

THAI CONJUGAL FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS AND THE HSU HYPOTHESIS

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Introduction

The Problem : Does the Hsu Hypothesis Fit the Thai Case ?

Based upon his study of four societies, Francis L.K. Hsu hypothesized in 1971 that the structure of a "dominant" kin tie in a society shapes the structure of social relations in that society.¹ The hypothesis is interesting for its apparent simplicity, and for its promise for advance in crosscultural comparative work. It reads :

The dominant attributes of the dominant dyad in a given kinship system tend to determine the attitudes and action patterns that the individual in such a system develops toward other dyads in this system as well as towards his relationships outside of the system. (1971a : 10)

Here, "dyad" refers to any of the eight pairs of persons linked together in the elementary conjugal family, covering two generations, viz., husband : wife, father : son, father : daughter, mother : son, mother : daughter, brother : brother, brother : sister, and sister : sister.

Noting that everyone is born into a kinship web, Hsu argued that kin relationships extend to and provide models for the larger social system, and that the dyadic kin relationship that does so more than any other is the "dominant" kin pair (1971a : 6-7).

Some critics have noted a lack of empirical fit in Hsu's hypothesis (Bohannon, Fernandez, Levy 1971). This paper treats an empirical problem posed by patterns of social relationship in Buddhist Thai society. Among these patterns, the older : younger sibling relationship (*phũ : nõng*)² is intensively and extensively reiterated, yet the Hsu

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1. By utilizing the notion of "dominance," Hsu elaborated upon Radcliffe-Brown's assertion of the primacy of kin ties over non-kin ties. Hsu attributed his formulation of the hypothesis to his study of Chinese, Hindu, and American life-ways in his 1963 work *Clan, Caste and Club*. He found the father : son dyad "dominant" among the Chinese, the mother : son dyad "dominant" among the Hindu, and the husband : wife dyad "dominant" among Americans. He reasoned that the brother : brother dyad is "dominant" among patrilocal African societies (1971 a).
2. Andrew Turton writes "The fundamental categorical distinction between people in Northern Thai culture is between older and younger, with the distinction between older and younger members of the same generation as important as that between senior and junior generations" (1972 : 238). Transliterations in the text are for Standard Thai unless otherwise stated.

hypothesis does not allow for it. Could the older : younger dyad be appended to Hsu's hypothesis? Or, is the Thai case incompatible with Hsu's hypothesis? What then does the older : younger relationship mean in Thai society?

Critique of Hsu's Hypothesis

Preliminary attempts to fit the Thai example to Hsu's hypothesis uncovered several difficulties in the hypothesis itself. First, Hsu's assertion that kinship is primary, modelling non-kin relationships in society, appears teleological. Sometimes, at very least, non-kin relationships are primary, as in peer group socialization. Thus, borrowing Geertzian phraseology, kinship may be either a model *of* key non-kin social relationships, or a model *for* such relationships.

Second, the meaning of Hsu's term "dominance" is unclear. Hsu leaves the problem of definition essentially unresolved with the broad assertion that a dominant dyad carries social values or maintains the sociocultural system or socializes the young more than any other dyad in a given society (1971b : 490). Levy argues cogently that when the sociopolitical domain is at issue, dominance resides almost everywhere in the father : son dyad (1971 : 37-39). Accepting Levy's argument, however, precludes cultural variation--and cultural variation is the very phenomenon which Hsu attempts to explain by his hypothesis. Fernandez proposes a functional definition of a dominant dyad that is attractive because it can be operationalized, viz.,

That axial relationship is most dominant which is most difficult to break in circumstances in which a choice has to be made between various axes (1971 : 357).

That is, given forced choices in various situations, the answers to the question, "Which dyad partner (s) do informants of different ages and sexes most readily, consistently or frequently select?" would identify certain dyads as "dominant."

Third, Hsu's insistence that only one kin dyad is "dominant" in a given society seems unrealistic. Given the complexity of human living, it is likely that different dyads come into focus as more influential at different stages and in different contexts of a person's or domestic unit's life. Fourth, Hsu does not offer a systematic way of determining just which "attributes" (typical modes of behavior and attitude) are dominant. Thus, although his identification of dominant dyads in the cases he cites seems to reflect sensitivity and keen insight, his method is too subjective for systematic generalization.

Nevertheless, Hsu's hypothesis can contribute to the interpretation of Thai kinship. In this paper, the hypothesis is used as a heuristic tool for delineating prototypic dyadic kin relationships among Buddhist Thai, in order to help explicate kinship in lowland Thai society.

