examples as a relatively consistent pattern of cultural and psychological traits, it would be just as reasonable to accept a more simple explanation and see Embree's examples as a hotch-potch of examples, the product of his superficial knowledge of Thai society and of the lack of factual data available at the time.

1. A category is a conceptual means of classification. It is a class or group of phenomena that have some attribute in common. Usually a group of phenomenon have to consist of a reasonable number before they are considered to be a category. Moreover the attribute which characterises the class or group is usually expected to be very specific.

In attempting to understand why Embree gave the type of examples that he did, it seems to me that Kirsch hit the nail on the head when he said two pages previously 'perhaps such descriptions (of social structure) were beyond his empirical competence, given his short acquaintance with Thailand.' (p257).

Embree was only in Thailand a short time, and at the time he wrote his article there was little concrete literature available that he could use to support his hypothesis. It seems just as reasonable therefore to assume that the number of possible facts he could use as examples was limited. Thus he had to draw his examples from wherever he could get them, regardless of the analytic sphere, be it cultural or psychological, to which they belonged. The superficial, anecdotal and essentially impressionistic nature of the examples should tend to bear out this explanation of Embree's examples. The type and varied nature of Embree's examples are the result of necessity, not the product of a clearly thought out piece of analytic construction.

Moreover it is possible to speculate that a contributory reason for drawing examples from diverse spheres was because he felt the greater the number and the more diverse the types, the more weight they would lend to his argument. Finally, as will appear in more detail later, Embree did not differentiate clearly between culture and 'society' thus it would probably have seemed legitimate to him to use examples from what nowadays would be considered the cultural sphere alone.

This analysis in the last few pages has revealed quite clearly that Kirsch's hypothesis that Embree's examples are drawn from the 'psychological' and 'cultural' spheres and form a 'relatively consistent pattern of traits' is untenable. For his examples are also drawn from the social sphere and they do not form a pattern but are essentially irregular in nature.

Furthermore, Kirsch's primary assumption that Embree was most concerned with the 'relative integration of culture' is also open to question. Kirsch argues that Embree is interested in this seen in terms of the relationship between the 'social

structure' and the 'cultural' and 'psychological' systems.

He (1969: p 49) argues that:

The illustrative material which Embree cites for the tightly structured situation emphasizes a consistent pattern of expectations with respect to role behavior and a consistent patterning of commitments of the actor to the system of roles and collectivities in which he is involved. As Embree presents his evidence, it is clear that he views the situation to involve more than "expectations", that is the expectations are reflected in action. Thus a Japanese is not only expected to identify with and subordinate his "personal interests" to those particular roles and collectivities in which he is involved and which form Japanese social structure, e.g. family, kin group, neighbourhood group, residential group (hamlet or village), political roles and nation, Japanese do conform to these expectations. Indeed, the themes of duty and of loyalty, of commitment to work, and to discipline, and to collectivities of various sorts, are pervasive elements which Embree emphasizes are displayed by individual Japanese. These factors activate internal and external sanctions which encourage conformity to the expectations and discourage or punish nonconformity. Thus Embree sees a basic isomorphism between what we might distinguish as the analytical domains of the Japanese "culture system" and "psychological system" and Japanese "social structure". Embree offers this situation as the paradigmatic model of a tightly structured system. In such a system, the interests of the individual actors are identified with the particular roles and collectivities in which they are involved.....But the Thai examples which Embree cites stress that the individual actor is not necessarily expected to subordinate his "individual interests" to his participation in specific roles or collectivities, e.g. family and kinship groups; nor is his loyalty to a leader or even, according to Embree, to his nation expected necessarily to take precedence over his "interests" as the individual himself defines them. These expectations and commitments (or lack of them) are paralleled by Thai orientations and characterological traits. Of course, it is this element which Embree is seeking to underscore by his frequent comments on Thai "individualism" and the "individualistic behavior" of the Thai. (1969: p49-50).

Kirsch's alternative hypothesis as to Embree's aims is a highly sophisticated argument. But it is the product of a vivid imagination, of reading too much into what is essentially a

confused article. It is in fact a misconception.

Kirsch's misconception of Embree's theory is not, doubt due to Embree's ambiguous use of the terms 'culture' and 'social structure'. On the one hand he uses 'culture' and 'social structure' as being synonymous whilst at the end of the article he clearly differentiates between the two (p191). Kirsch, himself, in an attempt to whitewash Embree's lack of clarity in his article, points to this ambiguous usage. He states:

Embree's usages in his article reflects the fuzziness which was widespread at the time about the distinction between 'culture' and 'society' or social system..... From this article it is not always clear if Embree used these terms interchangeably or saw some essential analytic distinction between them. (1969: p43)

Yet, although Kirsch acknowledges that Embree used these terms interchangeably, he interprets Embree as differentiating between the two. For his whole argument, that Embree is primarily interested in the 'integration of culture' is based on the implicit assumption that Embree does differentiate between these two terms.

While it is true to say that Embree is primarily interested in the 'integration of culture' a close scrutiny of the article tends to suggest that for him 'integration of culture' and 'integration of social structure' are synonymous. Thus when Embree states that he is interested 'in the relative integration of culture' in terms of a loosely as against a tightly woven social structure' it seems just as reasonable to suppose that the integration of culture to which Embree is referring is synonymous with integration of social structure i.e. he is interested in how different societies are socially integrated.

