

# REDEFINING THE SANGHA'S ROLE IN NORTHERN THAILAND: AN INVESTIGATION OF MONASTIC CAREERS AT FIVE CHIANG MAI WATS

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During the period July 1980 to April 1981 an investigation was conducted into the involvement of Thai monks in the Chiang Mai area of northern Thailand in rural development. It was concluded that the monks' role is undergoing significant transformations along the lines indicated in previous work and by other researchers, and that there are important educational factors which undergird the manner in which they are attempting to redefine their role. In particular, many monks are increasingly opting for Adult Education courses in preference to the traditional *pariyattitham* studies. These courses cover a wide range of secular subjects which enable the monks to fulfil a more development-orientated role than would otherwise be possible. They also equip them with the kind of skills which will increase their prospects of finding gainful secular employment if and when they disrobe.

Previous work on development-orientated programmes by Thai monks has been conducted by Tambiah, Suksamran, Klausner, and others.<sup>(1)</sup> Research by this author has been carried out at the two Buddhist Universities in Bangkok, where much of the monks' training takes place, and a descriptive account of the main features of some of the development projects mentioned in this article has recently been published in the *Southeast Asian Journal of Social Science*.<sup>(2)</sup> Financial support for these investigations has been provided by the British Academy and the Nuffield Foundation, whose generosity and confidence in the face of increasing political opposition to the social sciences by the U.K. Government, is much appreciated.

## I Chiang Mai's "Secular" Buddhism

Chiang Mai Province, occupying an area of just under 23, 000 sq. km., had a population of 1,100,000 in 1976.<sup>(3)</sup> Its capital, the city of Chiang Mai, serves as a

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1. S.J. Tambiah, *World Conqueror and World Renouncer*, Cambridge University Press, 1976; Somboon Suksamran, *Political Buddhism in Southeast Asia*, St. Martin's Press, 1976; W.J. Klausner, *Reflections in a Log Pond*, Suksit Siam, 1972. See also articles in *Visakha Puja* and elsewhere by Sulak Sivaraksa, Charles F. Keyes, Prawase Wasi, and Ruth-Inge Heinze.
2. D.L. Gosling, "Thai Monks in Rural Development" in the *Southeast Asian Journal of Social Science*, Vol. 9, Nos. 1-2.
3. The Official Census figures for the population of Chiang Mai Province in 1960, 1970, and 1976 were 800,000; 1,000,000 and 1,100,000 respectively. Chiang Mai is the largest of the sixteen provinces of northern Thailand.

market and financial center for a wide range of light industry (eg. furniture and bricks), commercial agricultural products (tobacco and tea), and handicrafts (silk, woodcarving, and silver work). The city is also the focal point of contact between Thai economic and political officialdom and the *chao khao* or hill tribes (to use a term which effectively challenges the conventional notion of distinct ethnic tribal groups.<sup>(4)</sup>)

According to the 1970 Census 94% of the 84, 000 inhabitants of Chiang Mai municipality declare themselves to be Buddhist. There are approximately 70 wats within the municipality, of which about 35 are located inside the walls of the old city. According to a survey conducted by Charles Keyes between 1972 and 1974 an average wat in the Chiang Mai municipality (*thetsaban*) contains five monks and 12 novices. Average congregation sizes vary from about 50 at the weekly *wan phra* (Sunday) services during Lent to 70 at major holy day festivals (eg., *Songkran*, *Og Phansa*, *Khao Phansa*). Keyes maintains that "not more than ten per cent of the "Buddhist" population of Chiang Mai city are members of the "supporting congregation" of any wat", and that "secular influences have strongly challenged the role which the wat traditionally filled".<sup>(5)</sup>

Keyes' figures for the composition of an "average" Chiang Mai wat are particularly significant in the light of distinctions made by Tambiah between the role of urban wats in provincial towns and those located in the Bangkok-Thonburi area. Whereas the ratio of monks to novices in an "average" Chiang Mai urban wat is 1 : 2, the corresponding proportion in some Bangkok wats is the converse. Thus, for example, at the Wat Mahathat, which is situated a few hundred yards from the Grand Palace in the Capital, there are more than twice as many monks as novices. Tambiah attributes this difference to the familiar pattern of migration whereby young men in their early teens ordain in order to take advantage of educational opportunities which would not otherwise be open to them :

The reason for this pattern is as follows : The large provincial urban wat are important educational centers to which come studious novices from village wat; it is in these provincial wat that they receive their preliminary Pali instruction; thereafter, those novices who show intellectual ability by passing the lower examinations, and who are also now close to 20 years old, must move to the wat in Bangkok-Thonburi in order that they may study in the famous Pali schools there. It is these schools that are able to prepare them for the higher examinations. Thus within a short time of moving to Bangkok-Thonburi these novices

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4. Charles F. Keyes, ed., *Ethnic Adaptation and Identity*, Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1979, p. 7.
  5. Charles F. Keyes, "Buddhism in a Secular City" in *Visakha Puja*, Buddhist Association of Thailand, BE 2518 (1976), pp. 64-65.

become eligible for ordination as full-fledged monks. They duly ordain and continue with their education, the most important factor in accounting for the larger proportion of (young) monks to novices in the capital. The provincial centers recruit and perform the early academic training of able young novices; Bangkok and Thonburi complete their higher education as monks in their early twenties and early thirties.<sup>(6)</sup>

Thus although the provincial urban wats such as the ones which formed part of the present investigation are not necessarily smaller than the Bangkok ones, their functions are different in that they often perform an intermediate educational stage between small village wats and those in the Capital. Wats such as the Wat Mahathat and the Wat Bovornives in Bangkok together with the two Buddhist Universities, Mahamakut and Mahachulalongkorn, represent the apex of an educational system whereby novices in their early teens from poor families in the provinces migrate via the provincial capitals or via intricate "patronage" networks to the Capital. This motivation is reflected in many of the responses to a questionnaire requesting reasons for ordination (See Section II).

In recent years the attraction of the Capital as an educational centre has been further enhanced by the introduction of secular subjects into the syllabi of the Buddhist Universities, and by development programmes centred on the Universities which enable monks originally from poor homes in the provinces to improve the standards of living of their kinfolk. The predilection of these young scholar monks for "science, technology, and social service" has been described in an earlier article.<sup>(7)</sup> The educational shift towards the study of more secular subjects at the Buddhist Universities and its practical concomitant in terms of enthusiastic involvement in Dhammatuta, Dhammajarik and other development-orientated programmes finds a provincial echo in a marked tendency to attend Adult Education classes rather than the traditional *pariyattitham* courses—a tendency which will be quantified in the ensuing sections.

A further distinction between residents of Bangkok and Chiang Mai wats is that there are proportionally fewer *navaga* or temporary monks in the latter. This is because the temporary monks who ordain for periods ranging from a few days to the duration of *Phansa* (ie. the rainy season) are drawn primarily from the professional and administrative urban classes of which there is naturally a preponderance in the Capital. However several such respondents were identified, plus a number who stated that they

6. S.J. Tambiah, *Op. cit.* (1), p. 283.

7. D.L. Gosling, "New Directions in Thai Buddhism" in *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 1980, p. 424. See also, same author, "Perspectives in Thai Buddhist Involvement in Science and Social Development" in *Visakha Puja*, BE 2522 (1979), p. 34.

ordained initially as *navaga* (in their own minds--no such official distinction exists), and then decided to stay on.