Purpose and Method

The search for cultural meaning involves making the implicit system explicit. It assumes that the implicit is so fundamental that it might easily be overlooked or denied by members of the culture themselves. This is also the sense in which Bohannan views dominance :

It is part of what Durkheim and Freud, each in his own way, called the collective unconscious. The principles are more compelling for being unstated and the sanctions more powerful for being collective (1971 : 61).

The explicit and implicit might reinforce or conflict with each other. For example, little girls in urban North Thailand (Chiang Mai)³ knew and reported the social behaviors prescribed for them at marriage :

Every girl must get married. After marriage, in order to be a good woman, you have to indulge your husband and not be unfaithful to him, always be pure and honest to him, smile cheerfully and brightly all the time (11 year old informant), . . . even when he is drunk (13 year old).

But this explicit social role sometimes opposes personal preferences. The tension between social and personal attitudes toward marriage seems to have been resolved in a cultural way by Chiang Mai females, as in the following statement by an 11 year old :

Every female loves her parents more than anyone else. You have to love your grandparents and all of your relatives, and, if you're married, you should love your husband, too.

That is, we'll marry our men, but our parents (and children) are more important to us. These attitudes were also expressed by married female informants, suggesting that this aspect of female socialization starts young and is sustained in adulthood.

In the remainder of the paper, some implicit aspects of conjugal family dyadic relationships among Buddhist Thai are made explicit by examining them in terms of four aspects of bonding between dyadic partners,⁴ viz., social distance and spatial distance between the dyad partners, durability of the dyadic relationship, and degree of diffusion in social space to non-kin relationships. The first two aspects were derived

3. The ethnographic material was obtained in Chiang Mai city. The data are more representative of the majority population sector than of the cosmopolitan elite, and are not generalizable to minority ethnic groups.

4. My purposes, thus, are both more limited and more operational than those of Dr. Hsu.

inductively from field observation and ethnographies of Thai society: durability was suggested by Fernandez (1971); and diffusion, by Hsu himself (1971a). The older: younger relationship is considered first because it describes social relationships among both kin and non-kin in Thai society, and because it was not dealt with in Hsu's work.

Analysis of Kin Dyads in Lowland Thai Society

The Older: Younger Relationship Between Siblings and Between Spouses

The standard Thai term for older: younger, *phii*: *nōng*, is a term of reference denoting classificatory siblingship. It is used without sex specifications as a collective for siblings, and for individual or group members of ego's generation to denote a vertical, superior versus inferior social relationship. For purposes of direct address and self-reference, the collective is separated into older versus younger. By using the sibling term older (*phii*) for husband⁵ and younger (*nōng*) for wife⁶ the Thai terminologically stress male dominance in the conjugal relationship and deemphasize sexual relationship as a *raison d'être* for marriage.

The chief characteristics of the older: younger relationship are asymmetry and reciprocity between two partners of either sex. To this extent, the older: younger relationship is a form of Foster's "dyadic contract" between patron and client (Hanks 1962: 1258; Phillips 1965: 93-4). Benefits accruing to older are the respect, obedience and services of younger; in return, younger gains protection and privileges from older.

The strength of bond in the older: younger relationship is often short-lived and its termination appears to be more readily sanctioned than that of other dyads. Although there is the expected "sense of love, obligation and respect that is derived from the simple fact of kinship" among Thai siblings, Phillips found that, in contrast to parent: child relationships, "maintenance of the older: younger relationship is always dependent upon what the participants can gain from it, i.e., from the other person" (1965: 32, 86). For kin-group compounds, this explains Wijeyewardene's finding that:

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5. The rural North Thai husband refers to himself and is addressed by his wife as *ây*, "older brother," instead of the Standard Thai *phii* or its unaspirated Northern form, *pii*. which is used by urban couples. This difference reflects the current demise of the Northern Thai dialect in urban areas, brought about by ever-increasing contact between the Northern and Central Regions.
 6. Turton identifies a marriage rule implicitly observed among the Northern Thai that "for a man no woman who can be assimilated to the category of *phii* (older) is marriageable" (1972: 239). However, there is a rule for breaking this rule, which is, if female is older, she establishes her marriageability by addressing her suitor as *phii*, whereupon she becomes *nōng* (younger) to him.

