

FROM WANDERING TO MONASTIC DOMESTICATION

The relationship between the establishment of
the Thammayut Nikaai in the Northeast Region
and ascetic monks in the lineage of
Phra Ajaan Man Phuurithatto

The main focus of this paper is to look at the dialectic and interaction which took place between the forest ascetic monks in the lineage of Phra Ajaan Man Phuurithatto (1870-1949), the most widely acknowledged *arahan* of modern times, and the religio-political centre around the turn of the century. Of particular interest is the implication of forest monks in the lineage of Ajaan Man in propagating and promoting the *Thammayut Nikaai* in the Northeastern countryside. I intend to show that many of Man's pupils (though not the master) were used to spear-head the establishment of the reform *nikaai* and were not above ecclesiastical politics, although there were some who preferred to pursue the "purist" and "exemplary" mode to its ultimate ends.

Man, although imbedded in the primitive tradition of "forest-dwelling", gained recognition on a national scale from a combination of personal charisma and associations (formal and informal networks) with high-ranking *Thammayut* Northeastern monks in the centre. This will be elaborated on below. In fact Man's strict adherence to the *winai* (monastic disciplinary rules) found parallels with the interpretation endorsed by certain reformists in the Sangha, even if recognition was not forthcoming.

Yet Mongkut's (Jorm Klao) reforms were distinctly urban-oriented and part of the later intent to regulate the national Sangha from the centre outwards. The reform leaders were not sympathetic to the peripheral forest monks, who on the whole had a reputation as being "magical" and "vagabonds" (*Phra jorajat*). Neither did the ritual austerities (*dhutangas*) rate highly in Mongkut's thinking, although some early reform monks practiced one or two and the *Thammayut* adopted the *dhutanga* relating to eating habits as part of its new *winai*.

Mongkut had practiced meditation at Wat Samoraai and Wat Raatchasit but became disenchanted when his teachers were not able to relate the practice to canonical bases. After a year he turned to "book learning" with a determination to read Pali texts and satisfy his inquisitive mind. He then moved to Wat Mahaathaasit for five years, mastering Pali after three years. In 1829 he moved back to Wat Samoraai inspired with teachings imparted by a senior *Phra Raachaakhana* Mon monk, Phra Phutthawangso "Saai" from Wat Bowornmongkhon (Lingkhob), (M.R. Thanyawaat

1964: 40-2). Mongkut had thus been critical of the forest tradition and *wipatsanaa* monks detached from a clear theoretical base and beyond rational means of classification.

A Grade Nine (highest) Pali scholar, an adept at both *pariyat* and *patibat* had impressed many in the early reform movement. This monk was called Somdet Phra Wannarat "Thab Phutthasiri" (1806-1891) and had been at Wat Samoraaai around the time of Mongkut's residence. In Wachirayaan's autobiography (ed and trans C. Reynolds 1979) this exemplary ascetic monk had differences with the more worldly monks at Wat Bowornniwet. This eventually led to dissension in the movement and as a result division into competing monastic lines or "stems" (Ibid.: 42-3). Four main monastic lines which emerged were Wat Bowornniwet, Wat Somanat (Thab's monastery), Wat Thepsirin and Wat Boromniwaat. There was some competition among them, certain ritual differences in the way of chanting, in Pali translations and aspects on the interpretation of *winai* (Ariyakhunaathaana 1933: 48).

Although the variations in monastic practice among *Thammayut* Bangkok wat were confined within respective monasteries, it soon spilled out leading to marked differences within the *Thammayut* as a whole. Specific practices were transmitted through monastic lines and monks were sent off to other monasteries creating distinctive monastic "branch" affiliations.

Prince Pawaret, head of the *Thammayut* (and *Sangkharat* between 1891-1892), had in his declining years been unable to unite the movement from Wat Bowornniwet. The number of monasteries ostensibly under his authority proliferated, with many reformist monks leaving Wat Bowornniwet for affiliate "stem" monasteries (Lingat 1933:93). Later under Wachirayaan's firm direction Wat Bowornniwet succeeded once again in becoming the centre for the reform monks. From this time onwards there was to be more uniformity in the various branches and monastic affiliations sourced in the capital (Ibid.: 98).

During this early phase of the *Thammayut Khana*, ten urban-based monks, most of whom were affiliated to Wat Bowornniwet, were at the fore-front of the reforms. These monks, besides the afore-mentioned Somdet Phra Wannarat (Wat Somanat) and Wachirayaan (Wat Bowornniwet) were: Phromasaro "Suk" (Wat Bowornniwet); Thammasiri "Iam" or "Phum" (Wat Khreuawan); Panyaa-akho (Wat Bowornniwet); Thammarakhito "Thad" (Wat Bowornniwet); Sophito "Fak" (Wat Bowornniwet); Phutthisano "Nop" (Wat Bupphaaram); Pusso "Saa" (Wat Raatchapradit) and Suwathano "Reuang" (Wat Bowornniwet), (N.A., R.5, *Seuksaathikaan*, 8/19, 1-19). During Man's time "Saa" was *Sangkharat* between 1893 to 1898, followed by Wachirayaan as head of the *Thammayut* and later *Sangkharat* (1910-1921), then Chinawornsiriwat (1926-1937).

Wannarat was very close to Wachirayaan, who referred to him as a "Dhammayut monk through and through" (Reynolds C., trans. *op cit.*: 43) and his

meditation instruction eventually became a standard text for the *Thammayut*'s advanced Mahaamakut students.

Shifting the perspective from the centre to the Northeast, it will be seen that the *Thammayut* was introduced to this region by a number of well regarded Bangkok *pariyat Isaan* monks. These included in a later phase some *Phra Kammatha*an pupils of Man, most of whom had been ranking scholar-monks.

The centre for the *Thammayut* in the Northeast was in Ubon and set-up by Ajaan Sui (Than Jao) sent by Mongkut whilst he was himself still a monk (see Tisso Uwan 1963:23 and Toem 1970:613-4). Sui, who became head of the *Thammayut* in Ubon, was credited with introducing formal Pali and Thai studies which he had learnt at Wat Saket, as well as particular ritual practices espoused by Mongkut. In 1851-2, shortly after Mongkut renounced his monkhood and became king, the Bangkok appointed third *Jao Meu*ang (Governor) of Ubon asked Than Phanthulo "Dii" and Than Thewathammii "Maa"o to formally establish the first *Thammayut* monastery, Wat Supat (Toem *op. cit.*: 614-5) affiliated to Wat Bowornniwet. According to one informant, Mongkut reputedly gave some of his own money to help build this first wat. Ariyakhunaathan (1933) with slight variation mentions a royal monk named Jao Phanthula (a Palicization on Phanthulo) sent to set-up the first *Thammayut* wat, supposedly Wat Siithong. Three wat were in fact established around the same time by support from local-based high-ranking dignitaries, namely Wat Siithong, Wat Supat and Wat Suthat. "Dii" was Abbot of this first wat (Tisso Uwan *op cit.*: 18) "Maa"o was made Abbot of Wat Siithong, founded with the support of the *Upa*raat (Viceroy) for *Monthon Isaan* (Tisso *op cit.*: 31; Ubaalii 1947: 4; Toem *op cit.*: 616-7 and Ariyakhunaathan *op cit.*: 50).