A study of social integration in a society was common amongst structural functionalists of the Radcliffe Brown-ian School in the 1940s and early 50s and was the product of their basic assumptions. They argued that a society was like a biological organism. It was made up of a collection of functionally related parts so that a change in one would involve a change in the others. Their model presupposed that a 'healthy' society

tended towards equilibrium and that any change would be dysfunctional. Since Embree, as has been pointed out, had a structural functionalist background, the assumption that he was interested in the integration of society tends to be given further weight, for such a study would be what one would expect from someone of Embree's theoretical orientations.

But the fact that the integration of culture to which Embree refers is a structural functional integration can be clearly inferred from the following quotation which, in its emphasis on social integration and dysfunction, is a classic structural functional statement.

Embree states at the end of his article:

Such evidence as has been given from Thailand, when contrasted with that of Japan and Vietnam, would indicate that there is considerable variation in the rigidity of the structures of different societies even when these structures at certain points bear surface similarities as, for instance, in family organisation or the school system. The permissiveness of individual behavioral variation in the culture does not mean that the society is poorly integrated. On the contrary, the loose integration is a functional one allowing not only variation in individual behavior but also in national behavior. It has a survival value which may well go back to the early days of extensive Thai migrations and which has served the nation well to this day. In such a society the processes of acculturation may produce fewer dysfunctional social situations than those which have occurred in, say, Vietnam society - that is, a loosely integrated structure such as the Thai may adjust to external cultural influences with less drastic overall changes than a more rigid structure such as the Japanese or Vietnamese. (1950: p191)

This quotation of Embree's as the underlined phrases clearly indicate, shows that the integration of culture that he is interested in is a structural functional integration. It is true as Kirsch points out in his argument quoted on page that Embree is interested in conformity, but he is not interested in psychological and cultural aspects of conformity as Kirsch seems to think. Rather Embree is interested in the relationship between conformity and social integration. It is apparent from

his article that he is attempting to point out that while in Japan the individual conforms and subsumes his interests to the community, in Thai society the individual has considerable variation of behaviour open to him and does not conform. But Embree comes to the conclusion that even though a wide variety of action is sanctioned in Thai society nevertheless Thai society is no less integrated than Japanese society.

It is true that at the end of the article, in the last paragraph Embree does refer to the relationship between personality and social structure:

it should be remarked that there seems to be little if any relation between closeness or looseness of social integration and any immediate social or psychological "needs" of a people. Whether or not this is true, studies of the differences of behavior in different cultures with similar social structures should be made to test a number of current assumptions in the social sciences - e.g., that social structures are neatly adjusted to individual and social "needs," and that similar social systems create similar culturally determined types of behavior.

But as Embree himself says it is a 'remark' and it seems obvious to the author that this statement is not the basis of Embree's argument but was intended to stress and further highlight the differences between social structures. If Embree had been interested in the relationship between personality and social structure as Kirsch suggests, then one would have thought he would have spelt it out more clearly in his article, even though his article does not show clarity of thought.

This analysis of previous pages of Kirsch's alternative hypothesis that Embree was interested in the relative integration of culture in terms of the relationship between personality and social structure and culture has been clearly shown to be unfounded. Kirsch's misinterpretation demonstrates just how ambiguous and confusing and open to misinterpretation Embree's article is.

But although it has been clearly shown that Embree was primarily interested in describing social structure in terms of integration nevertheless, such a study itself is open to criticism . The belief that a 'healthy' society is 'integrated' and in equilibrium and that change may be dysfunctional is the product of a priori reasoning and is the superimposition of a conceptual framework onto Thai society. In fact the Radcliffe-Brown organic analogy theory has been discredited in the last decade or so and is no longer considered a useful analytic tool.¹

Since the conceptual framework within which Embree argued out his theory is no longer generally accepted and the issues involved are dealt with extensively elsewhere, the author feels that it is not necessary to cite once again the fallacies inherent in the organic analogy theory. Nor, for the same reasons, is it felt necessary to discuss Embree's own attempt at applying the theory to Thai society, although in so doing he is open to criticism on several counts.² Rather the author will go on to discuss some of the basic confusions in the loose structure concept in terms of different levels of analysis.

1. For precise and clear critiques of structural functionalism see Nagel 'The Structure of Science' (1961) and Rex 'Key Problems of Sociological Theory' (1961).
2. Not the least being that his definition of integration is tautologous.

3) 'Concrete Behaviour' or 'Social Structure':

Empirical or Conceptual

It has been suggested several times in this thesis that the loose structuralists' analyses of Thai society tend to give the impression that behaviour in Thai society is random and unpredictable. But it has been pointed out that Thai data can be ordered in terms of regularities and patterns if Thai society is analysed in other than normative terms, for instance statistical terms.

Phillips, possibly the most influential of modern day loose structuralists, in the recent Yale symposium, in what seems to be an attempt to whitewash the inadequacies of the loose structuralist hypothesis, argues it these irregularities and not structural principles that are the loose structuralists' ultimate concern. Primarily they are concerned with the variety and fluidity of actual concrete behaviour.