Buddhism in Chiang Mai possesses a distinctive "ethos" derived in part from a rich history which reached its zenith in the fifteenth century. In 1423 Chiang Mai was the scene of a great council of monks, many of whom were Khmer and Sinhalese, which attempted to revise the Pali scriptures. Although the political independence of the Royal House of Chiang Mai was drastically diminished at the end of the nineteenth century, many distinctive religio-cultural features have persisted until the present day. Charles Keyes has described the struggles which occurred at the beginning of the present century between the national Sangha and the Chiang Mai ecclesiastical authorities as follows :

Beginning in the first decade of the twentieth century, the senior authorities of the Thai Sangha, or Buddhist Order, began instituting reforms which were designed to eliminate regional and local autonomy within the clergy. Two of the reforms instituted were of particular importance to the clergy of Chiang Mai and of other parts of northern Thailand: first, the role of "preceptor," that is the role of the monk with the authority to preside at the ordination of other monks, was no longer to be determined by seniority alone. Rather, "preceptors" were to be only those who had been confirmed by the authorities within the national hierarchy. Secondly, religious education was to be made to conform to a national curriculum, one which had been constructed by the Patriarch, Prince Wachirayan himself. The northern Thai clergy did not accept these reforms passively, as did, apparently, the clergy in northeastern Thailand for whom the reforms were equally threatening. In northern Thailand, the famous monk, Khru Ba Sivichai, led what I call the last stand of northern Thai conservatism. Following a series of moves which included the virtual imprisonment of Khru Ba Sivichai and the threat of open revolt on the part of the northern Thai clergy and their lay followers, something of a compromise was achieved. The northern Thai clergy accepted the authority of the national hierarchy in the matter of who should have the right to be a "preceptor" while the national Sangha authorities tacitly recognized the right of the northern clergy to perpetuate their own tradition of religious education, albeit only for local purposes. At the same time, the national Sangha officials succeeded in appointing several non-northern monks as religious teachers and as holders of other important functions in a number of the most important temples in northern Thailand. In Chiang Mai, the princely family assisted in the effort to convert the important wat of Cedi Luang into a temple affiliated with the strict Thammayut order which was intro-

duced into Chiang Mai by a ranking monk sent by Prince Patriarch Wachirayan. To this day its abbot is not a northern Thai. A non-northern monk was also sent as religious instructor to Wat Phra Sing, the other most important wat of the city. This monk subsequently became the ecclesiastical head of the district of Com Thong, in Chiang Mai province, and has recently been chosen as the abbot of Wat Phra Sing itself.<sup>(8)</sup>

The Wat Chedi Luang and the Wat Phra Singh, which played such a seminal role in the ecclesiastical struggles between Bangkok and Chiang Mai, were included in this investigation. The former is the centre of Dhammayut development activities in the province, and its Deputy Abbot continues the tradition indicated by Keyes in that he maintains strong links with the Capital. But whereas Keyes, writing in the early seventies, describes a historical context whereby the Bangkok ecclesiastical authorities maintained tight control over the northern provincial wats, the relationship now appears to have undergone a significant shift in that Chao Khun Rajavinayaporn, who is Deputy Abbot of both the Wat Chedi Luang in Chiang Mai and the prestigious Wat Bovornives in Bangkok, far from representing the cold dead hand of national ecclesiastical conformity, is one of the most charismatic and radically innovative members of the Sangha!<sup>(9)</sup>

At the time of the questionnaire and interview investigation there were eight monks and 15 novices in residence at the Wat Chedi Luang, plus approximately 50 *luksits*, many of whom were from the hill tribes. Reference has been made in an earlier article to the work of Phra Maha Tawin and Phra Thanajun Guttadhammo, both Dhammayut monks at the Wat Chedi Luang, among the Meo and Karen, and the role of the Wat itself as a springboard for development activities in remote parts of the north.<sup>(10)</sup>

Maha Nikai wats are much more numerous, and it is not so easy to identify any particular one as a focal point for development work. Klausner and others, writing in the early seventies, ascribe a major developmental role to the Wat Phra Singh, and Keyes offers historical reasons why this should be the case. But although this Wat was included in the survey, it was not felt to be particularly active in the field of development, and only 12 of its residents (five monks and seven novices) could be persuaded by the Abbot to complete questionnaires! Discussions with lay workers and academics at Chiang Mai University confirmed the view that there was not much development work going on there.

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8. Charles F. Keyes, *Op. cit.* (5), p. 63.

9. A more detailed account of this remarkable monk is given in an earlier and more descriptive article. See D.L. Gosling, *Op. cit.* (2).

10. D.L. Gosling, *Op. cit.* (2).

By contrast the Wat Bupparam, situated in the centre of Chiang Mai town, was a hive of activity. This was largely due to the dynamism and imagination of its Abbot, Phra Khru Mongkol Silawongs, who is also Chao Kana Ampur (District Sangha Governor) of the 82 Maha Nikai wats in the Doi Saket sub-district of Chiang Mai Province. Nineteen monks and 17 novices at the Wat Bupparam answered questionnaires.

Phra Khru Mongkol's charismatic impact on Maha Nikai wats in the Chiang Mai area is sufficiently significant to merit a more detailed account of his views, which inevitably influenced the attitudes of Maha Nikai questionnaire respondents. He believes that whereas the monk in Thai society has traditionally fulfilled the role of *thura vipassanā* (practitioner of meditation) and *thura kanta* (practitioner of learning), he must increasingly become a *thura patana* (practitioner of development). His development programmes in Doi Saket include weaving, sewing, flower and toy making, fruit growing, and a wide range of agricultural skills. Electricians are trained, and in the hill areas people are taught by the monks to dig wells and roads. Unlike the officials of the Government-sponsored Dhammajarik Programme based on the Wat Si Soda, Phru Khru Mongkol does not see development work as an adjunct to conversion to Buddhism—with all the political overtones that some writers see in this<sup>(11)</sup> He feels that development work must be done for its own sake and because it was enjoined by the Buddha on his followers. But he works in close cooperation with local Government Departments and their trained personnel, many of whom are extremely willing to assist in the training of the monks. The same local Government employees together with teachers and academics at colleges and the University of Chiang Mai, are responsible for the Adult Education classes which are proving increasingly popular with the monks and which are frequently held in wat compounds.

One of the most striking features of Phra Khru Mongkol's work is his *metta-naree* schemes which enable young women to learn sewing, weaving, and similar skills. These programmes are proving extremely popular and take place within the compounds of various wats. The goods are marketed in Chiang Mai. Chao Khun Rajavinayaporn also supervises similar schemes at rural wats under his jurisdiction. (In addition to being Deputy Abbot of the Wat Chedi Luang he is also Chao Kana Changwat (Provincial Sangha Governor) of all Dhammayut wats north of Nakorn Sawan). The sight of brightly dressed *metta-naree* trainees cheerfully operating Singer sewing machines in the forefront of wats administered by these two exceptionally talented monks is extremely refreshing, and represents a radically innovative aspect of the monks' role as

11. S. Suksamran, *Op cit.* (1).

*thura patana*. The last two questions of the Thai questionnaire, a translation of which is included as an Annex, were framed with the programmes of Phra Khru Mongkol and Chao Khun Rajavinayaporn in mind.

As has already been indicated, the Wat Si Soda is the centre of the Government-sponsored Dhammajarik Programme. The Wat recruits boys in their early teens from the hill tribes in the region, and after a very short period of training sends them to be ordained to the noviciate at a spectacular ceremony at the Wat Benjamabopitr in Bangkok. Ten monks, 35 novices, and one *luksit* answered the questionnaire. The *luksit* was having his head shaved prior to ordination at the time of the visit and may therefore be regarded as an honorary novice!

The questionnaire did not ask respondents to specify their original tribal group. This would have been impolite and "inappropriate". Some monks objected even to having to specify whether they were Dhammayut of Maha Nikai on the grounds that such a question was divisive. But insofar as all members of the same wat are necessarily members of the same "sect", there was never any fundamental problem in obtaining this information. According to the Abbot's secretary at the Wat Si Soda the questionnaire respondents included monks and novices from the Meo, Yao, Lahu, Lisu, Karen, Akha, Lauo, Tin, Huo and Tai Yai groups. The largest proportion were Karen. Some had a fairly limited command of Thai and were consequently rather dilatory about returning their questionnaires. They also tended to specify their year of birth according to the Chulasakarat system (year of rabbit, dog etc.).<sup>(12)</sup>

The Wat Chetupon was included in the investigation because it seems to be a typical Chiang Mai wat possessing none of the distinctive features of the ones that have been mentioned so far, and also because there is an Adult Education school attended by the monks in the wat compound. Its Abbot, Phra Khru Wickron Kanapirakhsa, is Chao Kana Ampur of Chiengdow District. He is much respected as a meditation teacher and is renowned for his kindness. There are ten monks and 74 novices normally in residence at the Wat, but many of them were away at the time of the visit. Seventeen novices and two monks completed questionnaires. Both monks and all but four of the novices were attending Adult Education classes.

## II General Characteristics of the Respondents

A translation of the Thai questionnaire is appended as an Annex. It was designed basically to probe respondents' social and educational backgrounds, the extent

12. According to the Chulasakarat System there is a cycle of twelve years, each bearing the name of an animal, beginning with the rat followed by the ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, goat, monkey, cock, dog and pig. King Prasattong caused some confusion in the Thai calendar by changing the order. The modern Thai calendar was introduced on January 1st, 1911 (Buddhist Era 2484, or the year of the snake).

of their involvement in development work, and their attitudes to specific development-orientated roles some of which might be regarded as controversial from the point of view of the *Vinaya* or *Pātimokkha*. The rationale behind different parts of the questionnaire will be discussed together with the responses.