In the next phase the *Thammayut* spreads to *Monthon Udorn* and *Phra Khruu* Saeng who established the reform movement at Wat Mahaachai in Nongbualamphu. The district of Nongbualamphu has an interesting religious history and a recent manuscript found at Wat Phochai (Phothiyanwachai 1959) gives some indication of its monastic developments which date from the sixteenth century. Originally a group of monks from Udorn (including Saeng) intended to go to Ubon but elected instead to go on to Bangkok for re-ordination (*plaeng nikaai*) at Wat Somanat. On the way all died of dysentery except Saeng (Toem *op cit.*: 619-20). Saeng then decided to go on to Ubon and re-ordain at Wat Siithong under Maa"o before returning to Nongbualamphu where he stayed in a forest wat with a monk from Khorn Kaen called Soem. Saeng then became the *Jao Khana Khwaeng* (monastic head of the provincial sub-district or district) and Preceptor (*upatchaa*) for the *Thammayut* at Wat Mahaachai at the invitation of the *Jao Meu*ang (Ibid.: 621; Ariyakhunaathan *op cit.*: 48-53). Wat Mahaachai was a branch of Wat Somanat in Bangkok and was by this time an important centre for the *Thammayut* in *Monthon Udorn*.

In a third phase, Phra Ariyakawii "Orn" (Man's *upatchaa*) was appointed as

Jao Khana Yai (Sangha General Governor, *Thammayut*) at *Monthon Isaan* (Ubon). In this *Monthon* there were fourteen *meuang*, divided into four provinces, headed by a core of six monks of *Phra Raachaakhana* rank. The four provinces were Ubon, Saket, Mahaasaarakhaam and Nakhorn Jampaasak. Ubon had three *meuang* (Ubon, Yasothon and Khemaraat) with eighteen districts (*amphoe*). Mahaasaarakhaam had five *meuang* (Suwannaphuum, Roi-et, Kaalasin, Mahaasaarakhaam and Kamalaasai) with twentyfive *amphoe*. Saket had four *meuang* (Saket, Khukhan - the old name for Siisaket, Sangkha and Surin) with eighteen *amphoe*. Nakhorn Jampaasak had two *meuang* (Nakhorn Jampaasak and Det Udom) with fifteen *amphoe* (N.A., R.5, *Seuksaathikaan*, 12/58, Vol.6).

Orn was born during the Third Reign in 1845 at Ubon. He ordained in the *Thammayut* under Maa in 1866 and was sent to Bangkok three years later to pursue his Pali studies, attaining Grade Five. In 1890 he was given the title Phra Ariyakawii, spending most of his time administering a Nonthaburii wat. Eventually he moved back to Ubon staying at Wat Supat, the centre for the *Thammayut*, and became involved in missionary work for the *nikaai* in *Monthon Isaan*. Orn sent many Northeastern pupils to Bangkok to study and established a number of provincial *pariyat* schools. Orn had the full backing of King Julalongkorn's younger brother Krom Luang Phichitpriichaakorn, the *Monthon* envoy for the king. Phichitpriichaakorn in fact was active in promoting the *Thammayut* generally in his *monthon* and gave one Baht of his own allowances for each *Thammayut* monk in Ubon towards food. His well-known royal replacement Sanphasitthiprasong was equally supportive towards the reform *nikaai* (N.A., R.5, *Seuksaathikaan*, 8/19, 1-19). As a monastic informant told me, *Thammayut* monks around this time received a great deal of attention from local-based elite.

Phra Ubaalii (Jan Sirijanthon, 1856-1932), perhaps the most famous of Northeastern monks, the senior and friend of Man, was appointed as *meuang* head in Ubon under Orn to supervise discipline and ritual. Orn was reputedly very strict and enforced additional rules forbidding monks to participate in non-normative practices popular in the Northeast, such as the "rocket festival", boat-racing, drum-beating competition and horse raising (Toem *op cit.*: 624-5). Ubaalii in fact eventually takes over as *Jao Khana Yai* (Ibid.: 627), the same position his younger kin Tisso Uwan (Somdet Phra Mahaawirawong) held at a later date. Ubaalii, like Orn, was responsible for taking Northeastern monks, such as Tisso Uwan, to Bangkok for *pariyat* studies to be placed towards the end of the nineteenth century in teaching positions in Ubon. Ubon had been selected by Wachirayaan and Damrong as a special centre for Pali and religious studies and had in fact been the focus since Mongkut's time with the movement of monks to the capital seeking education.

Ubaalii's little known autobiography (1947), written in 1926, provides some insight into the religio-politics at the time. Ubaalii, though essentially an administrative monk was a strong supporter of the *Phra Kammathan* tradition and always had the

desire to practice meditation at every opportunity (Toem *op cit.*: 636). He was seemingly caught in the middle between “theory” and “practice”, and because of his keen concern for improving education (Pali and Thai studies) and other administrative matters relating to the propagation of the *Thammayut*, he was closer to the capital than the forest. Nevertheless, because of the respect held for him by Man and his early teacher Ajaan Sao Kantasiilo (1859-1941) and their disciples, was seen as the patron and father figure of the modern forest monk tradition. Ubaalii was born in Nonglai Village, *Meuang* Ubon, and had been friends with Man since childhood. He was related to a number of Man’s associates and his younger brother also became a *Phra Raa-chaakhana* monk in the mid-thirties at Lopburii. The pioneering *Thammayut* monk Maa was yet another relative of Ubaalii. These monks, as with many of Man’s pupils, came from an area around Ubon that was the first to be influenced by *Thammayut* reforms in the Northeast.

Ubaalii’s father was Sorn Supphasorn; his mother’s name Kaew, both farmers. He ordained in his home village as a novice when twelve years of age and then went off to Wat Siithong in *meuang* Ubon to study for seven years. He had to disrobe when he was nineteen because his father had been recruited to fight the Hor invasion at the initiative of the Governor of Ubon in about 1874 (see Maha Sila Viravong 1959: 140-1). Ubaalii stayed to look after the family’s rice fields and then became reluctant to ordain again after his father returned. However he eventually agreed for his mother and former teacher Maa. In 1877 he decided to ordain for a period of three years. Maa was his *upatchaa* and went to reside in one of the *Thammayut*’s early monasteries in Ubon, Wat Chaiyamongkhon. He studied under Maa at nearby Wat Siithong, but after four years Maa became sick and was unable to teach. Ubaalii then went to the capital staying at Wat Buranasiri attay-aaraam, Wat Thepsirin and Wat Bubphaaraam and attained *Parian* Grade Three in his ninth *Phansaa* (rains period). He was thirty years of age and at this time wanted to give up *pariyat* pursuits and concentrate instead on *wipatsanaathura* which at that time was undergoing a resurgence of interest in the countryside through Man and Sao. He decided to go back to Ubon and look after the ailing Maa who had done so much for him in his early years. He returned to his home village with the intention of building a forest *samnak* as a place to practice for himself and his small band of followers, consisting of seven or eight monks and novices.