Phillips (1969: p26) states that:

I must argue that ultimately our concern is not and should not be structural analysis but rather the study of the behavior of the Thai peasants: how they ~~act~~, how they deal with and feel toward one another, and what they give and derive from such dealings. To me, social structural principles are merely constructs abstracted from the main stream of behavior. ^{which may aid in understanding such behavior} But behavior itself is always more complex, fluid, interesting and contradictory than any abstraction that is derived from it, and too rigid adherence to any structural principle is just as likely to impede as abet understanding of the behavior to which it ultimately refers.

This elementary argument is familiar to all of us. However, it is most germane to the issue at hand. To cite an obvious example: we all know about the central role played by the Buddhist temple and clergy in almost all Thai villages. Certainly these institutions loom large in the social structure chapters of almost every village study that has been written on the kingdom. The commitment that the villagers have to the temple and clergy is seen both by villagers (as an abstract native category) and by visiting anthropologists (as an abstract structural principle) as one of the most compelling elements in the ordering of rural Thai society. In my work on Bang Chan I have been

chided for ignoring this compelling, if abstract institutional consideration. Thus, to demonstrate the limitations of the "loose structure" formulation Kirsch (1966B:183) and Keyes (1966B:794) have independently taken me to task for ignoring "the institutional pressure on Thai men to spend at least a brief period as a monk" (Kirsch) and for suggesting that the Thai commitment to the Sangha is not "Unconditional" (Kirsch). However, what Kirsch's and Keyes' criticisms fail to account for, or even note, is that in Bang Chan 59 percent of the adult men are as willing as I am to ignore the institutional pressure to become monks; in Moerman's Thai-Lue community of Ban Ping where child monks are the norm, 70 percent of the men over the age of fifteen have never been ordained. I cite these behavioural considerations not because I think they represent a particularly powerful demonstration of the "loose structure" concept: frankly, I continue to be impressed by the fact that as many as 41 percent of adult men in Bang Chan do manage to be ordained sometime during their lives. My point is simply that mere existence of an institution says little about the behavior of people in it, toward it, or away from it. The fact that 59 percent of the adult village men have never become monks is not merely epiphenomenon nor an artifact that can be explained by such social science cant as "patterned deviation from the norm".

Certainly Phillips point that variation in individual behaviour cannot be explained in terms of 'patterned deviation from the norm' is a valid point for such variation of behaviour in Thai society is normatively socially sanctioned. So also is his view that:

Obviously it is just as important, perhaps even more important to know why village men do not become monks as to know why they do. Similarly, it is important to know how they are treated by monks, women and their own kind: whether failure to be ordained has affected their careers in any significant way; how they feel about not having been ordained; how the fact of their never having been monks affects or does not affect other aspects of their religious behavior. (1969: p 27)

Although it is necessary to take into account the culturally sanctioned variation in individual behaviour, if an adequate understanding of Thai society is to be achieved, this does not therefore mean that a structural study of Thai society is precluded, if by a structural study is meant the study

of the relationship between forms.

It is certainly true, as Phillips says, that a structural analysis based on the assumptions of a Radcliffe-Brown type of conceptual framework is inadequate for it cannot explain the normatively sanctioned variation in individual behaviour. But this is not the only analytic possibility. For instance it could be studied statistically. In fact a model such as Barth's transactional theory could adequately deal with explaining such variation. Barth's transactional theory looks at the way factors act as constraints and incentives on individual choice. Such a conceptual framework would be perfectly adequate to explain irregular, complex and fluid behaviour.

Thus the absence of obligatory norms and the existence of normatively sanctioned variation in individual behaviour does not mean that per se Thai social behaviour cannot be studied from a structural point of view. It merely rules out the Radcliffe-Brown approach.

Phillips' belief that structural analysis is not able to explain and take into account the complexity, fluidity and variation of individual behaviour is partly due to his equation of structural analysis with the conventional Radcliffe Brown theory and partly to his basic assumption as to the philosophic nature of 'social structure' and 'actual behaviour'.

Phillips view as to the nature of 'social structure' and 'actual behaviour' is clearly expressed in his statement as to the utility of the loose structure hypothesis. He states that:

Frankly, I do not think that by itself the concept of "loose structure" helps us very much in dealing with these specific issues (i.e. to non-participation in cultural ~~from~~ or abdication of institutional responsibility). However, by sensitizing us to the fact that in some areas considerable variation in individual behaviour is sanctioned in Thailand, it does lead us to recognize the relevance of these questions and begin to answer them. In Thai Peasant Personality I have tried to answer (pp23-32) precisely those kinds of questions with regard to loose

kinship arrangements and unfulfilled family obligations. An overweening or exclusive concern with structural considerations, structural analysis, or institutionalised forms without consideration, as is typically the case, of the magnitude and meaning of variation is simply to deny the behavioral reality of Thai Peasant society.

It is clear from this quotation of Phillips that he sees 'actual concrete behavior in all its fluidity, complexity and variation' as being different in kind from 'social structure'. For him, actual behaviour is 'out there' in Thai society, and is somehow more 'real' than social structure, whilst structural principles are:

merely constructs abstracted from the main stream of behavior which may aid in understanding such behavior. (p26)

Certainly, social structure is different from the 'facts', from 'reality' as both Lévi-Strauss and Beattie point out.