Attention will be directed primarily to respondents at the five wats which were described in the previous section. But questionnaires were also completed by sample groups of students at Chiang Mai and Ramkhamhaeng Universities, by monks, novices and *luksits* at the Wat Bovornives in Bangkok, and by a small group of monks at Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University.

Two hundred and eighty seven completed questionnaires were obtained in the course of the investigation, and many of the respondents were interviewed. The responses were translated into English, coded, and analysed using a standard SPSS programme on the University of Hull's I.C.L.-1904S Computer. Values of Chi Square were obtained, and it may be assumed that figures given in Tables I and II are statistically significant.

#### (i) Social Background

Thirty two per cent of the Chiang Mai respondents were monks, the remainder novices. Eighty-six per cent had been born in the northern region; of the remainder 10% came from the northeast. Fifty-five per cent had been born in Chiang Mai province.

The 45% of the respondents not born in Chiang Mai province specified birth-places primarily in the northern and northeastern regions, with less than 3% from other parts of the country (mostly from the south). From an inspection of the questionnaires it was apparent that respondents had moved according to well-established patterns which connected particular home provinces with particular Chiang Mai wats. These networks were closely related to the type of wat, ie. whether Dhammayut or Maha Nikai. (Seventeen per cent of the respondents were Dhammayut, the remainder Maha Nikai).

Chiang Rai and Mae Hong Son provinces in northern Thailand were the major suppliers of residents at the four Maha Nikai wats (after Chiang Mai province itself), whereas a large proportion of Dhammayut monks at the Wat Chedi Luang were originally from Lampang. Maha Nikai respondents also came from Kamphaeng Phet, Lampang, Lamphun, Nan, Petchabun, Phrae and Tak in the north, and Maha Sarakham, Nakhon Ratchasima, and Surin in the northeast. Dhammayut respondents not born in either Chiang Mai or Lampang came from Chiang Rai, Lamphun, Nakhon Sawan, Petchabun, and Tak in the north, and Loei, Roi Et, Sakon Nakhon and Udon Thani

in the northeast. There were no respondents belonging to either Nikai from Pichit, Phitsanulok, Sukhothai, Uthai Thani or Uttaradit in the north or approximately half the provinces in the northeast.

The fathers of 86% of the Chiang Mai monks and novices were farmers and none were involved in Government service. The remaining 14% were predominantly hired labourers or small traders. By contrast 30% of the Chiang Mai University students who completed questionnaires had fathers in Government service, and none were farmers. A respondent at the Wat Bovornives wrote "My father belongs to the rotten backbone of the country that profits landowners and civil servants". Parental occupations at the Wat Bovornives were distributed fairly evenly between Governmental, agricultural and "other" (eg. trade, commerce) responses. But the Wat Bovornives sample included *luksits* and quite a number of *navaga* or temporary monks, who tend to be drawn from the commercial and professional segments of Thai society.<sup>(13)</sup> A few *navaga* were resident at the five wats which constituted the main focus of the investigation.

Fifty-seven per cent of the Chiang Mai monks and novices had not had an occupation prior to ordination, which meant that they had been too young to have one. Thirty-eight per cent had been farmers. This contrasted sharply with the Wat Bovornives, where 67% stated that they had been in some form of Government service prior to ordination.

The majority of the Chiang Mai respondents had between two and seven brothers and sisters—characteristically specified as older or younger. The average number of brothers and sisters was  $4.6 \pm 0.2$ , making an average family size of 6.6. This is somewhat larger than any of the regional averages quoted in the 1970 census. According to the 1970 national population census the average household size for the whole country is 5.79; for the northern region it is 5.46 and for the northeast it rises to a regional maximum of 6.12. The most obvious explanation is that the families of monks really are larger than average, and that this is a factor which induces parents to encourage one or more sons to ordain.

### (ii) Monastic Careers

The role of wats in provincial capitals such as Chiang Mai in relation to the movements of rural youths from their native villages to the Capital has already been referred to, and is described in detail by Tambiah.<sup>(14)</sup> For the most part the findings of this investigation confirm Tambiah's conclusions. But Tambiah suggests that in certain respects the northern pattern may be atypical:

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13. D.L. Gosling, *Op. cit.* (7), p. 411.

14. S.J. Tambiah, *Op. cit.* (1), Chapters 13–15.

The northern pattern is... different from that prevailing in the rest of the country, in that the custom is to ordain novices in large numbers and for most of them to leave after a period of time. Some, more committed educationally and vocationally, stay on to become ordained monks. The custom of ordaining young men of 20-21 as temporary monks which is usual elsewhere in Thailand, is not traditional in the north, though in recent times it is taking hold especially in the towns as central Thai standards become the norm.<sup>(15)</sup>

No evidence was found for the existence of a distinctive northern pattern along the lines indicated, and one is therefore inclined to agree with Tambiah's concluding caveat.

Ninety per cent of the residents at the five Chiang Mai wats had been *luksits* prior to ordination, the majority for a period of approximately one year. All of them had been *luksits* in the northern region (which means that those born in the northeast had moved via an established network at least a year prior to ordination and at an age of between 10 and 15), but only a quarter had been *luksits* in Chiang Mai province.

At first sight the corresponding percentages for ordination to the noviciate are obscure. Sixty-six per cent of the respondents were ordained to the noviciate in the northern region and only 46% were ordained in Chiang Mai province. The reason for this apparent discrepancy is that the Wat Si Soda sends its members to the Wat Benjamabopitr for ordination. This distorts the classification of responses to place of ordination according to region (ie. central, north, northeast, south, Bangkok/Thonburi, or "other") and whether ordained in Chiang Mai province or not. If the Wat Si Soda ordinations are regarded as having taken place in Chiang Mai, then the figures become more intelligible.

Forty-eight per cent of the respondents appeared to have only ever resided at one wat (ie. the one where the investigation took place). Forty three per cent had been to two, and the remaining 9% had resided at more than two wats in the course of their monastic careers. Once again the Wat Si Soda, and to a lesser extent the Wat Chedi Luang, tended to distort the more general pattern in that they both recruit *luksits* and novices direct from the hill tribes, thus bypassing what for the majority is an intermediate stage at a rural wat in Chiang Mai province but often outside the municipality.

Thus, to revert to Tambiah's general thesis, it appears that wats in the provincial capital of Chiang Mai occupy an intermediate position between the rural wats which admit young men as *luksits* or novices and the wats in Bangkok/Thonburi. It is significant (though the actual numbers involved are small) that the 10% or so of the

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15. S.J. Tambiah, *Ibid.*, p. 281.

respondents born outside the northern region moved first into the "radial" orbit of Chiang Mai municipality from which some might ultimately migrate into the "galactic" orbit of the metropolis. It is also significant that none of the respondents at any of the five Chiang Mai wats had been born in central Thailand where presumably the majority of monastic careers fall within the "radial" sphere of Sukhothai.

There was no evidence of a distinctive northern pattern of temporary ordination to the noviciate. The use of the Yuan script in the education of *luksits* and novices at the wats was noted, though it was not possible to form an estimate of the extent of its use. According to Charles Keyes the Yuan script, which is traditional in the north of Thailand, has been relegated to a strictly religious function since World War II and is declining in importance.<sup>(16)</sup> *Luksits* and novices originally from hill tribes at the Wats Chedi Luang and Si Soda were much more concerned with improving their Thai.

Respondents at the five Chiang Mai wats were invited to state their reasons for ordination. The following fairly typical reasons were given by two monks and two novices at the Wat Bupparam :

I ordained as a debt of gratitude to my parents, to study *Dhamma*, and to keep Buddhism alive.

I became a monk out of faith in Buddhism, to propagate the Noble Truths, and to advance myself in the secular world.

I ordained to study. My family's economic background is not good. As a monk time is more readily available (for study), and the cost is less.

I ordained to study *Dhamma* and to keep Buddhism alive.

My formal education was very minimal and this is also why I ordained. Several respondents ordained partly at least in order to help disadvantaged sections of society. According to a monk at the Wat Chedi Luang :

I ordained to study Buddhism in depth, to please the family, and to contribute something to the community.

According to two monks at the Wat Bupparam :

I became a monk to be educated so as to help the poor. They cannot help themselves, so I will tell them how to do so.