At this time the *Jao* Nakhorn Jampaasak (Southern Laos) heard of his reputation and sent someone to ask Maa’s permission for him to go and help establish the *Thammayut* in his tributary state. The year was 1888 and the first recorded event for the establishment of the *Thammayut* in Laos. The new wat was called Mahaamaattayaaraam and had eleven to twelve monks, studying under Ubaalii. The *Jao* Nakhorn Jampaasak then asked Bangkok to give him the rank of *Jao Khana Sangkhapaamok*. This title pertained to the early system of having a *Phra Sangkharaat*

(Sangha Patriarch or Head) for each vassal state or principality, and was devised by Mongkut (Damrong 1970:6).

Ubaalii then went back to Bangkok, staying at Wat Pichaiyaattikaaraam in Thonburii, bringing many pupils with him. In 1890 he received a new rank and was made *Jao Khana Yai* (*meuang* Nakhorn Jampaasak), returning to Jampaasak that year to establish a school for Pali and Thai studies (Toem *op cit.*: 629). After the east-bank territories were handed over to France in 1893, Ubaalii went to Ubon, never again to return to Jampaasak (Ibid.: 630). In Ubon he stayed at Wat Supat, but decided once again to make the long and arduous trek to Bangkok in 1894, bringing more *pariyat* pupils with him. By this time Mahaamakut Buddhist University was established at Wat Bowornniwet and he was appointed on the foundation committee. After the *phansaa* in Bangkok Wachirayaan asked him to go and help the royal monk *Mom Jao Phra Siisukhotkhattayaanuwat* at Wat Thepsirin, as he hadn't yet attained ten *phansaa*. He also reluctantly sat for *Parian* Grade Four examination. After his nineteenth *phansaa* he became bored with *khanthathura* (book learning) and again wanted to concentrate on meditation, this time under the well-respected friend of Wachirayaan, *Jao Khun Panyaaphisaanthen* "Sing" at Wat Pathumwan (mentioned later). The following year he went *thudong* (wandering in the ascetic mode) to Khoraat, returning to Wat Pathumwan in 1896. After the rains he returned to Ubon and Wat Supat, where he established a thriving school for Pali and Thai studies (see Wyatt 1969: 248). Two years later Wachirayaan asked him to return to the capital and was officially assigned by the king as one of the Monthon Education Directors (*Phuu Amnuaikaan kaanseuksaa*, discussed later) for *Monthon Isaan*.

A Fifth Reign document (*Seuksaathikaan*, 12/58, Vol.6) mentioned that Ubaalii was assigned as Educational Director in 1899 (R.K. 118) and later on 11 November that same year promoted to Phra Yaanarakhit. He did not keep his position long and resigned shortly afterwards.

Ubaalii replaced Orn who died at Wat Siithong in 1903 as *upatchaa* for the *Thammayut* in Ubon. Up until this time he had travelled back and forth from the Northeast to Bangkok ten times and had twenty-three *phansaa*. By this time he was tired and decided to resign his official position, handing over educational responsibilities to his students. After receiving permission to leave he decided to go wandering to Burma. On the way he stopped at Khoraat and sent text books to his pupils in Ubon and before he reached Khao Yai he hurt his foot and had to stay the *phansaa*. He also fell sick from Malaria. That year in 1904 he received an appointment as Abbot of the important Wat Boromniwaat in Bangkok and was thus unable to proceed to Burma. He proved an efficient administrator (up until then the Wat had three previous Abbots) and continued once again to take an active interest in education. However, after every *Phansaa* he would go *thudong* to the forests (*rukhamuun*). In 1908 he was appointed *Jao Khana Monthon Janthaburii*, later in the year appointed simultaneously as head of

Monthon Raatchaburii, then promoted to Phra Raatchakawii. In the dry season he would visit his *monthon*. Two years later he was given the position *Jao Khana Monthon Hua Meuang Krungthep* (cf. Toem *op cit.*: 635).

Ubaalii complained about the poor *winai* and disorganisation in the Mon (Raaman) *nikaai* under his jurisdiction, monks who had so impressed Mongkut about eighty years earlier. That year (1910) Julalongkorn died. Ubaalii reputedly said that whereas Wachiraawut (Rama VI) preferred to let the *Sanghkharaat* control Sangha affairs, Julalongkorn acted over the Sangha and was very much more in control. During the re-organisation that followed the incoming new king, Ubaalii's administrative tasks became easier as he no longer had *Monthon Hua Meuang Krungthep*. He went *thudong* every year from 1911 onwards during the dry-season. In 1914 he was promoted to Phra Thepmolii and the following year demoted as a result of a controversial article (discussed later). In 1916 he was promoted to Phra Thammathiiraraatchamahaamunii. In 1922 he set off for Chiangtung where he was asked by the independent *Jao Nakhorn Chiangtung* to advise on local Sangha affairs. He noted that the monks were behaving badly, carried knives and swords and ate whenever they wanted. He added that they also didn't know how to chant (*suat mon*) correctly. He returned to Bangkok in 1923 and was promoted to Phra Phothiwongsaajaan and finally two years later to Phra Ubaalii Khunuupamaajaan and *Jao Khana Rong Aranyawaasii*. Further on it will be shown that Ubaalii became the pioneer for the *Thammayut* in the North, in a period not covered in his autobiography.

After Ubaalii had gone to Bangkok more or less permanently in 1904, this created something of an administrative problem for the *Thammayut* in Ubon. According to Toem (*op cit.*: 650-1), the *Khaaluangtaangphra-ong* (king's civil representative or envoy) had to nominate an elderly monk named Than Sangkharakhito "Phuun" to stay on at Wat Siithong and become *upatchaa* for the *Thammayut*. Seemingly there was no one else able to perform this important function in Ubon at the time. According to Fifth Reign documents (N.A., *Seuksaathikaan*, 12/4; 1-11, Vol.1), in theory by this time nominees were selected by the *Jao Khana Monthon* (monastic heads in the *monthon*) and then submitted to the Ministry of Education for ratification and seal of office. It was during the Fourth Reign (1851-68) that Preceptors (*upatchaa*) were selected and confirmed by the king's civil representatives. In 1900 there were reportedly 583 recognised *upatchaa* (presumably both *Thammayut* and *Mahaanikaai*) in all *monthon*.

In *Monthon Udorn* after Wat Mahaachai, Wat Jormsii in Kumphawaapii District was established headed by a disciple of Saeng, Than Samusii. Kumphawaapii, like Nongbualamphuu was then heavily forested and a favoured area for *thudong* monks. Wat Phothisomphon (then in District Maak-khaeng) was established in 1923, now in the *meuang* and place of residence for the present *Jao Khana Jangwat (Thammayut)*. This wat was headed by another well-known disciple of Saeng, Phra

Mahaa Juum Phanthulo, later known as Phra Thammajedii, a friend and supporter of Man. Affiliation was to both Wat Thepsirin (through Mahaa Juum) and Wat Somanat (through Saeng as Mahaa Jumm's Preceptor).

At the same time Wat Nong Sawan and Wat Yothaanimit were set-up by Mahaa Juum, regarded as branches of Wat Thepsirin. Mahaa Juum in fact helped immensely in the consolidation of the *Thammayut* in *Monthon Udorn* (Thet 1978).

From Udorn the *nikaai* spreads to Khorn Kaen, then to Nakhorn Phanom and Loey (Ariyakhunaathan *op cit.*: 58-65).