Lévi-Strauss (1953: p279) for instance holds that:

The term 'social structure' has nothing to do with empirical reality but with the models which are built up after it....social relations consist of raw materials out of which, the models making up the social structure are built, while social structure can by no means be reduced to the ensemble of the social relations to be described in a given society.

Whilst (Beattie (1964: p58) states:

"society" is not something given in experience; it is an intellectual construct or model, built ^{up} on the basis of experience, but not itself ^{for certain purposes} datum. Society is ^{an} indispensable hypothesis. If we impute reality to it, we saddle ourselves with an entity which is more embarrassing than useful.

But, similarly, using 'behavioral reality' as a frame of reference and looking at Thai society in terms of this variation, fluidity or flexibility of behaviour, is no more 'real' and just as much an analytic 'model' as is 'social structure'. It is a conceptualisation which abstracts from empirical data, from the 'main stream of behavior', data which it organises in terms of irregularities rather than regularities.

It is this belief that variation in behaviour actually 'exists' and is more 'real' in some sense that leads Phillips

to argue that structural analysis cannot deal with Thai behaviour adequately because of its inability to deal with the variation of behaviour which is essential to a clear understanding of Thai society. But Phillips' argument is obviously fallacious, for the study of Thai society from the point of view of randomness and fluidity of behaviour is just the superimposition onto Thai data of a different type of conceptual framework from that of 'social structure'. As such 'variation of actual behaviour' does not a priori have to be taken into account if an analysis is to be meaningful.

Even so, as has been pointed out, random behaviour, if it is realized that it is an analytic conceptualization, can be explained in structural terms, by organising these irregularities into regularities i.e. into statistical patterns and attempting to ~~explain~~ the principles underlying statistical patterns of behaviour.

This confusion of a conceptual model which orientates analysis around variation in 'actual behaviour' is found not only in Phillips' work but in the majority of the loose structuralists (Mosel 1957; 1965, Wilson 1962, Hanks 1962, Embree 1950) and has been a major cause of the false impression of random behaviour in Thai society that the loose structuralist concept tends to convey. The randomness in Thai society is the product of the basic assumptions of the loose structuralists' model, not of 'reality'.

Moreover, the fact that the loose structuralists consider that they are dealing with actually existing concrete behaviour has led them to see the loose structure concept as being an accurate description of actually existing social relations in Thai society. This fact, as Kirsch points out, has led them to see Thai society as being in some sense 'peculiar' in comparison with tightly woven social structures such as Japan, and to root the discussion of loose structure 'out there' in Thai society. Thus as Kirsch (1969: p40) points out, the polemic surrounding the loose structure concept has evolved to a certain extent

around the question of whether loose structure actually exists in Thai society.¹

But the issues involved in the loose structure polemic are not empirical. Thai society is not a 'freak' society because the norms allow a considerable variation in individual behaviour. Rather 'loose structure' is a conceptual problem. The so called 'freak' features of Thai society i.e. the randomness and unpredictability of Thai social behaviour is not innate or 'real' but is the result of the basic assumptions of the Radcliffe - Brownian conceptual framework on which the loose/tight model is based. Because the loose structuralists study behaviour from the point of view of norms and the lack of sanctions alone they are not able to take into account the ecological and demographic, social and economic factors that act as constraints on behaviour. Thus the loose structure is not an empirical problem, although it is necessary to determine the validity of the hypothesis empirically; it is a conceptual problem of deciding whether the loose structure model is adequate or useful for accounting for Thai behaviour. Both empirically and conceptually it has been found wanting.

This view that the issues involved in the loose structure hypothesis are not empirical but conceptual is also shared by Kirsch in the recent Yale symposium. He (1969: p41) argues that:

Despite the cumulation of data and the persistence of the discussion, the debate over Embree's article does not appear to be close to any general resolution. As the discussion has developed, it almost seems as if the supporters of one side or the other simply confirm their prior faith or scepticism concerning Embree's view. Each side offers evidence to support its view, yet neither side in the dispute has questioned or impeached the evidence

1. The loose structuralists arguing that it does and pointing to features of Thai society that support this view and the anti-loose structuralists, including myself, maintaining that it is not and if Thai society is studied from another point of view it will be seen that social behaviour is ordered and regular.

brought forward by its oponents, although this evidence should presumably undermine the alternative view. In essence, the discussants have been talking "past" one another. Indeed, there has been little ^{serious} disagreement among ~~the~~ Thai scholars concerning raw observations and descriptions of Thailand. This situation suggests to me that there may be more at stake in the controversy than appears on the surface. It may be that Embree's article is more ambiguous than has been commonly assumed; that his construction of the problem and issues involved may not only be misleading but actually mask the significant problems; and that the issues raised by Embree's article are really broad theoretical issues which have been left largely implicit in the discussion. That is, the controversy does not turn on the facts of Thai society and culture but around what these facts mean in terms of more general theoretical concerns. The problem then may not lie out there in some special features of Thai society (or the absence of special features) but in the unstated theoretical assumptions with which Embree (and subsequent discussants) approaches any society. Thus the resolution of the dispute may depend more on recognizing what these unstated assumptions are and on theoretical discussion than on empirical investigation and demonstration. If this is the case, the resolution of the dispute may reveal more about the state of social science theory in general than about the special characteristics of loose structure or the peculiar features of Thai society in particular.