Once the households are linked by sibling ties rather than by parent : child ties, economic and cooperative obligations lose much of their force, both emotional and jural-economic. Cooperation between siblings is much more voluntary in character . . . (1966 : 17).

Other evidence for easy termination of the older : younger bond is the ease of practicing both child fosterage (which changes siblingship; Kaufman 1960 : 23; Keyes 1977) and early serial monogamy (which changes spouses; Wijeyewardene n.d. : 41-45). Although the older : younger sibling relationship is explicitly institutionalized with linguistic differentiation and precedence rules,⁷ it is relatively weak in its durability.

While the older : younger relationship can be terminated, it is also easily established. It may occur diffusely in social space wherever one partner has age seniority or status superiority over the other. Every individual has both older and younger in his or her social space, and is simultaneously older to certain younger persons and younger to certain older persons--even twins are explicitly differentiated in social status on the basis of birth order. The vertical, inter-generation axis permeates the horizontal, intra-generation axis, classifying each generation into two parts, older versus younger, or superior versus inferior. Thus, an inter-generation relationship seems structurally a more appropriate prototype for Thai social relationships than any same-generation relationship.

The Father : Child Relationship, as Distinct from the Mother : Child Relationship

Of the four basic parent : child dyads, the ones headed by father seem dominant because fathers (married men with children) hold general juro-political power in lowland Thai society. They are identified as the legal and customary head of household (although of course this is not always demographically possible), and (along with widowed, postmenopausal mothers) as the candidates for village and district headmanship or high Government positions-- "A childless person is not elected as head man : his sterility might infect the whole community" (Pederson 1968 : 129).

Men also appear superior to women in the religious domain of Buddhism. Only adult men are eligible for the supreme social status acquired by taking the yellow robe of monkhood.⁸ While fatherhood is set aside during monkhood because a monk must

7. For example, the collectives for "grandparents" and "aunts and uncles" rank the relatives by sequential order higher to lower age and social status, with the order FaFa-FaMo-MoFa-MoMo (*pùu-yáa-taa-yaay*) for grandparents, and PaOBr-PaOSi-MoYSib-FaYSib (*lung-páa-náa-'aa*) for aunts and uncles.

8. Women may enter monastic life as *mâe chii*, but they are not ordained, and function chiefly in monastery housekeeping, cleaning and cooking, with little time for study and meditation. See Thitsa 1980 : 16-18.

be celibate and unencumbered with worldly affairs, previous experience as a monk is the Thai ideal of male preparation for marriage and fatherhood. Although when a married man is ordained, he carries no responsibilities as husband or father, his "former" wife must continue to comport herself as a married woman, and is not free to marry anyone else; she thus maintains the bond between the monk and his children.

Fatherhood is a widespread symbol of highly respected social power. Monkhood, as expressed in fatherhood is wise, protective, and quasi-sacred. From the lay viewpoint, a good monk counsels well, behaves as a model of virtue, and fearlessly dispels evil; the older he is, the more likely he is to be revered with the honorific *luǎng phồ*, or "great one who is like a father." The term *phồ*, "father," is also used to indicate great success--and respect for the power and knowledge that go with success. Examples include the above term *luǎng phồ* for a venerated older monk, and the term *phồ liang*, literally "father who nourishes or feeds," for an employer or for a man of wealth or worldly success who is expected to act as a patron (Wijeyewardene 1971). Teachers, be they male or female, are accorded the loyalty and respect of an ideal father; and the student : teacher bond is commonly life-long, with pupils of the same teacher often expressing a sibling-like association with each other. Child informants in urban Chiang Mai viewed fathers in the ideal, at least, as strong and protective :

Father's kindness in raising us children can be compared to a *bodi* tree that gives ample shade to all those under it (12 year old male informant).

Even after a great man has died, people still respect and bow to him (13 year old male informant).

The monarchy symbolizes the supreme secular power of the father, with the King being in relation to country as father is to family.⁹

The corresponding term *mâe*, for mother, is also extended in meaning, but rarely to the juro-political sphere or to convey the power of moral virtue. Common extensions of the term *mâe* associate "mother" with the domestic sphere or earthly places : for example they signify 1) female gender, as in *mâekhrua* for "female cook," or *mâekai* for "hen"; 2) fertile source, as in *mâenáam* for "major river"; 3) a tool for support or security, as in *mâeraeng* for "jack" and *mâekunjae* for "padlock"; 4) a place by name, as in *mâesariang* and *maehongsôñ* provinces; 5) earthly (lowly) goddesses as in *mâekhongkhaa* for water goddess or *maethoꝛanii* for earth goddess.