In the year 1898 (R.K. 117) significant changes were brought about in Sangha affairs in an effort to improve the educational program in the provinces conforming to Bangkok standards. The Sangha was the main vehicle for extending this program. Julalongkorn assigned Wachirayaan (as General Manager) and Damrong (as adviser "*Phuubamrunghuapai*") to carry out this ambitious program. Wachirayaan, who had around this time criticised the Ministry of Public Instruction for the low standards of monastic practice among the provincial Sangha (Wyatt *op cit.*: 248), appointed his own team of high-ranking monks to supervise education and religion up-country. Originally this consisted of a team of nine senior monks to supervise ten *monthon*, later another four monks were added for four additional *monthon* (including the two principal Northeastern ones, Nakhorn Raatchasiimaa and Isaan). These were the thirteen (Wyatt 1969 mentions twelve) Education and Religion Directors (*Phuu Amnuaikaan Kaanseuksaa*). Each dry-season they were supposed to travel to their respective *monthon* (The *monthon* system of administration had been introduced five years earlier by Damrong) and report back each year to the capital (Ibid.: 237). In effect they could obtain only limited information from outlying districts, relying instead on the main provincial centres (Ibid.: 243-4). Travel up-country at this time, as mentioned later, was no easy task.

In the Northeast monks responsible for the two *monthon* were Phra Thepmunii (Nakhorn Raatchasiimaa) and Phra Yaanarakhit (later to be known as Ubaalii) for *Monthon Isaan*. These monks had to keep the central administration informed about conditions in their *monthon*, maintain statistical data on monasteries, monks, novices and "temple boys" as well as schools, and to give advise to monks and laity on how to construct new schools. They also selected monks and novices to be sent to the capital for *parian* studies to be eventually sent back home to teach (N.A., R.5, *Seuksaathikaan*, 12/4, 1-11, Vol.1). It should be added that statistical data gathered by these monks tended to be somewhat unreliable because of poor communications. The *monthon* "directors" had considerable power and could act as provincial religious heads in certain cases. By 1900 they were expected to establish models for efficient administration in the provinces, linking the periphery to the capital (Wyatt *op cit.*: 245). One early report by Ubaalii pointed out that the behaviour of the uneducated rural Sangha (*Phrasongbaanpaamuangdorn*), lacking effective leadership, was

unsatisfactory. He also mentioned that the people, as in times past, preferred to listen to the *Mahaachaata* (*Vessantara Jataka* tale) rather than practicing the *Dhamma* (N.A., R.5, *Seuksaathikaan*, 12/58, 6).

Wachirayaan recognised that the tasks of the monk-directors was not without some difficulty, and there was some confusion over place names (many with the same name) and time limitations (much of the time spent in travelling). Misunderstandings also frequently occurred simply due to poor communications. At the conclusion of every annual meeting Wachirayaan was supposed to provide a summary report for the king, and in one instance complained about the huge amount of work needing attention. Damrong was also under considerable pressure (N.A., R.5, *Seuksaathikaan*, 12/8, 1).

It would appear that the *Thammayut* with its tight network sourced in the capital were able to make in-roads into the Northeast because of the combined efforts of high-ranking *Isaan* monks, and the support and patronage proffered by local-based elite. Northeastern *pariyat* monks would in turn make use of the pupillary lineage of Man to help establish forest *samnak* many of which would eventually evolve into conventional *Thammayut* wat.

The efforts of the *Thammayut* would not have been possible without the backing of the Bangkok appointed civil officials in Northeastern *monthon*. As Vickery (1970) and Tej Bunnag (1977) have shown, there was an "almost total exclusion" of traditional local elite in the new administration. The Northeastern provinces were integrated rapidly into a direct mode of control within the *monthon* system "without any preparatory stage to mitigate the effects of change" (Vickery *op cit.*: 880). As mentioned earlier in the case of *Monthon Isaan*, formal backing and support for the expansionary *Thammayut* came from the king's royal representatives and lesser officials sent from the capital. Originally, as Tambiah (1984: 166) remarked, the majority of *Thammayut* monasteries were established either by royalty or affiliated Bangkok elite and many of its leading monks selected from among a core of favoured royal disciples. A Fifth Reign document (N.A., *Seuksaathikaan*, 8/19, 1-19) provides a listing of *Phra Raachaakhana* monks in the *Thammayut*, starting with the royal monks Mongkut, Pawaret and Wachirayaan. This document covered the period since the inception of the reform movement until 1913. From the listing of one hundred and six monks, three had direct connections with the Northeast and *Phra Kammathaan* (meditation practitioner monks) pupils of Man. These were Tisso Uwan, Ubaalii (then *Phra Raatchakawii*) and Ariyakawii "Orn" (mentioned earlier). These monks were listed as being connected with the *Thammayut*'s pioneering monastery in Ubon, Wat Supat.

In the forest tradition revitalised by Ajaan Man, it would be incorrect to view a religio-political motive behind his extensive wanderings even if the *Thammayut* later used him and his pupils' popularity to strengthen their sphere of influence in the

countryside. Undoubtably “virtuosi” and by the nature of their chosen vocation essentially apolitical, or even antipolitical (following Weber), they were nevertheless embroiled on occasions in *nikaai* concerns. Their primary objective in “wandering” was to seek suitable places for practice, visit meditation masters and teach normative religion (*traisaranakhom*) to the laity.

In understanding historical developments around the turn of the century it is useful to bear in mind the traditional division between the vocations of “theory” (*Khanthathura*) and “practice” (*Wipatsanaathura*) which have long been inherent in religious hostilities. This is connected to the religion in the towns and cities and that of the forest, as different social fields.

Another consideration is that emphasised by Tambiah (*op cit.*: 190, *passim*) in that whilst forest monks are representatives of the extreme polarity to inner-worldly concerns, once bureaucrats and influential laity become patrons and supporters they become drawn into establishment interests. In other words they may evolve towards a more domesticated mode and open to manipulation in a way antithetical to their “other-worldly” and “mystical” ideals. In a similar way the encroachment of the outside world and impingement of central value system into the periphery (Shils 1975) has rapidly undermined the habitat and primitive life-style of the forest monk. Elite interests have long sought these “world renouncers” for their mystical and charismatic powers in the forests, cemeteries and mountain caves. These monks have at the same time been feared for their ability to co-exist in the same ecology with the nether-world, wild animals and political insurgents. Both the forests in the periphery and the wandering ascetic monks have now been “neutralised” and thoroughly “domesticated”. Largely through the extension of *Thammayut* lines and urban patronage and sponsorship, the forest monk is now kept in a state of “domesticated sanctity” in the country’s periphery.

The evolving process of domestication can be appreciated in the transition from wandering abodes used by forest monks at various “impact” points in the countryside to *Thammayut* wat complete with *bot* and *phatthasiimaa* (permitting formal Sangha rituals, including *upasampada* ordinations).