I ordained to study the Lord Buddha's teaching so that it could reach people in remote areas enabling them to understand Buddhism and culture for their own benefit.

Two novices and a monk at the Wat Si Soda gave reasons for ordination consistent with their tribal backgrounds :

16. Charles F. Keyes, *Op. cit.* (5), p. 62.

I got ordained through faith in Buddhism and to study both religion and secular subjects including every single part of the Thai language.

I became a monk to spread Buddhism to far away places.

I ordained to understand Buddhism and to learn the Thai language because I come from a hill tribe.

A monk at the Wat Phra Singh, who had tended buffaloes prior to his ordination, painted a gloomy picture of educational standards in his home area (Mae Jam):

Ordination was the intention of my parents for me to have a better education because the family is poor. In our countryside there are many children who even after obtaining Grade 4 of primary education cannot read at all.

A novice at the Wat Chetupon from a merchant family in Chiang Rai ordained as a *navaga*, but decided to remain in orders:

My aunt passed away and I wanted to extend merit to her. After studying the *Dhamma* and attending classes I felt very good so I decided to stay on.

A monk in his mid-twenties at the Wat Chedi Luang was extremely articulate about his reasons for ordaining:

I ordained because I was convinced by the Lord Buddha's teaching which is rational and up-to-date. The Buddha does not force anyone to believe, but leaves people to believe for themselves. His teaching is of the highest philosophical quality and is very scientific.

### (iii) Education

Since the time of the Ayutthaya era and possibly prior to it, education has been an integral part of the Thai monastic system. It is therefore incorrect to view those who advance themselves educationally via the Sangha as having an ulterior motive in relation to their Buddhist beliefs. Nation, monarchy and religion are so closely entwined that it is virtually impossible to analyse any one in isolation from the others. To be Thai is to be a Buddhist and a loyal subject of the King. To be an educated Thai is to be a more mature and effective member of society, and it is therefore both natural and appropriate for the Sangha to play a major role in the education of the Nation's youth. And it is equally natural—as happened in the latter part of the last century and the early part of the present—for the Monarchy to attempt to mobilize the Sangha in order to promote more effective educational programmes.

But the ensuing educational matrix with its parallel avenues of religious and secular social mobility is extremely complex. Before describing it in detail a number of general points will be made.

Historically the Thai Sangha has always laid a high premium on education which was traditionally centred on the local wat. Wat education was primarily based on Pali studies and essential Buddhist teaching, but also included instruction in medicine, law, astrology, and even construction and the art of self defence!<sup>(17)</sup> Furthermore Thai custom has always recognised the right of individual monks and novices to disrobe and resume lay status without loss of respect or merit. Consequently there is a long and venerable tradition of monks who have attained great scholastic eminence within the Sangha and who then disrobe and take up civil positions of considerable power and influence. King Mongkut, who ruled from 1851–1868, did precisely this himself, but seems to have had subsequent misgivings about the impetus he had thereby given to the secular ambitions of some members of the Sangha. At any rate he appears to have been the first monarch to recognise the possible dangers of such open-ended avenues for social advancement. In passing several royal decrees to stem the tide, he seems to have started a competitive dialogue between secular and ecclesiastical educational systems which continues to this day!

In 1892 King Chulalongkorn (Rama V) established a Ministry of Education and thus initiated a secular counterpart to the ecclesiastical institutions which had traditionally assumed responsibility for all levels of education. But it was not until 1921 that Rama VI promulgated a Primary Education Act requiring all children between seven and 14 to attend school. In 1933 these age limits were changed from eight to 15.

The first four years of primary education were originally geared to four *prathom* grades followed by six secondary *matayom* grades. In the early 1960s primary education was extended until eventually seven *prathom* grades were in existence. In the mid-1970s children aged between seven and 14 would attempt primary *prathom* 1–7 followed by secondary *matayom* 1–5, which took them from 14 to 18, when they would be eligible to go to University.

In 1978/79 the *prathom* grades were reduced to six, starting at the age of six and finishing at 12, and the secondary *maw saw* grades were divided into two groups, *maw* 1–3 and *maw* 4–6. These were designed for the 12 to 18 age group, so that *maw* 6 is now the recognised entry qualification for a secular university (eg. Chulalongkorn or Ramkhamhaeng—not to be confused with Mahachulalongkorn or Mahamakut Buddhist Universities, which are for monks only). Not only have the secular primary and secondary systems changed twice in the last decade, but there are regional variations,

17. S. Chongkol, "An Historical Sketch of Thai Education Administration. Evolution of the Administrative Organization", in *Education in Thailand, a Century of Experience. A Revised Version of the Third Academic Conference*, 1969, Bangkok. The references to "traditional medicine, construction, astrology, magic and the art of self defence" relate specifically to northern wats.

and many people in Chiang Mai did not seem to know that *maw saw* 5 had been re-named and changed.

Ecclesiastical grades are no less complex. The lowest *naktham* ("student of dhamma") grade is *naktham thri*, followed by *naktham tho* and *ek*. This elementary religious instruction is fairly basic and does not require any knowledge of Pali.

The Pali *pariyattitham* studies are designed to offer detailed analysis of the Pali language and Tripitaka texts. The *parian* examinations, as they are known, enable the monks and novices who sit them to obtain *prayog* grades ranging from one to nine. *Prayog* 9 is extremely difficult, and very few monks attain it. In practice, and for reasons often to do with the establishment of alternative routes to advancement such as Adult Education and the Buddhist Universities, few monks now go beyond *prayog* 4. A monk or novice who has obtained *naktham ek* and *prayog* 4 is eligible for admission to either of the two Buddhist Universities in Bangkok and may move there without proceeding further with the *parian* examinations. Traditional Pali studies in the provincial capitals such as Chiang Mai have suffered as a result, and Adult Education courses are now having an even more deleterious effect on them.

An account of the education offered by the Buddhist Universities has been given elsewhere.<sup>(18)</sup> The syllabi have recently been changed so as to include more secular subjects and instruction in practical skills which enable the scholar-monks to part in development programmes. The overall effect of the Buddhist Universities is to take more able monks from the "radial" ambit of the provincial capitals into the "galactic" sphere of influence of the Metropolis—to use Tambiah's expressive phraseology.

Adult Education courses, like those at the Bangkok-based Universities, also include a large amount of instruction in practical subjects, and are proving increasingly popular with monks and novices in the provincial capitals. Although designed primarily for laymen who wish to enhance their job prospects, they are very often held in wat compounds at times of the day when it is convenient and "appropriate" for monks to be present. It is not appropriate, of course, for members of the Sangha to attend local secondary schools because this would be incompatible with their monastic duties and would bring them into an inappropriate amount of contact with members of the opposite sex. But they are usually allowed to sit examinations in the same buildings as local children. Hence some novices and monks have used Adult Education classes at their wats to learn enough to enable them to pass *maw saw* examinations.

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18. D.L. Gosling, *Op. cit.* (7), p. 413.

From the time of King Mongkut until the present day both civil and ecclesiastical administrative authorities have viewed the secular aspirations of monks with a certain amount of suspicion. This has led them to progressively downgrade the religious *naktham* and *parian* grades in relation to secondary standards. At one time a monk who had passed *prayog* 3 was eligible to enrol for a degree in law or economics at Thammasat University. In the mid-1940s the qualifying level was raised to *prayog* 6. Today none of the *parian* grades is recognised by any secular Thai university, though many universities in the UK and in the USA regard them as more than adequate entrance qualifications.

In the early 1960s *naktham ek* was considered equivalent to lower secondary *matayom* 3, and *prayog* 5 was ranked equal to upper secondary *matayom* 6. *Matayom* 6 was then effectively renamed *maw saw* 3, and the level of entry to a secular university was raised to *maw saw* 5 (ie. the secondary system was upgraded without reference to the *parian* grades). *Prayog* 5 thus became equal to *maw saw* 3, and higher levels of equivalence were abolished. This meant that a monk had no easy route from *maw saw* 3 to pre-university *maw saw* 5 (which has now been changed to *maw* 6—as it is known colloquially in the few schools who seem to have heard of it!)

The Buddhist University degrees and Adult Education courses are effectively enabling scholar-monks to overcome the educational obstacles with which they have been confronted by successive civil and ecclesiastical bureaucracies (often working hand in hand—the *Maha Thera Sama Khom* or Supreme Sangha Assembly does not encourage the educational aspirations of younger members of the Sangha!) A monk or novice who has obtained *naktham ek* and *prayog* 4 is eligible to enter either Mahachulalongkorn or Mahamakut University in Bangkok, and hence has no reason to pursue Pali studies beyond a certain level.