The use of fatherhood as a linguistic metaphor for supportive power is so common among the Thai that we may ask why it is. The father role is diffuse in social space--i.e., there are many models of fatherhood, including genitor and pater,

9. See Turton (1972 : 252-5) for an insightful analysis of the father figure in Northern Thai myth, legend, spirit cults and the explicit socio-political order.

patron, king, even the unmarried monk who has forsaken family obligations. This is in sharp contrast to the mother role which is rarely extended beyond the models of genetrix and mater. Furthermore, whereas the father role is vague in definition, being essentially benign protection and support, the mother role is defined with explicit duties and obligations. The vagueness of father-role performance possibilities in the family is paralleled by socially diffuse father-role models. This vagueness of definition allows flexible application of the father metaphor beyond the domestic sphere. In contrast, the specificity of the mother role may prevent its broad extension to larger society.

The social power that is culturally vested in Thai fatherhood implies a power differential between father and child. This power differential is generally greater than the social distance between mother and child. Children are expected to fear and respect both parents, but usually fear their fathers more than their mothers, even though fathers punish less often than do mothers. Disobedient urban teenagers run away from home for days or weeks after committing an infraction in order to escape a father's potential wrath, whereas they say they feel sad and disappointed with themselves for having pained their mothers by being absent from home.

The potential power of father over child exists until child has a house of his or her own, which is often after marriage and childbirth. The social distance between father and child may be supported by the widespread assumption that the women in the family will never forsake the children, allowing fathers the option of voluntary and intermittent, rather than necessary and sustained, responsibility for the children. A father (and older sons) may be absent from the home at night for what are perceived as legitimate reasons--pleasure-seeking (*pai thiaw*; *pai 'ew*, Northern Thai) or work--whereas a mother is almost never absent overnight, and by evening would be so only if her children were with her and they were all near home, for example, at a local monastery fair. The greater spatio-temporal distance between father and children than between mother and children is also evident in common sleeping patterns wherein (except in the first month after childbirth), when the parents do not sleep together, mother sleeps with children and father sleeps alone or with older sons.

The father : child bond may be as durable as the mother : child bond, but is less consistently so. A father's temporary, intermittent or permanent absence from home is sanctioned through the institutions of the military and of the Buddhist *Sangha* or monkhood, whereas a mother has no similarly sanctioned absence from home. Contemporary social change, with the increasing need for wage-earning, might cause temporary or even long-lasting absence of the father from home as a migrant worker or permanent urban employee. But the father : child bond can also be permanent, as

when a daughter raises her children in her parents' home. There are also non-kin life-lasting bonds that structurally and culturally parallel the father : child bond, such as the esteemed teacher : loyal student bond.

To summarise, bonding in father : child relationships generally has the following characteristics :

1. *social distance* is maintained by father's superiority over child in the domestic, political and Buddhist domains (as also found in the social superiority of older over younger person);

2. *spatial distance* between father and child may be nil for the coresident married daughter, or large for the father who is in the military or monkhood;

3. *durability* of the bond may be temporary, as for the young son who leaves home to establish another family, or permanent, as for the daughter who stays at home and will inherit her parents' house; and,

4. *diffusion in social space* of the fatherhood metaphor to non-kin relationships is broad, for example to teacher : pupil and monk : lay person relationships, but it is not as diffuse as that of the older : younger relationship.

Of course the values of all four aspects vary depending at least on the sex of the children, the respective stages in the life cycle of the dyad partners, the ages and birth orders of the relationship partners, and their socio-economic statuses. For example, the characteristics of the father : son and father : daughter relationships are similar until late adolescence, whereupon the values of social distance, spatial distance and durability may change radically because son moves away from home or daughter brings a husband home. For another example, low birth-order daughters probably do not experience relationships with their mothers that are as durable or spatially close as those of last-order daughters or younger sons with no sisters, both of whom tend to live with parents after marriage and inherit their house. And, durability and spatial closeness of bond would be less for the landless poor, whose children usually must set up neolocal residence at marriage.

The Mother : Child Relationship and its Interaction with the Husband : Wife Relationship

Elementary school boys and girls in Chiang Mai were unequivocal in their assertions that the person they loved the most was mother, citing the self-sacrifice a Thai mother puts herself through for the sake of her children, and asserting that mother will support child through thick and thin more than any other person.