One example will show how this process usually occurs. Wat Aranyawaasii in Thaabor District, Nongkhai, is today an important centre for the *Thammayut*. When Man and Sao first set up their *klot* (monk’s umbrella) in the dense forest on the outskirts of Thaabor village, the only indication that it had been a place of sanctity before were the remains of an ancient *jedii* (stupa). A monastery was supposedly first built in the forest during the height of Wiengjan (Vientiane) sometime between the sixteenth to seventeenth centuries. The only visitors over the centuries since it was deserted were the occasional *thudong* monk and in 1916, Ajaan Suwan Sujinno, a pupil of Man. Man and a small band of disciples were at this time wandering from Kamcha’ii District in Nakhorn Phanom, destined for Sakon Nakhorn and eventually Nongbualamphu

Udorn. Suwan had gone back and forth to the Thaabor forest and on each occasion received good reception from the villagers. As recorded in a biographical sketch of the wat (Thet ed. 1986), Suwan was in no way concerned about promoting any particular *nikaai* (*latthi-nikaai*) but only in giving the normative teachings of the Buddha to the villagers. After Suwan, Ajaan Duun Atulo stayed the *phansaa* in the forest (Duun eventually became *Jao Khana Jangwat Thammayut* in Surin). Then in 1925, nine years after Man set out from his base in Nakhorn Phanom, his group arrived at Thaabor. The villagers then started to build temporary shelters. Besides Man, Sao and Thet Thetsarangsi (the modern patriarch of the wat), there were other well-known monks, Ajaans Kuu Thammathinno, Oun Thammatharo, Orn Yaanasiri, Fan Aajaaro and Kwaa Sumano. Fan's biography (1977:35) also mentions another monk, Ajaan Saan from Ubon. Most of these monks later went on to establish their own line of pupils.

It was in fact Thet who was largely responsible for building up the wat in the coming years. A short time after the group arrived, Sao went off by himself to near-by Wat Phra-ngaamsiimongkhon (later headed by another pupil of Man, Ornsii), at that time only "untamed" forest. Thet and Oun went to spend the *Phansaa* of 1926 at Baan Naa Chaang Nam, whilst the rest of Man's group went on to Thaa-uthen District in Nakhorn Phanom spending the rains at Baan Saamphong. In 1933 Thet returned from Khoraat where he had been staying and spent the *phansaa* at Thaabor before going off to Chiang Mai with Ornsii. The following year Ajaans Bunmaa Thitapemo and Rian Waralaapho (the present *Jao Khana Amphoe*, Sii Chiang Mai District, Nongkhai), stayed the *phansaa* in the Thaabor forest, by this time getting more and more attention. In 1936 a wealthy local Chinese lady offered money for new buildings. Three years later Thet returned and the first permanent *kuti* was built by the same patron. The *siimaa* was officially laid that year around the new *bot*. Over the coming nine years Thet, who always maintained firm links with *Thammayut* "development" (*pheuay phrae*) interests, stayed on and with support from a local businessman and rice-mill owner, built up the monastery. Thet also appointed the present Abbot, Ajaan Naak, to run the wat. By this time Man and his group had long since moved on, leaving only *Thammayut* administrative monks and forest monks too old to "wander" at the monastery.

Today, there is little evidence of the wat's primitive origins because of developments both inside and outside and there is no evidence of remaining forest. The wat is presently run by a *pariyat* monk, *Phra Khruu Kittiworakhun*, the *Jao Khana Tambon* (sub-district). Naak, now ninety-three years of age is too feeble to administer the wat and resides like a relic of the past in the original *kuti* built for the first *Jao-aa-waat* (Abbot). Expensive new *kuti* have grown up, a new double-storey *saalaa* and a recently completed four million Baht *Bot* (a modest sum compared to the amount spent on building *jedii* for Man's line of *arahana* disciples). The *bot* was designed by an architect from the Fine Arts Department to represent "art of both sides of the Khong

River", the door and window panels by a well-known Lao wood-carver. In 1978 the wat was given a lucrative award (*Wat Phatthanaatuayaang*) by the Department of Religious Affairs as a "model development wat".

At the time of my visit in February 1988 I asked *Phra Khruu* Kittiworakhun to explain the connection as he saw it between the wandering forest monks and the establishment *Thammayut*. Essentially his reply reflected the view held by many that forest monks and the *Thammayut* are indivisible, being at different points in a developmental line, the forest monks in the lineage of Ajaan Man simply pioneering representatives of monastic reform. Although not mentioning the metropolitan connection, he went on to say that the *Thammayut* provided the most appropriate organisational framework at the time to implement doctrinal reforms in the countryside. The associations of forest monks with the *Thammayut* is more tenuous than Kittiworakhun made out and doesn't explain the encouragement given by Man to establish a "practice" tradition in both *nikaai*.

National integration and Sangha reforms largely account for the eventual linking of the peripheral forest-dwelling monks to Bangkok, the outer remaining patches of forest now unquestionably "Thai". Modern communications also aided in bringing the capital closer to the forests (O'Connor 1980: 36). As Keyes (1967:18) remarked, in general the extension of Thai administrative control over the Northeast was facilitated by the creation of modern communications and transportation networks (particularly the rail line to Khorat, completed in 1900). This brought the Northerners in closer contact with the central Thai and an awareness of the economic and political significance of the centre. During the Fifth Reign (1868-1910) messages from the capital to the periphery were carried by scheduled runners on horseback or fast boat, taking sometimes many weeks. Travel by water was limited to connecting internal centres in the Northeast on the Mun, Chao or Chong Rivers. In Ubaali's autobiography (1947) he mentions travelling by oxen-cart from Jampaasak in the third month of 1889 and arriving in Bangkok in the sixth month of the following year. Although later he mentions it took only two months to return to Ubon (Ibid.: 13), presumably after the completion of the rail line to Khorat. Other biographical accounts relate similar tales of the difficulties faced and time spent in travelling about the countryside.

Perhaps the most important innovation making Northerners aware of their inclusion into the Thai nation-state was the educational reforms began by Chulalongkorn, replacing the traditional monk-dominated system (Keyes *op cit.*: 19). However, monks were still involved but in a new way and not to the liking of the uneducated local Sangha. Besides educational reforms which had attracted a number of prominent Northeastern *pariyat* monks, the propagation of normative religion also tended to appeal to some of Man's *patibat* disciples. Conflicts were noted in a number of first-hand and biographical accounts between the wandering ascetic monks and

village clergy, particularly in the former's discouragement of "popular" animist beliefs and practices prevalent in the countryside. Many biographical accounts mention the emphasis on religious reform and apostatization. For instance at the time of Man the Northeastern countryside was dominated by "superstitious" beliefs until the people were "instructed" and "awakened" to the true religion (*traisaranakhom*) and eventually changed their ways.

Hostilities in the countryside were integrally connected to *nikaai* tensions sourced in the capital as well as jealousy within factions of the *Thammayut*. Around this time *nikaai* administration was divided into two clear separate lines up-country, both *Thammayut* and *Mahaanikaai* (Suthamkhanaajaan 1988: 32). Among ecclesiastical elements forest monks were rumoured to be "renegade" and "non-conformist" self-made "arahans" not performing any of the correct Sangha Acts (*Sangkhakam*) (Thet 1978: 192). Complaints were made to the Department of Religious Affairs and ecclesiastical heads accusing them of being "vagabond" monks causing unrest and disunity (Ibid.: 193). These criticisms were later proved to be largely unfounded. Although the forest monks were thought by many administrators in the capital to be something of a "problem", Man and Sao facilitated a change in official attitude and in the latter phase of Man's life had the backing and support of local elite and central government officials.