Adult Education grade 4 is recognised as equivalent to *maw saw* 3, so that a monk who does Adult Education courses hardly needs to pursue any *parian* grades. Not surprisingly the level of attainment in Pali studies of the Chiang Mai monks and novices who formed the basis of this investigation was not very impressive. It was not possible to establish an inverse correlation between low Pali grades (or their complete absence) and participation in Adult Education classes. But the results of both the questionnaire analysis and interviews with respondents and their abbots suggested that Pali studies are being seriously undermined by Adult Education and similar local educational programmes.

Details of the religious and secular levels of attainment of the Chiang Mai monks and novices are shown in Table I. The responses were analysed according to

wat, and it may be presumed that the distribution was fairly even unless stated to the contrary.

The primary *prathom* grades were evenly distributed except for a concentration of *prathom* 4 responses at the Wats Bupparam and Si Soda. Several of those with no apparent *prathom* grade had simply omitted to complete that part of the questionnaire. But they were much more meticulous about specifying secondary and Pali grades. Responses were not always very precise: thus "studying for *prayog* 4" (in Thai) would be coded as *prayog* 3 irrespective of whether or not they had actually obtained such a grade.

*Naktham* grades at the Wats Bupparam, Chedi Luang and Chetupon ranged from 17% to 36% (*tho*) and 10% to 20% (*ek*). They were slightly lower at the Wat Phra Singh, and at the Wat Si Soda the majority of respondents had not progressed beyond the lowest grade or *naktham thri*; the percentages were 55% (*thri*), 14% (*tho*) and 6% (*ek*).

Only 14% of the respondents had obtained any Pali grades. None of these were at the Wat Si Soda, and only the Deputy Abbot of the Wat Phra Singh had a *parian* qualification (*prayog* 4). Only three additional respondents at the five wats had obtained *prayog* 4 or a higher grade. By contrast, 16 monks at Mahachulalongkorn University (90% of the sample) had at least *prayog* 4.

Secondary *matayom* (or *maw saw*) grades were comparatively impressive. Thirty-two respondents had *maw saw* 3 or less, and seven had *maw saw* 5. These *maw saw* grades were distributed fairly evenly among the five wats, with the exception of the Wat Si Soda, which was under-represented. By contrast, when taking into account the wider sample, every respondent at Mahachulalongkorn University could boast *maw saw* 5!

Forty-nine per cent of the Chiang Mai respondents had Adult Education qualifications. Most were at the Wat Bupparam, Chetupon and Si Soda. Only four respondents at the Wat Phra Singh had an Adult Education grade, and there were none at the Wat Chedi Luang. However the Wat Chedi Luang, which it must be remembered is the only Dhammayut wat in the sample group, has an independent school which is administered by Chao Khun Rajavinayaporn. Tambiah comments rather disparagingly on the scholastic attainments of the Wat Phra Singh, which runs its own distinctive educational programmes for monks and laymen.<sup>(19)</sup> In 1971 it had only 12 monks with the title Phra Maha (ie. who had *prayog* 3 or 4 at least).

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19. S.J. Tambiah, *Op. cit* (1), p. 331,

**Table I: Religious and Secular Educational Qualifications**

	Prathom	Naktham	Matayom	Pali	Adult Education
Grade*	%	%	%	%	%
0	17	15	71	86	64
1	0	16	5	2	9
2	1	41	5	7	0
3	2	28	14	2	14
4	42	-	0	2	12
5	0	-	5	0	0
6	18	-	-	0	0
7	20	-	-	1	1

\* Not all numbers necessarily correspond to actual grades. A response such as "soon to take Adult Education 4" is classified as Adult Education 3.

It is extremely difficult to make across the board comparisons between the levels of attainment in Pali studies of monks and novices in Chiang Mai and elsewhere. Jane Bunnag's seminal research in Ayutthaya was conducted in the middle and late sixties and suggests that Pali standards were not very high even then.<sup>(20)</sup> Tambiah's more recent studies give much the same impression and indicate sound reasons why the more able scholar monks migrate from the provincial capitals to the Metropolis. What seems to emerge from this present investigation is that enhanced opportunities to pursue secular studies in the provincial capitals are further devaluing the premium placed on traditional Pali studies.

Before concluding this section two monastic careers will be traced. Both are based on concrete data obtained from interviews and questionnaire responses, but each conflates information obtained from more than one individual.

Phra Maha L was born in a small village in Doi Saket in "the year of the rat" (1948). He went to the local primary school and passed *prathom* 4 at the age of 11. He wished to pursue his studies further, but his family did not have sufficient money to support him. His sister, however, was working as a *metta-naree* trainee at the Wat Pah Pai Si Khong, a small Mala Nikai wat a few miles away from L's home. She prevailed upon the Abbot, Phra Sing Toh, to find L a place as a *luksit* (or *dekwat*) with a view to ordination as a novice. L's ordination to the noviciate was sponsored by Phra Sing Toh who also became his *luang phi* or moral tutor (approximately). From Phra Sing Toh he learned *Dhamma* and *Vinai* (monastic discipline, ie. *Vinaya*),

20. J. Bunnag, *Buddhist Monk, Buddhist Layman, A Study of Urban Monastic Organization in Central Thailand*, Cambridge University Press, 1973.

and at the age of 15 passed the highest *naktham ek* grade. The Wat was a small one and the only local village school was a primary school similar to the one in L's home village, so it was not possible for him to proceed beyond *prathom* 4 and *naktham ek* without moving.

One of the monks residing at the Wat Chetupon had been born in the same village as L, and was therefore a *yaad* or kinsman. L's mother prevailed upon this monk to ask the Abbot of the Wat Chetupon, Phra Khru Wickrom Kanapirakhsa, if he could find a place for L at the Wat. Since the monk in question was the head of a residential section of the Wat, Phra Khru Wickrom readily agreed, and L transferred to the larger wat within Chiang Mai municipality. The kinsman-monk provided L with sufficient pocket money to purchase books needed to study for the *parian* grades which were taught at the Wat. L also learned meditation from Phra Khru Wickrom and attended Adult Education classes held in the Wat compound. Somehow, and periodically at cost to his health, L combined *parian* with the more secular Adult Education studies and greatly impressed the Abbot with his tenacity at *vipassanā* (meditation).

By the age of 20 L had obtained *prayog* 3 and Adult Education grade 4 (which is equivalent to *maw saw* 3), and was thinking of progressing further. But in order to gain admission to Mahachulalongkorn Buddhist University he needed to pass *prayog* 4, and the Wat Chetupon did not teach beyond the third Pali level. With *naktham ek* and *prayog* 3, he could, in fact, have easily enrolled in one of the Mahachulalongkorn pre-undergraduate schools for a year in order to obtain *prayog* 4, but Phra Khru Wickrom, whom L now regarded as his *achan*, wanted him to ordain to the monkhood in Chiang Mai. L therefore went to the Wat Bupparam in the centre of town in order to study for his next *parian* examination, which he passed the following year.

Phra Khru Wickrom, the gentle Abbot of the Wat Chetupon, was L's *upachaya* at his ordination to the monkhood. In encouraging him to complete his Pali studies at the Wat Bupparam he had an ulterior motive (of the kindest possible variety) in that he wished L's training to be as perfectly "rounded" as possible prior to his inevitable departure to Bangkok. L's stay at his first and second wats had established him in Phra Khru Wickrom's eyes as *thura kanta* (a practitioner of learning) and *thura vipassanā* (a practitioner of meditation). He now wanted him to become *thura patana* (a practitioner of development), and who better to teach him this than his good friend Phra Khru Mongkol Silawongs, Abbot of the Wat Bupparam and Chao Kana Ampur (District Sangha Governor) of Doi Saket District ?

Phra Khru Mongkol would take a particular interest in L's training in development activities because L hailed from the area under his jurisdiction, and his sister had by this time become a leading organiser of the *metta-naree* groups which Phra Khru Mongkol had originally established. Furthermore Phra Khru Wickrom wanted his *luksit* (now using the term for the first time for an ordained person) to learn development from someone who understood it in a completely non-political context—unlike the organisers of the Dhammajarik programme which L might meet in Bangkok.

Phra Khru Wickrom was not an outstanding scholar and unknown as a teacher of meditation outside Chiang Mai. He was, on his own admission, hopeless at the practicalities of development work. But he was very kind. And also very shrewd.