In Thai society, neither marriage nor death need terminate the mother : child bond. It is thus extremely durable. Even after their own marriage, children continue

to pay respect to their mothers' ancestral spirits (*phii p̄uu yâa*),¹⁰ maintaining the mother : child bond. When a mother dies, her young children are usually raised by her sister, who provides the closest substitute mother : child bond possible. If she dies in childbed, nothing is done to save the infant (except when modern medical doctors are in attendance), thereby precluding a potential breaking of the mother : child dyad because both die at once. If a child dies but the mother lives, the bereaved parents usually expect the child's spirit to reappear in their next-born child; this expectation can be interpreted as an attempt to maintain the mother : child bond. A mother's remarriage is the greatest threat to the mother : child bond : when living virilocally, the second husband's mother may exercise the power of her greater age to prevent her son's new wife from bringing her children of a former marriage into the family. But here a mother : child bond in the subordinate junior generation is sacrificed to the maintenance of a mother : son dyad in the senior generations.

Although the head of a Thai household is generally said to be male, this is true in name more than fact (Kaufman 1968 : 22). The housewife-mother operates behind the scenes in implicit control of the household and of the kin relationships within it, and in direct control of the household economy and spirits. She makes the Thai family "matrifocal" in Raymond Smith's sense of the term that kin relationships focus upon the mother (1973 : 124-125). In reviewing the literature, Smith labels as matrifocal just those societies which, like the Thai, combine

an expectation of strong male dominance in the marital relationship and as head of the household . . . with a reality in which mother : child relations are strongly solidary . . . (1973 : 129)

Crucial to Smith's matrifocal family is a conjugal relationship that is relatively weak in solidarity and affectual intensity, ranking below other primary kinship ties, as found above for Thailand (1973 : 5-6). Marriage has many forms in Thailand but is memorable only if a child is born of the union. The rural and lower-class ceremony is secular and private, with only a simple presentation of offerings to parents and house spirits being required. Childlessness is both a legal cause (Adul 1968) and the most common cause of divorce. For some it implies that the woman has accumulated bad *karma*, or "fate," in her previous lives. Thus, childbearing, much more than marriage, has traditionally conferred social status, extended kinship, and proven morality. These facts favor solidarity of the mother : child bond over the husband : wife bond.

10. The *phii p̄uu yâa* cult is dying out in urban areas. Upon or after marriage in the North, a man may purchase membership in his wife's family's *phii p̄uu yâa*, but often does not, rather continuing to identify himself with those of his own mother. It is unheard of for a woman to change her *phii p̄uu yâa* because of marriage. See Davis 1973 : 61 footnote and Turton 1972 : 221.

Local definitions of marriage are very flexible in the North, but the event of live childbirth is taken retrospectively as proof of a marriage. In the author's 1973 study of low economic status of families in Chiang Mai city, three-quarters of the adults had not registered their first marriages (71.4% of 259 females, and 72.1% of 204 males), and about one-fifth reported having had no religious ceremony in observance of their first marriage (17.7% of 288 females, 24.8% of 250 males). However, all of the informants said they had been married and had had at least one live child. The social importance of childbearing for women is again demonstrated in the tendency of women to figure out their ages at first marriage by the age or birth of their first live-born child. Men, in contrast, usually first reported the approximate age of their current marriages, and had difficulty recalling their age at first marriage (Muecke 1976 : 109-113).

Fertility surveys in modern Thailand have consistently found comparatively small proportions of childless couples. For 1960, only five and a half percent of all married women were estimated to be childless (Dhara 1968). The 1964 Potharam Study in rural Central Thailand found only one percent of 1,017 couples with wife aged 20 to 45 childless (Chulalongkorn University 1971 : 18). A 1969 survey in the rural North found only four and one-half percent of married women ages 15 to 50 childless (Jones and Rachapaetayakom 1970 : 17). In comparison, Whelpton *et al.* report a much higher prevalence--twelve percent--of childlessness among married women of the United States (Whelpton 1966 : 164-165). These percentages again suggest that marriage is very important to the Thai as a means of childbearing, as well as a goal in itself.

Most of the women interviewed accepted a husband's "need" to seek out prostitutes as likely. They generally tolerated his sexual interests in and outside the home in order to provide an attractive atmosphere for him to come home to. However, the women were keenly aware and anxious that by tolerating their husbands' sexual independence outside the home, they were allowing their husbands opportunity to find other wives. This ever-present possibility posed a great threat to the women, as desertion would make the economics of their everyday lives more difficult, and lower their and their children's social status as well.