Since the 1902 Sangha Act (Article 9a) formal procedure had been set for establishing *samnak song* (monastic residences not registered as wat and without *siimaa*). Permission had to be obtained from the local District Officer (*Naai Amphoe*) and relevant *Jao Khana Amphoe* (ecclesiastical District Officer). Thus forest monks intent on establishing forest *samnak* had to work with the co-operation of local officials.

From one account (Wiriyang 1980: 174) in 1926 Man and Sao called together all the *Phra Kammathan* disciples to discuss application of additional rules for living in the forest, to give guidance in teaching meditation and set special regulations for establishing *samnak* (cf. Thet 1978: 74-5). Some of these forest *samnak* were set-up by disciples during the course of their wanderings at the request of villagers, or more commonly the local District Officer who wanted them to stay and instruct the villagers.

It is difficult to ascertain Man's attitude to the establishment of forest *samnak* due to contradictory and elusive comments in this regards. Some of these accounts mentioned that Man discouraged the formation of permanent *samnak* which he believed would be detrimental to the ascetic forest *thudong* tradition in the long run. Yet even in his lifetime he must have seen this starting to take place around him. At a number of "impact" places throughout the Northeast where Man had stayed, wat were already by the thirties starting to emerge. Man seemed to be quite disinterested in this evolutionary process, contrary to conclusions made by Ferguson and Ramitanondh (1976), and spent most of his time avoiding the "pull" into monastic domestication.

Ferguson and Ramitanondh (*op cit.*) mentioned that Man "pioneered" the

establishment of the *Thammayut* at Wat Jedii Luang in Chiang Mai during his period in the North (1929-1940). In fact Ubaalii was the pioneer at the invitation of the Prince of Chiang Mai (*Jao Kaew Nawarat*) and the *Uparaat* (king's representative) for the Northern Region, *Jao Phrayaa* Mukkhamontrii. Ubaalii in turn requested *Jao Khun Panyaaphisaanthen* "Nuu" to post Man as Abbot of this wat in 1929. Man had been staying under him at Wat Sapathum (Pathumwan) in Bangkok. Nu (1864-1944), had also come from Ubon and ordained under the previously mentioned pioneering *Thammayut* monk Thewathammi Maa. He had been Man's occasionally travelling companion when the latter made one of his rare and long treks to the capital. At Wat Jedii Luang Man was given an official position as *Jao-aa-waat*, but apparently gave it up the same year (Wiriyang *op cit.*: 179)

Seemingly he only accepted this position out of duty to his friend and senior Ubaalii, who himself had great trust in Man. According to one informant who claims to be the only living disciple of Ubaalii (Phra Theppanyaamunii "Buu", Abbot of Wat Boromniwaat), Ubaalii asked Man to go with him to the north on a preliminary visit between 1927-8, after a report had been made by the visiting *Jao Phrayaa* Mukkhamontrii on the poor state of the *Laanaa* Sangha. In fact the *Jao Phrayaa* and his mother Khunying Noi had been ardent supporters of Man (Lii n.d.: 19-20). There were many Northeastern monks who had spear-headed the growth of the *Thammayut* in the north (*Laanaa Thai*) and seem to have been respected for their monastic "professionalism". Man himself however preferred secluded retreats and as soon as he thought the "call to duty" was too much would disappear in the wilds.

Another account mentions that during the *phansaa* of 1932, the year Ubaalii died, Man was staying at Wat Jedii Luang. It should be borne in mind that even *thudong kammathan* monks had to spend the rains in a suitable monastic residence of the appropriate *nikaai*. During the time towards the end of the rains Wat Boromniwaat was arranging Ubaalii's funeral in Bangkok and most senior ranking monks were invited to attend. The Abbot asked Man to look after the wat in his absence. After the funeral Man received a letter giving him authority to become *upatchaa* as well as the position of *jao-aa-waat*. This fits in with Man's official registration certificate as *Upatchaa* in 1932, with his title Phra Khruu Winaithorn. After reading the letter Man decided that he should as soon as possible resume his wanderings (Lii, *op cit.*: 20-3). When Man had first arrived at Chiang Mai he had made his position clear to the gathering group of disciples at the railway station, that he was a wandering monk and intended to reside in the forests and mountains outside the town (Mahaa Bua 1982: 107). True to the ascetic peripatetic life Man also discouraged his own disciples (not always with success) from accepting official monastic administrative positions. His own experience at Wat Jedii Luang was the only time in his life in which he undertook this responsibility. In Chiang Mai another high-ranking Northeastern monk and nephew of Tisso Uwan named Somdet Phra Mahaawirawong "Phim Thammatharo"

(1897-1974) had on occasions used Man's disciples to help establish *Thammayut* wat, particularly in Lamphuun. These monks did not stay for long and preferred to return to the Northeast after a while. Man's period in the north marked an important phase for the *Phra Kammathan* tradition. Man himself and some of his disciples (for example Ajaans Waen Sujinno, Khao Anaalayo and Phrom Jirapunyo) reputedly attained *Nippa* in the mountainous country. In the Northeast during Man's absence, Ajaan Sing Khantayaakhamo (1880-1961) was left in charge of his growing band of pupils. Sing, according to various accounts, was largely concerned with establishing *samnak* and teaching monks and laity. He and his younger brother, Mahaa Pin "Panyaaphalo" who died in 1946 from tuberculosis, had been *pariyat* monks and continued, as with many other meditation pupils of Man, to maintain firm links with expansionary *Thammayut* interests.

The ascetic Thai-Lao forest tradition did not emerge as a significant feature in the *Laanaa* religious landscape, despite the presence of many ascetic wandering monks. This suggests its distinctive regional heritage. After Man returned to the Northeast, this marked the final phase of his career and the consolidation of pupillary cells. Man's pupils started to establish their own monasteries and spawn a second-generation group of disciples. The monastery where Man arrived, Wat Paa Nonniwet which was then situated in a forest on the outskirts of Udorn, was the centre for many visiting pupils. Man's reputation as *arahan* was by this time firmly established and in this final phase of his life continued to instruct his disciples as before to maintain their practice (Mahaa Bua 1986: 285-6). Although seventy years of age he was still active and preferred wandering alone, leading a solitary life (Mahaa Bua 1982: 213-4). He then went off to Sakon Nakhorn staying in various places until his death in 1949 at Wat Paa Sutthaawaat, now also consumed in the urban sprawl and a landmark for the establishment *Thammayut*. After the cremation Man's disciples went off in different directions to eventually settle in forest *samnak* and *wat*. There is then a clear pattern, the central focus being the pupillary lines which grow around the charisma and reputation of the teacher in an initial peripatetic phase. The next phase a settled residency occasionally near the place of birth in a forested area outside the village and the establishment of *samnak song*. In this instance there would be no more than a handful of disciples and young novices from the village. With the increasing popularity of a teacher and more monks coming to seek instruction, the *samnak* may make formal application to establish a monastic residence, followed by request for *wisungkhaamasii*, the initial "royal" *siima*, usually (if no intention of building a *bot*) set around the confines of the *saalaa*. Later, in some cases, a *bot* may be built and *phatthasii*, giving the monastery inalienable rights and security over land. This latter stage has not always happened and depends largely on the aspirations of the teacher (who normally happens to be the Abbot).