However Kirsch overstated his case for although it is reasonable to state that there is 'little disagreement among Thai scholars concerning the raw observations and descriptions of Thailand', it is untrue that 'neither side has questioned or impeached the evidence brought forward by its oponents'. Nor is it accurate to state as does Punyodyana (1969: p 83) that:

Embree's characterization of Thai social relations can be simultaneously accepted and rejected even on the basis of the same body of facts or empirical data (Embree's own not excluded), depending upon how they are interpreted.

Certainly, the validity of the loose structurists particular hypothesis does turn on the facts. For the anti-loose structurists, myself included, both 'question and impeach' the validity of the loose structurists' hypothesis on empirical grounds, on both

normative and pragmatic levels." Nevertheless, Kirsch hit the nail on the head when he said that the issues raised by Embree's article are really 'broad theoretical issues' and it is what these 'facts' are taken to mean in Thai society and how they are interpreted that is crucial. For it is the specialists' conceptual framework that determines how he organises his data and the impression that he gives.

With this in mind, it is possible to consider why the loose structure hypothesis is inadequate for explaining Thai behaviour.

The loose structure model is inadequate to explain Thai social behaviour because of certain fallacies and/or questionable assumptions in Embree's Radcliffe-Brownian conceptual framework, assumptions which are accepted uncritically by the majority of his supporters.

The basic premises of the Radcliffe-Brownian school is that behaviour is the outcome of the normative rules and that these rules are enforced by sanctions. Any individual's behaviour that doesn't conform to the normative rules is considered to be deviant. Radcliffe-Brownians also assume that the normative rules in a society are relatively clearly defined and can be categorised in terms of rights and duties and classified into roles. These assumptions lead the Radcliffe-Brownians to focus their attention onto the study of the normative rules alone and on social control and deviance.

From his article it is clear that Embree is following in the Radcliffe-Brownian tradition, for he too focuses his attention on the normative rules and sanctions. But if attention is focused on the normative rules in Thai society it is apparent as Kirsch (1969: p56) says:

the individual actor could not unambiguously be seen simply as a collection of his role and collectivity memberships. The actors significant social action and social identity could not be exhausted simply by isolation and identifying his involvement in particular roles and collectivities. As in the conventional schema with which Embree was familiar, there was a "residual" element. But unlike the tightly structured situation for which the conventional theory was adequate, the residual element in the Thai case could not conveniently be explained away as idiosyncratic individual variation, as "psychological," and thus of no relevance to the social analyst. It could not be treated in this way precisely because it was institutionalized, socially sanctioned and culturally defined, and because it very clearly had social relevance.

Thus if Thai society is studied from the point of view of the normative rules alone, the analyst is confronted with this residual element, and focusing attention on this residual element is liable to lead one to the conclusion as it did Embree, that 'considerable variation of individual behaviour is sanctioned' and it logically leads to a stress on individualism.

Similarly if attention is focused on social control, as Embree does in his article, then such a study is liable to reinforce the impression that the Thais are individualistic. For as Kirsch (1969: p56) points out in his own analysis on this point:

(Embree's) Thai evidence indicated that the individual Thai actor did not simply link himself to and identify himself with the particular set of roles and collectivities in which he was involved. The individual Thai actor might remain tied to these roles and collectivities, but then again he might not!... But in Japan when an actor chose not to identify himself with these particular roles and collectivities, sanctions were mobilized to ~~wither~~ encourage or enforce conformity or punish his non-conformity. In Thailand when an actor chose not to identify himself with his particular roles and collectivities, no sanctions

were mobilized. Hence in Thailand this could not simply be seen as deviance as it could in Japan.

Thus a study of Social Sanctions in Thai society, because they are of minimal social significance, would logically lead the analyst, as it did Embree, to stress the autonomy of the individual will.

Given the basic assumption of the autonomy of the individual, it was but a small logical step for Embree and the loose structuralists to assume as they do that, since the normative rules are not clearly defined and sanctions are minimal, behaviour would therefore be random and unpredictable. This model, as has been empirically established, gives a false impression. Obviously therefore, it is inadequate to study Thai society from the point of view of the norms and social sanctions for they cannot take into account other factors which may affect the choice of action.

It is open to debate whether it is analytically useful to categorise Thai behaviour into roles at all. Mulder (1969: p20) argues:

In all social interaction, in Thailand as in any place else, people meet as occupants of ^{functional} social positions or roles, that can be defined in structural terms: there is nothing "loose" about that. If it were otherwise in Thailand, sociologists and social anthropologists might better avoid Thai society as an object of study.

A 'role analysis' is based on the a priori assumption that it is possible to categorise behaviour in a particular society, in terms of rights and duties. In Thai society such a supposition is open to question.