The Mother : Daughter Relationship and Child Socialization

Hsu excluded the mother : daughter dyad from possible dominance on the basis that there are no matriarchal societies. Nevertheless, certain lowland Thai behavioral patterns suggest special importance of the mother : daughter relationship in that society. Briefly the salient evidence for a strong mother : daughter bond is as follows :

1. Daughters are raised to be mother role-substitutes, being kept at mother's side longer after birth than sons, and closer to home (at least until marriage) in order

to share child-rearing and household maintenance responsibilities with mother, and to protect daughter's morality from outside influences.

2. Daughters much more often than sons share annual propitiative offerings to family and clan spirits with their mothers. They also inherit from their mothers the responsibility to nourish family spirits.^{10, 11}

Furthermore, in space and time, a daughter is generally much more closely bound to her parents than is a son: at marriage, uxorilocal residence is generally preferred to virilocal residence; and, although land is generally inherited in equal parts by all siblings, in the ideal case the youngest daughter and her spouse inherit her parents' house.

The mother : daughter bond, far more than the father : son bond, is analagous to a mirror image, reflecting parallel, identical and mutually dependent figures. The mother : daughter bond is made of a repetition of likenesses, with each partner being in a different stage of the same life cycle pattern. Thus, mother depends upon daughter for help in raising daughter's younger siblings, and, by role reversal in mother's old age, for daughter to care for her when she can no longer care for herself. Daughter depends upon mother for instruction in the mother-role, for help in carrying out postpartal practices, and sometimes for rearing daughter's own children. These interdependencies and role exchanges between mother and daughter sometimes make a mother of a grandmother, or of a sister. Because of the preference for uxorilocal residence at marriage, the closest male parallel to this role replication and interdependence is the father : daughter's husband dyad rather than the father : son dyad.

Outside the family context, gender interchangeability of roles has been the traditional pattern of rural and peasant labor; today it is reflected in unskilled and semi-skilled occupations, as well as in professional and managerial positions. That is, whereas there is little sex role differentiation in the economic subsistence sphere, there is sex role differentiation in the domestic, religious and political domains.

The mother : daughter relationship, as characterized by high interchangeability of roles, is more durable than any other relationship thus far examined, even though it is limited behaviorally to the domestic and economic domains.

11. See Turton (1972) and Davis (1973) for indepth analyses of domestic spirit cults in Northern Thailand. Davis finds "a complementarity between male and female powers, one [male] deriving from the arcane knowledge of ritual texts and the other [female] from the tutelage of domestic spirits." Jane Hanks has astutely observed that "since a man's power is threatened by female-associated objects, female power is ultimately ascendent over male." (1963 : 79).

The Mother : Son Relationship and Sex-Role Modelling

A husband diffuses his energies in all directions, not only toward his wife, but also toward his mother, other women, and his sundry patrons and clients. A wife, in contrast, focuses her energies primarily on her children. This sex-based difference in character of social bonds made by adults is paralleled by sex-linked childhood experiences. A North Thai woman is bound close to home by social dictates that began at her birth. Her mother decided how long to observe the postpartal ritual *kaan yùu yen* ("to stay cool") on the basis of her sex : the ritual is observed several days longer for daughters than for sons on the belief that this practice will make the daughter always stay close to home, and make the son more adventuresome outside the home (Muecke 1976B). Daughters, as noted above, are raised to substitute for mothers. Sons, in contrast, are raised to complement their mothers. This sex differential in childrearing goals creates higher tension in the mother : son relationship than in the mother : daughter relationship. A son can make religious merit for his mother, by being ordained as a novice or monk, that she is in no way capable of making for herself. A son passes on the family name, providing mother with a means to social immortality that she cannot achieve without him. Thus, a son can provide his mother with moral and social status that neither she nor her husband can. On the other hand, a son learns a key behavior from his mother that is prerequisite for his success in adult society : her protection of him vis-a-vis wider society models for him the role of mediator that he will have to play as an adult in juggling his patron-client relationships. Thus, while Thai Buddhist society appears explicitly paternalistic at the socio-political level, implicitly it appears that the prototype for both males and females is set by the *mother*. Whereas a girl is reared to be like mother in her adulthood, a boy is reared to be like a mother's son in his adulthood. In other words, girls are raised to be self-dependent and nurturing, and boys are raised to be diffusely dependent.¹²