Expansion may occur at the parent monastery and a hiving process take place

not unlike the formation of *muubaan-faak*, or satellite villages in the Northeast. This leads to the creation of affiliative *samnak* or branch-monasteries (*Wat Saakhaa*) controlled and regulated by the teacher or his senior disciples (second-generation from Man). In time these second-generation monks gain reputations as "teachers" which in turn create new pupillary cells, in a maze of formal networks across the countryside. The hiving process may be partly as a result of the encroachment by the macro society, the similar proliferation of satellite villages with new rice lands and cash-cropping (especially cassava) to the detriment of the remaining forests. Hamlets are now just outside the monastery boundary and even in some places make incursions into the forest wat for hunting or wood. Forest monasteries are thus making a desperate stand against the outside world, the construction of perimeter walls topped with broken glass or barbed wire an essential ingredient in preserving the habitat of the forest monk. Accessible roads into the villages now make it easier for urban supporters, merit-makers, relic and amulet hunters from outside to visit forest teachers. These factors effectively push the ascetic monks into remaining isolated pockets of forest and mountains, or more commonly facilitate a change in the routine and ritual of the ascetic life in an accommodation to the increasing demands of the outside world.

One forest teacher explained that as recently as ten to fifteen years ago the forest wat was the only clearing in the surrounding forest. Today the forest wat is the only densely treed area in the cleared surrounding countryside. Even then most of the larger trees have been taken out in the construction and expansion of monastic dwellings.

It is worthwhile emphasising two distinctions in *wat saakhaa* associated with well-known forest teachers. Firstly the branch wat founded by the teacher himself (first-generation) and those founded by their disciples (second-generation) which in turn become established bases. This is the phase mentioned above in which the second-generation and indeed now third-generation teachers create their own pupillary networks as relatively short-lived segmentary lines. In any meditation tradition the central element is the teacher and with his death pupils disperse and form new alignments, usually closely connected with their previous teacher. Thus pupillary lines are by no means static (even when the teacher is alive) and there is a free movement between "stem" and "branch" monasteries. After the death of a well-known teacher, the parent monastery usually becomes little more than a relic-museum and the *jedii*, the locus of merit-making (*tham bun*).

The growing network of disciples around Man must have been seen as something of a problem for the *Thammayut* hierarchy and ecclesiastical authorities. He was regarded with some antipathy and suspicion in the early days, as a non-conformist always on the move. The national Sangha at the centre around this time sought to regulate monks and informal lineage structures which tended to by-pass the central hierarchy in the far provinces (Somboon 1982: 29). Monks in effect needed

monastic affiliation otherwise they would no longer be recognised and as *Phra Jorajat* (vagrant monks) arrested and forced to disrobe (Wachirayaan 1971:60). The central ecclesiastical administrators were clearly unsure at times on how to handle regionally popular charismatic individuals. By regulating the growth of forest monasteries in the periphery this tended to destroy the local bases of charisma and ideology.

O'Connor (1978) perceived the antipathy by the central administration as a product of the popular belief in the "magical" abilities of forest monks. This could be extended specifically to the assumed cultivation of magical "skills" (*saiyasaat*) through manipulating the powers of nature for personal gains. The association of forest monks with apotropaic abilities spring from the well-head of popular religion and came into direct conflict with the official emphasis on doctrinal orthodoxy.

In the eyes of the scriptural *Thammayut* movement, any assumed linkage with practices considered non-normative such as curing, protection or divination were abhorred. The reform movement tried to eliminate practices associated with magic within the framework of traditional cosmology. O'Connor concluded that the "administrative and doctrinal orthodoxy" against the ascetic forest monks is connected to these magical associations. Perhaps the problem could be seen in terms of an incompatibility between a new elite trained in a rational nineteenth-century Victorian world-view (Zack 1977: 231) at odds with a "mystical" indigenous tradition.

In general the new central bureaucratic machine was hostile to forest monks because they were perceived to be outside its controls and thus not able to be regulated under the new stream-lined infrastructure. By all accounts the state of the Sangha up-country was anything but inspiring, local *Mahaanikaai* monks were by and large ill-disciplined, gambled, sometimes played with girls, eating in the evenings and other activities Mongkut and later Wachirayaan were apparently made well aware. Lao monks had a reputation for practicing magical arts, and a few of Man's former pupils before following the master had spent time with Lao monks learning to cultivate supernatural powers (*aphinihaan*). Yet Wachirayaan and other elite had little real direct knowledge of conditions up-country, even his "inspection tours" indicated his ignorance in this regard. He had to rely on his administrative monks for reports on the Northeast, even then there was a gap separating provincial centres from outlying fever-ridden districts "supposed to be under their direct administration" (Zack *op cit.*: 164).

Eventual support for Man's lineage came through personal associations with elite and high-ranking monks who recognised their ascetic orthodoxy. With few exceptions Man's lineage consisted of monks ordained in the *Thammayut Nikaai* and many lasting associations were established through formal ordination lines. Phra Thammajedii (Mahaa Juum) was responsible for acting as *upatchaa* for many of Man's disciples who sought re-ordination. Yet despite all this, forest monks had faced some hostility (as mentioned above) and were frequently asked to move on by local government and clerical officials compelled to act on complaints received from

villagers and local clergy. At some places they had been stoned, had their food poisoned, *kuti* or *klot* burnt, received death threats and so on. The local clergy (who normally incited the villagers to act) perceived these monks as a potential threat to the security and established order of the village. Importantly they had impinged on the "territory" jealously protected by the local sangha. It should be remembered also that the forest and those few individuals able to co-exist in the forest (the antithesis of established social order) are regarded as being at the very fringe and terminous of human habitation, predictability and stability. Thus they were regarded somewhat with a combination of respectful fear and mistrust. Biographical accounts mention that when the *thudong* monks passed through the village the people would try to avoid them and stay inside their houses. But in those days villagers had little contact with the outside world because of the risks and difficulty in travelling.

In the case of Man, it was not until he and his disciples established their orthodoxy and normative reputation through personal links in a direct line to the capital, that the *Thammayut* gave its token support. Some of Man's senior pupils and associates had on occasions to mediate with ecclesiastical authorities who were sceptical of his acclaimed virtues. The third afore-mentioned *Phra Raachaakhana* Northeastern monk mentioned in Fifth Reign documents, a junior relative of Ubaalii named Somdet Phra Mahaawirawong "Tisso Uwan" was openly hostile to Man and his pupils in the early days. However, he later changed and became the principal *Phra Kammathaan* supporter in the capital whilst staying at Wat Boromniwaat.