It seems to me that Mulder, in the above quotation, confused status i.e. rank, with role i.e. the normative rights and duties expected of an incumbent of a status. But in Thai society it is very necessary to clearly differentiate them for although status is very clear cut in Thai society, roles are not. From knowledge of an individual's status it would be possible only to determine the resources that the individual had control over. It would not be possible to determine, except in the most general terms, how the

individual status incumbent will act for it would be up to him to determine his pattern of behaviour.

Mosel (1965) has attempted to deal with this problem by trying to analyse Thai society in terms of generalized roles. For instance he (1965: pp4-5) states:

In a sense we might say that in Thai society there are two highly generalized roles: superior and subordinate. Given these two statuses or clusters of social characteristics the average Thai can easily make paired judgements.

But such a conceptualisation as this is not analytically useful. It is of such a high level of generality that it tells us little about the content of the role-holders behaviour which is the aim of role analysis in the first place.

Moreover classification of normative rules into Radcliffe Brown and Nadel type roles in a society such as the Thai, gives the impression that behaviour is more normatively particularistically formalised than it in fact is, and this can mislead the analyst. Certainly the ease with which Thais move from role to role, often between disparate roles such as the movement from peasant farmer to bureaucrat, has been remarked upon. (Hanks 1962). But this ease of movement can easily be understood if the diffuseness of roles is born in mind, rather than the status aspect. Since in Thai society it is status that is emphasized not role, neither the status incumbent or alter will operate with a clear image of how the status incumbent should act. Providing the individual keeps within universalist limits any behaviour is sanctioned. Given this factor neither the status incumbent or alter will see any contradiction in the role behaviour expected from the individual who moves between disparate roles.

Since in Thai society normative rules can be classified into roles in only the most general terms, and since role analysis presupposes focusing attention on the norms, which it has been shown in some societies such as the Thai tends to mislead, it is suggested that structural functional role analysis of the Radcliffe-Brown or Nadel type, should not be used as a conceptual framework for studying Thai society. Infact the author tentatively suggests that structural functionalism which was evolved to tackle the problems confronting the anthropologists in unilineal societies should not be used as a model for the study of non-unilineal societies, such as those found in Southeast Asia which are totally different.

But this does not mean that a defeatist attitude should be taken by the anthropologist as Mulder suggests, that is, that the anthropologist should 'avoid Thai society as an object of study.' Rather what is needed is a conceptual framework that can deal with the problems confronting the anthropologist in the study of Thai society.

4) An Alternative Model

If the loose structure concept is inadequate to explain Thai social behaviour what sort of model should be used to analyse Thai society? as Udy(1968: p490) says:

Everyone presumably agrees that the twentieth-century scientist, as opposed to his nineteenth-century counterpart, is no longer trying to "discover reality" but, rather, is seeking to understand observations by imposing different kinds of order on them in the form of various models, exploring the implications of each, and accepting one model as opposed to another on pragmatic grounds.

Given Udy's criteria for the significance and validity of a model which model would be the most useful for understanding Thai behaviour?

Various models have been suggested in the literature recently, including Foster's 'dyadic contract' model, Redfield's 'Great and Little Tradition', and Leach's 'economics before kinship' model. But there are various drawbacks to these models.

Given the emphasis in Thai society on dyadic relations, the informal dyadic reciprocal exchange of goods and services in Thai society, it might seem that Foster's 'dyadic contract' model which is orientated around the study of the informal exchange of goods and services would

be an ideal conceptual framework with which to analyse Thai society, but Foster's 'dyadic contract' presupposes a clearly defined normative system as can be seen from Foster's (1961: p1176) statement:

The contractual principle enables the individual to disentangle himself from the weight of ideal role behaviour implicit in the totality of ascribed and achieved statuses he occupies in a society and to make functional those relationships as he deems necessary in every day life.

Thus unlike the dyadic exchange which is a formal principle in Thai society, Foster's model is an informal structure underlying the normative system and articulated in terms of and through it. Given it's normative orientation the 'dyadic contract' model falls foul to the same fallacies and inherent methodological difficulties as Radcliffe Brownian role theory described previously.

Moreover, as far as theories of 'peasant society' are concerned, such as 'dyadic contract' and the 'Theory of Limited Good' (Foster 1965) I agree with Kirsch's (1969: p. 58) view:

Within the context of the discussion of Embree's article, it seems to me that several objections might be raised about applying "peasant society theory" to Thailand. For one thing, this would imply that the problems involved are simply those of social "complexity" which is by no means clear... More importantly, the "theory of peasant society is little more than a collection of dubious empirical generalizations fraught with as many internal inconsistencies as Embree's article is with ambiguities (see the incisive comments of Kennedy and Piker 1966). Turning to the theory of peasant society is unlikely to solve the kind of problems involved in the discussions of loose structure.

Even Redfield's hypothesis that peasant society is a 'part' society, a Little Tradition, incapsulated in a Great Tradition - a High Culture, has its drawbacks. Not only does Kirsch's criticism above apply to it too but his argument that the system of belief in peasant society is a refraction of and a dilute version of the high culture, a hotch-potch of unrelated ideas and customs is open to criticism. For as Kirsch (1967) has clearly shown, peasant systems of belief are a structurally and functionally inter-related mass and form a coherent whole. Since Redfield's (1966) basic premise is fallacious it does not seem worthwhile to use it as a model for the study of Thai society.