Phra Khru Mongkol was delighted with his new monk, whom he took on regular visits to the various development projects in his district. After two years he arranged for L to go to Bangkok where he resided at the Wat Mahathat and obtained his B.A. degree at Mahachulalongkorn University. But he was unhappy and disillusioned with life in the Big City, and quickly returned to Chiang Mai where he eventually became Abbot of the Wat Doi Saket.

All the wats mentioned in this account have been Maha Nikai. The following "case history" is based on Dhammayut centres.

M was born in a small Meo village on the Doi Inthanon mountain in B E 2500 (1957). His father died when he was nine years old, and his mother took him a year later to meet Phra Maha Tawin Dhammaraso, a senior monk from the Wat Chedi Luang living in the village.

Phra Maha Tawin arranged for M to move to Chiang Mai where he resided as a *luksit* at the Wat Chedi Luang. He quickly learned Thai and passed *prathom* 4 and, eventually, *naktham ek*. In the absence of his original *luang phi*, Phra Maha Tawin, who had returned to his semi-permanent residence on the Doi Inthanon, M began to attract the attention of Chao Khun Rajavinayaporn, who took him on some of his many journeys among the hill tribes. When M first expressed an interest in ordination Chao Khun Rajavinayaporn explained that it was not essential for him to ordain in order to pursue his studies. But when M persisted, he was ordained first to the noviciate at the Wat Chedi Luang, and eventually to the monkhood at the Wat Bovornives in Bangkok. He failed to gain admission to Mahamakut Buddhist University and returned to Chiang Mai where he disrobed and joined the Border Patrol Police.

### III The Scope and Justification of Social Development

The main thrust of this analysis has so far been to show how the interplay of monastic careers with recent educational opportunities is opening up new avenues of social mobility which enable monks and novices to pursue a more development-orientated role. It remains to chart the various kinds of development work which are open to the monks, their rationale for undertaking it, and the manner in which some of them seek to justify their new roles in the light of traditional Buddhism—in particular the strictures of the *Pāṭimokkha*, which played such a major part in nineteenth century monastic reforms under Mongkut.

Much has been written about the Government-sponsored development programmes which have been in progress for the best part of two decades.<sup>(21)</sup> These are primarily the missionary-orientated Phra Dhammatuta scheme begun in 1964 under the auspices of the Department of Religious Affairs, the Phra Dhammajarik Programme started the following year under the joint auspices of the Sangha and the Department of Public Welfare, and various other schemes based on the two Buddhist Universities and major wats such as the Wat Phra Singh.

As has been indicated, the Phra Dhammajarik Programme, though community-based, is centred on the Wat Si Soda in Chiang Mai, and exists primarily to recruit boys from the hill tribes. After a short period as *dekwats* or *luksits* the boys are ordained in a grand ceremony at the Wat Benjamabopitr in Bangkok. Suksamran has drawn attention to the political overtones of both this and the Phra Dhammatuta scheme, a point of view echoed by certain members of the Sangha and some former monks on the teaching staff of Chiang Mai University. No attempt was made to gauge the politics of any of the respondents in this investigation, and it would have been inappropriate to have tried to do so. But both Phra Khru Mongkol Silawongs and Chao Khun Rajavinyayaporn made it clear that they did not actively recommend the Government schemes and that they disagreed with the overtones of social work as a means of securing converts to Buddhism.

All respondents were asked whether or not they had participated in the national development scheme. Thirteen per cent had been involved in the Phra Dhammatuta Programme, 30% with the Phra Dhammajarik, 7% listed Dhammapatana, 19% Spiritual Development, and 14% "Other" (mainly Sunday School teaching). Two thirds of the Dhammajarik respondents were predictably resident at the Wat Si Soda, which trains Dhammajarik novices and monks for community-based work in the hill areas.

"Spiritual Development" was intended to elicit responses from monks and novices who had worked at Phra Kittiwutto's controversial centre in Chon Buri (Chit-tapavan College). But no such identification could be made, and the four monks from

21. See especially S. Suksamran, *Op. cit.* (1).

the Wat Chedi Luang who opted for this questionnaire category could not conceivably have trained under Kittiwutto—if only because they belonged to a different Nikai! (Though Phra Khru Mongkol's training schemes increasingly involve both Maha Nikai and Dhammayut monks).

The majority of respondents who had taken part in development schemes had done so in or near their original home villages. The duration of their work varied from a few weeks to more than a year. A period of three or four months in Chiang Mai Province was fairly typical.

Attitudes to social service as an expression of Buddhist commitment were gauged in two ways. Respondents were asked to state which part or parts of the Buddha's teaching suggest that a monk should do community service (Question 8). They were also requested to comment on the work of Khun Prateep Ungsongtham, whose spirited attempts to provide a rudimentary education for the slum children of Klong Tuey in Bangkok recently earned her the coveted Magsaysay Award. Respondents were asked whether or not they considered her work to be compatible with the Buddha's teaching, and if so, why? (Question 9).

The following responses relate to Khun Prateep's work, though the answers to Question (8) were couched in very similar terms:

Khun Prateep has shown kindness and compassion, having no craving (*tanhā*). She helps the poor and educates them, sympathising with all human beings.

She shows kindness to the Thai people . . . . If all humans behaved like Khun Prateep the world would be at peace.

Khun Prateep is industrious and willing to suffer for others, not for herself. She has been seeking what lives at the back of the Buddha's image (i.e. doing good deeds without telling other people). Because of her good deeds she was awarded the Magsaysay Award.

The fact that Khun Prateep sets up a school says that she tries to help others first. What she has done was not for fame or for her own self and not for her family. She did it for better lives for slum dwellers who she would like to see living in better conditions in society. She did it for the sake of Thai citizens and for humanity.

She is teaching good *Dhamma*. I hear from the radio what is being taught to Thai citizens so that they will be better citizens staying away from Communism.

Sacrificing for the public is praised by the Lord Buddha. Sacrifice is an act of giving (*dana*) which in this case is *Dharmadana*, that is making education available to the uneducated without any expectation of return.

Her kindness extends to the underprivileged in education and her deeds help to maintain society. This fits in with the four *Brahmavihāra*.

Quite a number of respondents justified both Khun Prateep's work and their own developmental roles in terms of the four *Brahmavihāra* ie. *mettā* (loving kindness), *karuṇā* (compassion), *upekkhā* (even mindedness) and *mudithā* (sympathetic joy). There were also frequent references to the *Saṅghahavatthu* and the four *Iddhipāda*. The *Brahmavihāra* (or Sublime Abodes) and *Saṅghahavatthu* have been discussed in relation to social action in an earlier article based on the Buddhist Universities.<sup>(22)</sup> But none of the monks in the earlier samples referred to the *Iddhipāda*, or recommended virtues set out for a novice or newly ordained monk. These are *chanda*, satisfaction or joy in one's work, *virīya*, diligent effort, *citta*, wholehearted concentration, and *vimamsā* or careful and rational "thinking around" the matter in hand. These and a range of additional virtues culled from a wide range of Pali scriptures (in this case the *Vibhaṅga*) are set out in a recently published standard textbook for *naktham ek* students by Somdet Phra Maha Samaṇa Chao Krom Phrayā Vajiraṇāṇavarorasa.<sup>(23)</sup> The book repays careful reading as an authoritative account of an appropriate life-style for a novice or newly ordained monk. It is interesting to note that the respondents made no scriptural distinction in justifying their own role as *thura patana* and that of Khun Prateep, who, after all, is both a lay person and a woman!

#### IV Appropriate and Inappropriate Developmental Roles

The foregoing discussion provides a useful background for a consideration of the manner in which certain developmental activities may be appropriate or inappropriate from the standpoint of the *Vinaya* or *Pātimokkha* (which is contained within it). According to the *Pātimokkha* a monk may not damage a plant or dig the earth, though there is nothing to stop him from chopping up, say, a tree, once someone else has cut it down.<sup>(24)</sup> But the 227 rules of the *Pātimokkha* do not apply to a novice who is subject only to ten precepts. There are many activities which are inappropriate for a monk or novice from a variety of Buddhist standpoints, such as owning luxurious items or indulging in activities which bring the Sangha into disrepute. Also there are some things which, though not exactly inappropriate, are not really in accordance with the status of a monk—changing a car wheel, for example.

22. D L. Gosling, *Op. cit.*, (7), p. 428.

23. *Navakovāda* (Standard Text for *Naktham Ek*), Mahamakut Buddhist University, 1971, p. 44.