12. After formulating the above interpretation, I had the honor of meeting Ms. Sumalee Viravaiya, while she was a foremost Bangkok journalist, and discovered that she had arrived at an interpretation of Thai family relationships as essentially dominated by the mother : son bond. She has written : While fidelity, obedience, and loyalty to husband is [sic] emphasized in the upbringing of girls, those virtues in boys are directed toward their mother. Very little is said about how they should treat their wives . . . The wife is expected to give all and the husband to take all . . . Why? I would like to suggest that it is because the mother is jealous of her son. She cannot bear the thought of his loving another woman. In order to keep his love, she indulges her son and keeps him a child as long as she possibly can. He remains tied emotionally to his mother all his life. Marriage is a physical and biological necessity, not an emotional one. The Thai man must put his mother before his wife . . . What can the mother do to keep her son loyal and devoted to her but at the same time not destroy her daughter? The answer is to mould her daughter to be so strong and self-sufficient that she will not break. The girl is taught never to expect her husband to give her the emotional warmth and security that "rightly" belongs to his mother. But everyone needs emotional warmth and security and since a wife cannot expect it from her husband she proceeds to breed it in her son . . ." (Sumalee 1973 : 13).

Early in the paper it was suggested that the religious domain of Buddhism contains behavior like that of the father : child relationship (page 30). Having since looked at other conjugal family dyads, the similarity between monk : layperson and father : child bonds can now be examined in relation to the other dyad pairs. Of the two types of father : child dyad, father : son and father : daughter, the father : daughter seems the more similar to the monk : layperson relationship because daughter nurtures father in his incapacities of old age, just as the Buddhist female nurtures the male monk in his earthly passivity, providing him his daily sustenance. Furthermore, the ideal comportment of the proper Thai unmarried girl matches that expected of the ideal male qua monk in many striking ways : both images demand quiet inobtrusiveness, sexual avoidance, complete modesty and an affect of contentment-- a role model of perfection --from the person in the role. But nurturing is probably universally a behavior and responsibility carried out more by mother than by daughter, and receiving nurturance is more characteristic of the son than the father. Therefore, it appears that a mother : son metaphor parallels the father : daughter analogy at a more implicit, cultural level of analysis.

Thai boys are expected to be naughty and intrusive, and laymen, to "follow their instincts"; but while ordained, both are expected to behave like the ideal female described above. Resembling the female are the quiet, well-behaved elementary school age boys who are readily referred to as *kathoey*, "transvestites." Despite the social non-acceptance of adult transvestites by many individuals, their existence is well-known (through city street corner hangouts, restaurants, annual *kathoey* beauty contests in Bangkok, etc.). Female transvestites, even "tom boys," are, by comparison, very rare : this suggests that female socialization follows a female model almost exclusively, whereas male socialization ambiguously follows both male and female models.

When possessed by spirits, however, women do adopt what are locally viewed as "male" behavioral patterns, such as male dress, drinking whiskey, seductive dancing, and exercise of moral authority. Spirit mediums are traditionally female and are usually possessed by spirits of venerated religious or political *male* figures from legend or history. This conforms to our previous finding of explicit male superiority in Thai politics and Buddhism : i.e., the only acceptable way for a female to enter these domains is to present herself as a male, and as a male of high social status, as a monk or nobleman who was a predecessor to the current politico-religious order.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