Leach's thesis that the 'constraints of economics are prior to the constraints of morality and law has its points, in that it would enable the analyst to deal with the flexible and diffuse universalist norms. Leach's argument, which he spells out in a discussion of the social organisation of Pul Eliya is concisely put by Wijewardene (1966: p95) in his study of South Village in which he attempts to assess the validity of Leach's hypothesis in Thai society. Leach's argument Wijewardene says runs more or less as follows:

The natural environment acts as a constraint chiefly through the scarcity of water. Within the limits imposed by the environment, the tank, the house sites and the fields have been laid out in a particular way. It is easier for all the community to adapt social relations to the relatively invariant layout of the fields, than to change the latter to conform to an ideal pattern of social relations. The social structure of the community, which here means such things as the pattern of marital choice, co-operative groups and political alliances, is dictated by the invariant structure of the fields. Through a detailed analysis of factionalism, land transactions and marriages over a period of seventy-five years, Leach concludes that 'Pul Eliya is a society in which locality and not descent forms the basis of corporate grouping.'

Although Leach's argument seems to hold up well for Pul Eliya society, in his hypothesis he is postulating a priori that 'the constraints of economics are prior to the constraints of morality and law.' But this theoretical and philosophical assumption cannot be a priori considered valid for all societies, certainly not for Thai society. For as has been pointed out previously in chapter 3, Wijewardene (1966: p101) comes to the conclusion in his article that:

the invariant aspects of landed property are matched by equally invariant aspects of law and morality - of the system of values.

Thus Leach's thesis that 'the constraints of morality are prior to the constraints of morality and law' is not a matter that can be a priori assumed, but is a matter for empirical investigation in a society.

Even so, although Leach's philosophical assumptions are open to question, his model does sensitize us to the importance of taking into account ecological, demographic, environmental and economic factors, if Thai social behaviour is to be understood adequately. Factors that have also been shown to be important throughout this thesis to the understanding of social action.

Thus as has been pointed out, not only should norms be clearly differentiated from actual behaviour and the relationship between the two be a primary concern of the anthropologist. But so too should the relationship between the norms, actual behaviour and these ecological, environmental, demographic factors be taken into account if a satisfactory understanding of the mechanism of social behaviour are to be achieved.

But attempts at studying society so far have generally concentrated on either one or the other of these variables. The Sociology of Knowledge school, for instance, emphasizing the importance of ideas. They see ideas as a frame of reference for action and thus prior to action and are inclined to orientate their analyses around the study of ideas. Whilst specialists with Marxist leanings stress the importance of economic variables as being prior to ideas. Ideas for them are the expression of group economic interest and thus of little sociological significance. Thus in their analyses they tend not to take ideas into account, or define them away or understress their importance. But as Udy (1968: p490) says:

the question of the importance of the folk models, relative to other patterns of social phenomena, as sources of theoretical explanation. The problem of their relationship, under various conditions, of folk models on the cultural level to other patterns manifest on the morphological, systematic, group, and individual levels of social structure is a matter for empirical investigation, the answer to which can hardly be assumed away or defined out of existence

Thus since this critique of loose structure has shown that such factors as ecology, world view, social structure, demography, environment and so forth have to be taken into account if actual Thai behaviour is to be understood satisfactorily, the author intends to fit these factors in to the ^{model} hypothesis that is about to be described.

Given the fact that as far as anthropology is concerned, Thai studies have hardly got off the ground, in fact even now there is very little reliable data of a sociological nature available, what is needed is not an all embracing blanket term like 'loose structure' which obscures the issues, but a general orientation, a basic conceptual framework which can be used as the basis for more 'low level' hypotheses. Since in Thai society as Moerman states patterns are more statistical than jural, it is tentatively suggested that these statistical patterns be studied. The factors e.g. social structure, world view, ecology, demography etc that act as constraints and incentives on individual behaviour and which channel behaviour into statistical patterns to be the focus of study. Such a model as this would of course be able to deal with the so-called amorphous and unpredictable nature of Thai society, for the loose structuralist's 'random' behaviour would be able to be studied and classified statistically.

This model owes much to the 'Bergen Transactional School'. But unlike the Bergen model, which is orientated around the study of the individual and is based on the erroneous nineteenth century assumption of rational man i.e. that an individual's decisions are the result of the rational weighing up of alternatives, and is a model based on a dubious definition of values.¹ This model because it focuses attention on the study of factors that act as constraints and incentives and on statistical patterns of behaviour omits these errors.

Such a model as this will not just be 'butterfly collecting' like the loose structure model. It will attempt to explain why the statistical patterns evolve in the way that they do. As Barth (1966: p2)

Explanation is not achieved by a description of the patterns of regularity, no matter how meticulous and adequate nor by replacing this description by other abstractions congruent with it, but by exhibiting what makes the patterns i.e. certain processes. To study social forms, it is certainly necessary but hardly sufficient to be able to describe them, to give an explanation of social forms, it is sufficient to describe the processes that generate the forms.