24. Ven. Nānamoli Thera, *The Pātimokkha*, Mahamakut Academy, 1966, p. 48. For a more detailed account of the *Vinaya* see *The Entrance to the Vinaya*, Vols. I and II, Mahamakut Academy, 1969–73.

These issues have been discussed in more detail in an earlier article.<sup>(25)</sup> They were partly instrumental in shaping questions eliciting information as to whether respondents considered a particular activity to be "appropriate", "inappropriate", or "sometimes appropriate". The responses are shown in Table II.

The figures in Table II were evaluated using the University of Hull's I.C.L.-1904-S Computer. Omitted responses were not subtracted since some respondents completed only certain parts of question (10). It may be presumed, for example, that since the percentages of those who thought it "appropriate", "inappropriate" or "sometimes appropriate" for a monk to saw wood were 5.9%, 47% and 18% respectively, 29.1% did not answer the question. Of those 29% the majority were novices who did not feel sufficiently well informed about the *Vinaya* to say whether or not a monk should ever need to saw a piece of wood.

The most appropriate activities for both monks and novices were clearly those with some practical value to society such as healing sickness, giving an injection, or assisting refugees. The high premium placed on curing drug addiction reflects the work of Phra Chamrun at the Wat Tham Krabok in Saraburi, who, like Khun Prateep, received the Magsaysay Award for his efforts. Thus curing drug addiction was less inappropriate for both monks and novices than any other activity.

Opposition to driving cars and owning television sets probably reflects the impatience of some monks with the image projected by Phra Kittiwutto, who achieved notoriety in the summer of 1978 through his association with a Volvo car which was allegedly smuggled into the country.<sup>(26)</sup> Assistance to refugees should be seen against the background of the large influx of Khmers into Eastern Thailand during the middle and late seventies. Some monks from Mahachulalongkorn University went into the refugee camps and initiated a remarkable peace programme.

Clearly monks and novices do not think that members of the Sangha should drive motor boats, offer family planning advice, or take part in any kind of political demonstration. But the uncompromising opposition to horoscopes is strange in that many monks are supposed to be good at reading them.

The *Pātimokkha's* distinction with regard to felling (ie. "killing") trees—inappropriate for a monk but acceptable for a novice—is statistically significant—though it probably has status overtones. The responses for sawing wood, which is technically permissible for both monks and novices, are fairly consistent.

25. D.L. Gosling, *Op. cit.* (7), p. 430.

26. D.L. Gosling, *Ibid.*, p. 431.

**TABLE II: Attitudes of Respondents to Specific Developmental Activities**

DEVELOPMENTAL ACTIVITY	APPROPRIATE		INAPPROPRIATE		SOMETIMES APPROPRIATE	
	Monk %	Novice %	Monk %	Novice %	Monk %	Novice %
a) Sawing Wood	5.9	6.6	47	47	18	24
b) Felling Tree	2.2	8.8	59	52	9.6	17
c) Driving Boat	2.2	2.9	60	64	6.6	8.8
d) Reading Horoscope	1.5	2.2	60	66	10	8.1
e) Healing Sickness	33	40	16	13	27	26
f) Cholera Injection	40	39	20	25	10	16
g) Owning Television	5.1	6.6	57	68	5.1	4.4
h) Driving Car	0.7	0.7	65	74	2.2	2.2
i) Contraception Advice	7.4	5.9	56	62	4.4	9.6
j) Curing Drug Addicts	57	68	5.1	7.4	7.4	8.1
k) Peaceful Demonstration	4.4	4.4	62	72	0.7	0.7
l) Helping Refugees	29	34	26	29	12	16

Various cross-tabulations were made by dividing respondents according to status (ie. monk, novice, and layman), educational qualifications (eg. whether Adult Education or not), and sex. But in order to produce statistically significant results it was necessary to add the responses from students at Chiang Mai and Ramkhamhaeng Universities and from monks, novices, and quite a number of *luksits* at the Wat Bovornives. When this is done the foregoing conclusions are strengthened (eg. with regard to status factors), but the additional data requires more interpretation and discussion than is feasible here.

In addition to being asked about the appropriateness or otherwise of certain activities, respondents at the five Chiang Mai wats were required to specify which, if any, of a series of developmental activities they had actually performed. The functions, and the percentages of those claiming to have undertaken them, are as follows: sanitation, 53%; medical advice, 50%; agricultural techniques, 50%; electrical methods, 18%; weaving or using cloth materials, 6%; well construction, 40%; road building, 43%; making toys, 4%; woodwork, 7%; building a sala, 61%; business advice, 13%; approaching Government officials, 41%. Many of these skills had been acquired via Adult Education courses. Clearly a large proportion of the respondents were accomplished and useful members of their local communities.

Information concerning monks' involvement in specific activities such as the ones just referred to was obtained prior to the compilation of the Thai questionnaire (a translation of which is given as an Annex). This is one of several examples illustrative of the methodological approach adopted in this investigation, and this section may therefore appropriately conclude with a brief discussion of the way in which anthropological and sociological concepts were seen to complement each other.

The manner in which anthropological and sociological concepts and methodologies in field research in Thailand may be related are discussed in an important article by Milton Jacobs in *The Journal of the Siam Society*.<sup>(27)</sup> Jacobs argues that while "intimate" anthropological methods such as participation-information, interviewing informants, obtaining life histories etc. are well suited to the study of small societies, sociological techniques are also needed when dealing with the complex problems of developing societies.

Utilizing Redfield's folk-urban continuum based on anthropological research in Central America, Jacobs attempts to define the "traditional, transitional and modern Thai" on the basis of sociological characteristics such as spatial mobility, social isolation and communication behaviour. Recognising some of the confusion generated by Redfield's terminology, Jacobs maintains that his basic framework is a useful typology which can serve with some adjustment in the analysis of Thai society:

I would argue that in the developing countries the small scale anthropological studies based on a number of villages, for example, should occur first and should provide for the initial hypothesizing. The sociological concern for quantification and sampling should follow to test out the anthropological hypotheses. There are a number of reasons why this seems preferable: (1) it allows for more flexibility;

27. M. Jacobs, "The Alliance of Anthropological and Sociological Concepts and Methodologies in Field Research in Thailand" in *The Journal of the Siam Society*, Vol. 62, Part I, 1974, p. 35.

(2) it allows for more depth research although admittedly on a small scale; (3) lastly, it is more practical, easily managed, and less costly.<sup>(28)</sup>

Jacobs proceeds to demonstrate from his own field work studies that anthropology and sociology are complementing disciplines. The demonstration is convincing enough, though there are places where the use of the concepts of "merit" and "status" might profitably be replaced by the notion of "respect."<sup>(29)</sup>

Although much of this article has been based on the results of questionnaire responses, it must be pointed out that the form of the questionnaire and manner of interpretation of the results was largely shaped by previous work, the most relevant parts of which in relation to this investigation are summarised in an earlier article in the *Southeast Asian Journal of Social Science*.<sup>(30)</sup>

## V Conclusions

The basic thesis of this investigation is that Adult Education courses are playing a significant role in shaping the monastic careers of monks and novices at five wats in the Chiang Mai Municipality. In the introductory section (Section I) an outline was given of the distinctive features of what Charles Keyes has described as Chiang Mai's "secular" Buddhism, and a brief summary was offered of the five wats whose residents formed the basis of much of the information obtained. These wats were described partially from a historical perspective in order for consideration to be given to what Tambiah has described as the "continuities and transformations" between the past and the present which are crucial to a full understanding of the available anthropological and sociological data.<sup>(31)</sup> Charles Keyes has described Tambiah's approach as "the most recent and perhaps the most sophisticated statement of a type of structuralism which has been developed by a number of British anthropologists".<sup>(32)</sup>

An example of a "transformed" historical role (in Tambiah's sense) may be seen in the work of Chao Khun Rajavinayaporn at the Wat Chedi Luang. Traditionally, as indicated by Keyes, a senior ranking monk representing the Bangkok ecclesiastical bureaucracy, resides at the Wat Chedi Luang in order to guarantee the continuation of

28. M. Jacobs, *Ibid.*, p. 37.

29. Jacobs' overemphasis of "merit" is derived from Lucien Hanks. See L.M. Hanks, "Merit and Power in the Thai Social Order" in the *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 64, No. 6, 1962.