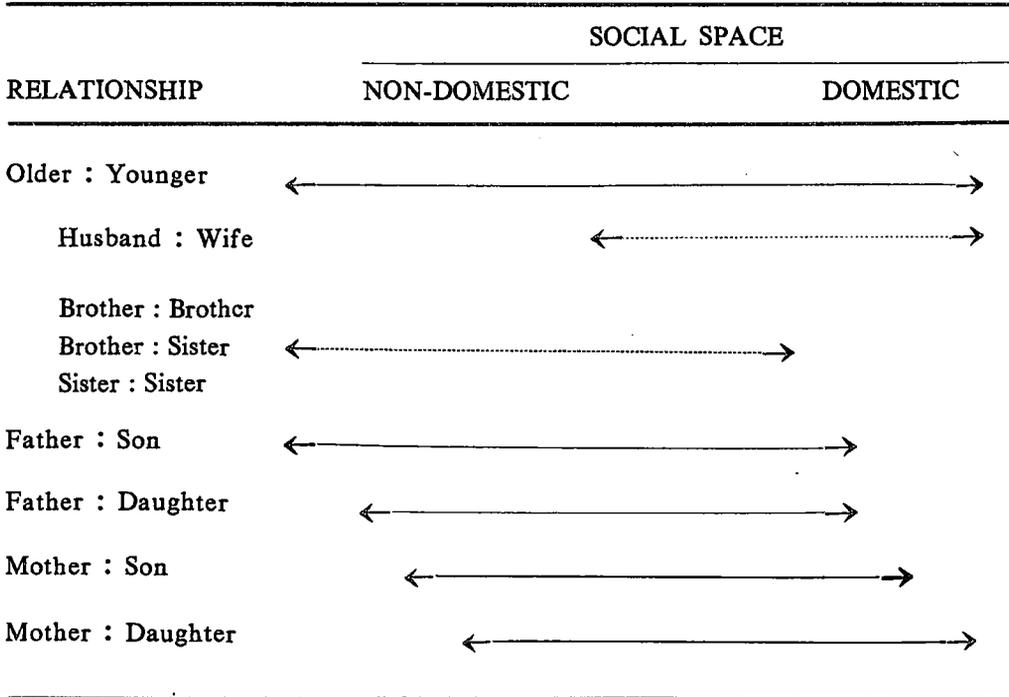
Conjugal family relationships among the lowland North Thai have been examined with the heuristic of the "Hsu hypothesis." At the outset it was posited that the extension of kinship to non-kin domains is a misleading hypothesis, at least for complex societies, because the direction of influence can also be the reverse, as in peer group socialization. After suggesting that Hsu's concept for "dyadic dominance" is too simplistic for describing the intricacies of living out social relationships, an inductive approach to the concept of dominance was adopted to look for characteristics that distinguish conjugal family dyads among the urban North Thai low socio-economic status research informants.

Taking the lead from the pattern of Thai terminological usage, the "older : younger" relationship was examined first. This dyadic type includes four of Hsu's "basic dyads," viz., the husband : wife, brother : brother, brother : sister and sister : sister pairs. All four pairs are same-generation relationships in which the partners are distinguished on the basis of birth order and social status. It was concluded that intergenerational relationships are structurally primary to intragenerational relationships in Thai society. Therefore the remainder of the discussion focused upon the intergenerational parent : child relationships.

What has emerged from this analysis is a complex process of variation, rather than a neat proxy variable, "dominance." Brief description of the most obvious complexities will show that "dyad dominance" in Hsu's sense of the term is exceedingly difficult to operationalize; and also will help make explicit certain implicit aspects of Thai conjugal family relationships.

Analysis of the social space in which the different conjugal family dyads are particularly active suggests a boundary between the domestic and non-domestic social spheres. For example, the mother : daughter relationship is concentrated in the domestic sphere; the father : son relationship operates throughout the non-domestic sphere, but only in part of the domestic sphere; and the older : younger relationship is very active in both the domestic and the non-domestic spheres. However, the degree to which a dyad is active in either sphere depends upon the type of social life being observed. For instance, in the non-domestic sphere religious roles refer primarily to Buddhism and to men as monks, but in the domestic sphere, they refer more to spirit cults and to women. The range of kin dyad activity in social space can be graphically summarized as follows :

DIFFUSION OF THAI FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS IN SOCIAL SPACE



Within the ranges of action specified in the diagram, the dyadic relationships vary at least in the three dimensions,--social distance, spatial distance and durability--that were defined in the text (page 27). And, the variation is dependent at least upon the sex, age, birth order, life-cycle stage and socio-economic status of each relationship partner. Therefore, these characteristics may be defined as independent variables. That is, within the range of activity in social space depicted above for each relationship, the following variables can be defined :

Independent Variables
(characteristics of
relationship partner)

age
birth order
sex
life cycle stage
socio-economic status

Dependent Variables
(characteristics of
dyadic relationship)

social distance
spatial distance
durability

The above analysis suggests that Thai girls are raised with the intention of becoming mothers and staying in the domestic sphere, and boys, with the expectation of becoming political or religious power figures. Were sons and daughters socialized primarily for conjugal family roles in adulthood, the mother : child bonds could be expected to involve greater social distance, and the husband : wife bond, less social distance than has been found. That is, husband : wife roles would gain in cultural significance what co-parent roles would lose.

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