¹ Barth relates values to the individual alone. He does not take into account the significance of the world view as a system, that is the significance of the content and interconnectedness of ideas as factors which channel and constrain behaviour. Yet as the previous study of Japan has shown it is very necessary to take them into account if behaviour is to be fully understood.

Moreover this will be a processual model. It will be able to account for change. Phillips stated that a point in favour of the 'loose structure' model was that it could account for change whereas the conventional structural studies could not. It is certainly true as has been continually pointed out in the theoretical literature in the last decade or so that conventional Radcliffe-Brownian 'equilibrium' type models have difficulty taking into account social change. But this criticism also holds true of the 'loose structure' model too, for the loose structure emphasis on random and unpredictable behaviour can result in only very superficial descriptive accounts of change, it cannot take into account the principles that underly change. But as Barth (1966:p2) argues:

If a concept of process is to be analytically useful, it must refer to something that governs and effects activity, something that restricts and canalizes the possible course of events. These restrictions should go beyond what can be contained in static or general kinds of limitations. Just as the description of a ~~socket~~ is more than a description of the binding rules, so a description of process of interaction should contain more than a listing of reciprocal obligations. The study of process must be a study of necessary of probable interdependencies which govern the course of events, exhibit what makes the pattern.

The loose structurists, of course, have argued that because of the 'individualism' of the Thai, social behaviour in Thai society is very difficult to predict. But if the proposed model were used to study Thai social behaviour, it should in principle, if the principles underlying the statistical patterns of behaviour are analysed, ^{be possible} to predict social action. Of course, it is accepted that it is philosophically debatable as to whether it is possible to predict individual or trends of behaviour. Some specialists such as Mayek (1964) argue that it is philosophically and /or methodologically impossible for social behaviour to be predictable i.e. the study of man is essentially impressionistic.

But although 'predictability' in the social sciences is still very much an open question, nevertheless the Bergen School has had some success in this pursuit. Horowitz (1967)'s recent study of the principles underlying conjugal patterns in the West Indies is a good example of such an approach. Therefore on pragmatic grounds it seems analytically worthwhile for the anthropologist to structure his model so that it is capable of prediction.

The aim of the social anthropologist should be the suggestion of hypotheses which can be tested empirically. Unlike the blanket term 'loose structure' which has not generated any significant hypotheses and which has led anthropologists to ask the wrong questions for almost twenty years, this model, because it is of a high level of generality should lead to a plethora of hypotheses, both empirical and conceptual, as to the relationship between the variables that act as constraints and incentives on action.

It is hoped that this is but the first of many models to be offered as aids for understanding the Thai, be they behavioural or ideological in orientation. For what is needed in Thai studies, given the present stage of development, is not a hypothesis that purports to be an accurate empirical description of Thai society as does 'loose structure', thus being an intellectual straightjacket that inhibits further analysis, but a model that will aid the analyst in furthering the understanding of the Thais, which after all should be the aim of the Thai specialist.

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* Wijeyewrdene has been mis-spelt throughout this thesis as Wijewardene.

GLOSSARY OF THAI WORDS *

| | | |
|-------------------|-------------|---|
| Amphoe | อำเภอ | District |
| Aw haeng | เอาหาง | Type of exchange labour in Ban Ping |
| Awraeng | เอาแรง | Type of exchange labour in Central Plains |
| Ayutthaya | อยุธยา | Old capital in Central Thailand. |
| Bab | บาป | Sin |
| Bhikkhus | ภิกษุ | Monks |
| Bun | บุญ | Merit |
| Dukkha | ทุกข์ | Sorrow |
| Choey | เฉย | Calmness in the face of difficulties |
| Jap jawng | จับจอง | Squatter's rights. |
| Kamnan | กำนัน | Commune headman |
| Kathin Ceremony | กฐิน | Ceremony at which robes are given to priests. |
| Kha-cang | ค่าจ้าง | Wage |
| Khammic | กรรม | Karma |
| Khauraeng | ขอแรง | Type of labour in Central Plains |
| Kreengcai | เกรงใจ | To be reluctant to impose upon. |
| Muuban | หมู่บ้าน | Village |
| Nibphaan | นิพพาน | Nirvana |
| Pan | ปัน | Gift, receiving |
| Pay thiaw | ไปเที่ยว | 'going around' form of journey generally undertaken by young men. |
| Phansaa | พรรษา | Lenten Season |
| Phujaiban | ผู้ใหญ่บ้าน | Headman of village |
| Phuu nooy | ผู้น้อย | 'Little man' -client |
| Phuu yaay | ผู้ใหญ่ | 'Big man' -patron |
| Phyyng | พึ่ง | Respect, to depend on for help |
| Rai | ไร่ | Measurement: two fifths of an acre |
| Sakdii naa | ศักดินา | Traditional Ranking System. |
| Sanug | สนุก | Pleasure |
| Tambon | ตำบล | Commune |
| Tham dii: dai dii | ตาบด: ดาบด | Do good: receive good |
| Wat | วัด | Monastery |

*This glossary does not include all the Thai words used by this thesis, for it has proved impossible to discover the Standard Thai equivalents for some of the words used, especially the dialect words. The author has retained the Romanised version used by the authors cited in this thesis. Where the author has introduced Thai words, 'Mary Haas' orthography has been followed where possible.