30. D.L. Gosling, *Op. cit.* (2).

31. S.J. Tambiah, *Buddhism and the Spirit Cults in North-East Thailand*, Cambridge University Press, 1970, Chapter 21.

32. Charles F. Keyes, "Structure and History in the Study of the Relationship between Theravada Buddhism and Political Order", in *Numen*, Vol. XXV, Fasc. 2, p. 156.

national patterns of religious education by northern Dhammayut clergy. Insofar as Chao Khun Rajavinayaporn is a non-northern senior ecclesiastic at both the Wat Bovornives in Bangkok and at the Wat Chedi Luang, he fulfils the traditional historical role. But he has also transformed it in a most charismatic manner by promoting educational schemes which not only cater for the needs of hill tribes in a remarkable manner, but by doing it more effectively than the Bangkok-based Dhammatuta and Dhammajarik programmes. Far from imposing a central pattern on Chiang Mai province, he is challenging the moribund presuppositions of the central bureaucracy by shaping monks' educational and developmental programmes more effectively.

Much the same may be said of Phra Khru Mongkol's work at the Wat Bupparam and surrounding Maha Nikai centres. Unfortunately the Wat Phra Singh, which like the Wat Chedi Luang exerted a major historical influence at the beginning of this century, seems to have lost its progressiveness.

The historical dimension is crucially important in understanding the transformations which are currently taking place in the education and career structures of many members of the Sangha. The traditional educational role of the Sangha both in relation to the laity and its own members illuminates the manner in which novices move from village wat to provincial town and ultimately to the famous monastic centres in the Capital. There have always been what Tambiah calls the "push" and "pull" factors in relation to monastic mobility and recruitment—the former representing the young novice's aspirations for educational advancement, the latter reflecting the desire of senior monks in famous wats to recruit the most able and intelligent young men in the land:

Both sides in this encounter have complementary interests and mutually benefit each other, and the various patrons and intermediaries who assist young men along the monastic network make possible the realization of the interests of both parties, while themselves gaining influence and prestige in the process.<sup>(33)</sup>

This much, at least, is part of a historical process which needs to be understood against the background of the historical events which have shaped it. Monastic migrations, in themselves, have no particularly dramatic contemporary sociological significance. And similarly the tendency away from traditional Pali studies to more secular types of education can be explained in part at least in relation to overall changes made by successive Governments.

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33. S.J. Tambiah, *Op. cit.* (1), p. 357.

It is when one puts together the historical, social, educational, economic and various other factors that the full significance of the "continuities and transformations" becomes apparent. What is new in the contemporary situation as it applies to the Sangha is the growth of a special kind of radial polity:

It is our thesis that the present urban arrangement of the country is partly a product and partly a faithful reflection of the center-initiated policy of creating a hierarchy of administrative units from circles and provinces to districts (and smaller units) with their respective administrative capitals. The result in a predominantly agricultural, industrially underdeveloped, country is the growth of a new kind of center-oriented, center-dominated polity that is *radial* in character, in that the various provincial capitals and urban constellations do not have so much interlocking relationships with one another, but rather are directly oriented to the national metropolis that engages them in discrete dyadic relations. Within each province the district administrative and market centers whose hinterland is the surrounding agricultural areas relate radially to the provincial capital, and all provincial capitals in turn relate radially to Bangkok rather than to one another.<sup>(34)</sup>

Tambiah's general thesis is supported and amplified by the data contained in Section II of this study. What appears to be novel is the role currently played by Adult Education courses in enabling novices and monks to enhance their careers by raising the level of educational standards open to them—with all that this implies in terms of new avenues for social mobility prior to or subsequent to disrobing—and by providing them with the necessary skills to perform more development-orientated roles in society.

These new development-orientated roles must, in turn, be set within a somewhat different and lengthier historical perspective which validates or invalidates them from the point of view of religious (and particularly scriptural) orthodoxy, consideration of which has been given in Sections III and IV.

I should like to express my gratitude to the Nuffield Foundation for a grant in support of this research and to the Thai National Research Council for permission to carry it out. I am indebted to the following for their advice and assistance: Dr. Sunthorn na-Rangsi and Dr. Somboon Suksamran of Chulalongkorn University; Dr. Saeng Chand-Ngarm and Dr. Siddhi Butr-Indr of Chiang Mai University; and Khan Teddy Prasetyo of the Indonesian Embassy.

34. S.J. Tambiah, *Op. cit.* (1), p. 273.

**Annex : Translation of Thai Questionnaire**

The purpose of this investigation is to study the role of the Sangha in modern Thailand. It is being conducted on behalf of the University of Hull (U.K.) in conjunction with the Thai National Research Council. Please mark answers you agree with with a tick.

**1. Status**

Lay Person

Male

Female

Monk

Novice

**2. Home Background**

Year of birth :

Place of birth :

Province :

Occupation of Father :

Number of brothers and sisters :

Have you been a luksit ?  Yes  No

Which year ? :

For how long ? :

Name of Wat : Province :

**3. Ordination as a Novice**

Year of Ordination

Name and Place of Wat : Province :

Reason for Ordination :

**4. Ordination as a Monk**

Year of Ordination :

Name and Place of Wat : Province :

Dhammayut  Mahanikai

Wats at which you have resided since ordination :

Name (s) and place (s) of Wats; Province (s) :

Wat at which you are now resident : Province :

How long have you been at your present Wat ? :

What was your occupation before entering the monkhood ? :

**5. Educational Qualifications****a) Secular Education**

Compulsory Primary Education : Level obtained :

Secondary Education : Level obtained :

Other : Level obtained :

**b) Religious Education**

Naktham : Level obtained :

Pali : Level obtained :

Buddhist University : Level obtained :

Adult Education : Level obtained :

**6. Present Education**

Institution :

Course :

Year of course :

Special options or choice of faculty :

**7. Meditation**Do you practise meditation?  Yes  No

If yes, how many hours per week do you meditate? :

Type of meditation :

Name any meditation teacher who has particularly helped or influenced you :

**8. Community Service**Have you ever done community service?  Yes, I did  No Yes, I do  No

If yes, please mention the kind of activity :

Spiritual development programme Province Duration

Dhammatuta Province Duration

Dhammajarik Province Duration

Dhammapatana Province Duration

Other Province Duration

What part or parts of the Buddha's teaching suggest that a monk should do community service ?

9. Do you know of Miss Prateep Ungsongtham's work?  Yes  No  
 If yes, do you think that it is compatible with the teaching of the Buddha?  Yes  No Why?

10. Which of the following are appropriate for a monk or novice?
- |   |           |                              |                             |                                    |
|---|-----------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| a) Sawing a piece of wood                     | 1) Monk   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes |
|   | 2) Novice | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes |
| b) Felling a tree                             | 1) Monk   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes |
|   | 2) Novice | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes |
| c) Driving a motor boat                       | 1) Monk   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes |
|   | 2) Novice | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes |
| d) Reading a horoscope                        | 1) Monk   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes |
|   | 2) Novice | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes |
| e) Healing sickness                           | 1) Monk   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes |
|   | 2) Novice | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes |
| f) Giving a cholera injection                 | 1) Monk   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes |
|   | 2) Novice | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes |
| g) Owning a television                        | 1) Monk   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes |
|   | 2) Novice | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes |
| h) Driving a car                              | 1) Monk   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes |
|   | 2) Novice | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes |
| i) Giving family planning advice              | 1) Monk   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes |
|   | 2) Novice | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes |
| j) Curing drug addicts                        | 1) Monk   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes |
|   | 2) Novice | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes |
| k) Joining a peaceful political demonstration | 1) Monk   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes |
|   | 2) Novice | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes |
| l) Helping refugees                           | 1) Monk   | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes |
|   | 2) Novice | <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No | <input type="checkbox"/> Sometimes |

11. (For monks and novices only). While ordained have you ever instructed or advised lay people in any of the following?

- |                                     |                          |     |                          |    |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|-----|--------------------------|----|
| a) Sanitation                       | <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No |
| b) Medical advice                   | <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No |
| c) Agricultural methods             | <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No |
| d) Electrical methods               | <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No |
| e) Weaving or using cloth materials | <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No |
| f) Constructing wells               | <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No |
| g) Making roads                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No |
| h) Making children's toys           | <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No |
| i) Woodwork                         | <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No |
| j) Constructing a sala              | <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No |
| k) Economic or business advice      | <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No |
| l) Approaching Government officials | <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No |
| m) Other                            | <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No |

Where did you learn to do these things?

Please return the questionnaire to the person who gave it to you.

Thank you for your cooperation.