Tisso (1867-1956) was born in Ubon, formerly *Mahaanikaai* later re-ordaining at Wat Siithong under *Upatchaa* Maaao. He began his impressive *pariyat* career four years after his re-ordination following Ubaalii to the capital (Toem *op cit.*: 651-4). He went on to become the first Sangha Prime Minister (*Sangkhanaayok*) in 1941 (Ibid.: 659). The biography of Ajaan Fan Ajaaro (1977: 79) and first hand accounts relate how Tisso considered the forest monks as idle and disinterested in studies, therefore useless. Man was considered "unqualified" to teach "Dhamma" to disciples and laity without a theoretical background. There may also have been some resentment at his growing popularity. Yet towards the end of Tisso's life after he started to practice meditation himself, trying to overcome his debilitating sickness, he changed and actively supported the forest monks in Man's lineage. Two monks were largely responsible for bringing about this change. Ajaans Fan (Wat Paa Udom Somphorn, Sakon Nakhorn) and Lii (Wat Paa Khlorng Kung, Janthaburi). Tisso attained *Parian* Grade Seven and resided first at Wat Bowornniwet, then Wat Thepsirin, Wat Boromniwaat and Wat Supat in Ubon as *Jao Khana Monthon Isaan*. He died at Wat Boromniwaat at the age of eighty-nine (N.A., R.5., *Seuksaathikaan*, 8/19, 1-19).

As an example of the hostility the wandering monks came across as related in a number of accounts took place in 1926 when about fifty of Man's disciples headed by Ajaan Sing were staying in a forest in Ubon. The group included a number of lay

followers. Tisso who was *Jao Khana Monthon Isaan* ordered the *Jao Khana Amphoe* and *Naai Amphoe* from Amnaat Jaroen and Meuang Saamsib districts to drive them away. He also arranged for a notice to be put up forbidding the people to give alms food to the monks. However they refused to move. One disciple was nominated by the group to go and ask Man's advice. Man at the time was staying in a forest in Baan Norng Khorn. The dispute was eventually resolved with the intercession of the *Jao Khana Jangwat* (Ubon). Five years later whilst Tisso was in Khorat he changed his attitude and even ordered Sing and his group to come and teach the villagers (Fan, *op cit.*: 79). In defence of Tisso one monastic informant told me that he forbade the forest monks from moving about the Isaan countryside to prevent the escalation of already simmering inter-*nikaai* hostilities. The *Thammayut* forest monks were considered by the *Mahaanikaai* as engaged in *pheuay phrae*, although with no apparent intention of missionising they gave the appearance of this in their wanderings.

Interestingly, Sing had been ordained under Tisso Uwan at Wat Suthat (Ubon) in 1909 and must have been close to him at one time. Sing had been a promising student and later *pariyat* teacher before becoming a forest monk disciple of Man. He had impressed many younger monks by his widely distributed book *Traisaranakhom lae samaathi withii* "The Triple-Gem and techniques of meditation".

In understanding the initial antipathy towards forest monks one should bear in mind the domestic climate in the first decade of the twentieth century, especially the impact of the reforms and sporadic peasant unrest in parts of the Northeast. Bangkok may have felt it had good reason to be concerned in Man's peripatetic career in sensitive outlying areas. Man was seen as an "outsider" to the establishment, following a way of life which was not popular (Keyes 1982: 168). The practice of wandering was regarded by Bangkok and provincial *pariyat* monks as "shameful practice" (Thet 1978: 41) not in tune with the religious aspirations of the new Bangkok administrative elite. Yet with Man's apparent success at detaching himself from the social order and establishment Sangha, he was thought to be "charged with power" (Keyes *op cit.*: 168) and a potential threat to the wider society. Eventually though this "power", redefined in normative terms, came to be seen as positive and symbolic of the classic Buddhist *arahan*.

Another factor worth considering is that Damrong's design of bureaucratic reforms were formulated with a negativity towards a separate Thai-Lao identity in his attempt to make all dependencies and half-dependencies inner provinces (Siffin 1966: 67; Keyes 1967: 17). As one scholar (Chou-Meng Tarr 1985) recently remarked, in Damrong's thinking "one was either Thai or anti-Thai". Damrong was also prejudiced against any expression of regionalism or "local particularism" in the Northeast (Vickery *op cit.*: 879). Wachirayaan, as head of the *Thammayut* and later the Greater Thai Sangha saw the need to centralise and regulate the national Sangha (resulting in the Sangha Act of 1902) and worked with Damrong's overall design on unification and

centralisation of the country's Sangha. Some outlying *monthon* in the north and northeast proved difficult to regulate until many years after the implementation of the 1902 Sangha Act (Wyatt *op cit.*: 328-9). This Act was a means of effectively administering a new structured Sangha and, as stipulated in Article 3 (trans. Phra Mahaa Thawil and Prathai, 1963) was not intended to "interfere" with *nikaai* concerns or matters of doctrine. These would, as before, come under the responsibility of the respective *nikaai* heads.

Forest monks had long been peripheralised to the point whereby they ceased to be recognised as a formal division in the Thai Sangha hierarchy. The system of using successful Pali scholars and heads of royal monasteries in Sangha administration was to the disadvantage of forest monks' involvement in "monastic government" (Ferguson and Ramitanondh *op cit.*: 110). Although it should be added that true ascetic practitioners would have remained outside administrative structures anyway. New ecclesiastical regulations also meant that forest monks lost formal recognition and in many cases were unable to perform *upasampada* (Placzek 1981: 157). This created some discord among disenthralled monks with "strong regional followings" (Ibid.: 170). The 1902 Act effectively denied personal charisma, which was an important element in the emergent Sangha, and instead codified and endorsed "ex officio" charisma (Ishii 1986: 78). Regional variants of the religion and charismatic monks with informal followings were to be subsumed under this regulatory power emanating from the capital and its missionary inspired *Thammayut* scholar monks (C. Reynolds 1972: 266; Tambiah 1976: 259 and Keyes 1971: 22).

The domination of the Northeastern Sangha by the centre from the late nineteenth century onwards created regional tension although this became absorbed, through *Thammayut* monastic lines, under the new administration (O'Connor 1985: 24n). Northeastern novices and monks made use where possible of the opportunities for pursuing Pali and Thai studies and in gaining a foothold in the new administration. Kin ties were pervasive and indispensable for access to formal mobility, as is the case today.

As mentioned earlier it is feasible to assume that in time, as Man's popularity grew at various "impact" points in the periphery, the effects were soon to be felt in the centre. Thus the *Thammayut* could not ignore the popular attention and especially the attraction by a number of high ranking *pariyat* Northeastern monks to this meditation master. The *Thammayut* may also have thought it an appropriate opportunity to increase their sphere of influence in these far provinces.

It was in fact inherent in the central reforms to extend its administrative lines far into the countryside and the propagation of *Thammayut* forest *samnak* were an effective means of achieving this. Forest monks traditionally do not stay for long in one place, and the *samnak* in time can be administered by the *Thammayut*'s carefully trained "domesticated" monks. The connections between certain forest monks and

pariyat administrators was in anycase already in existence. Forest monks in this category include teachers who were given and accepted, official *Phra Khruu* or *Jao Khun* ranks, such as Khamdii, Thet, Sing, Mahaa Pin, Duun, Lii and Daeng.

After Man's initial wandering phase he himself firms up personal connections in Bangkok although managing to keep a distance and maintain his own practice. On his occasional visits to the capital he stayed at a monastery for Northeastern monks, Wat Pathumwan or Sapathum (probably more inspiring than today and a lot quieter). This wat was then well-known for teaching meditation to both monks and laity. Wachirayaan's book *Essentials of Samathakammathan* was written in 1915 as a cremation volume for his friend and former Abbot, Phra Panyaaphisaanthen "Sing".

At the time of Man's brief stay at Wat Pathumwan, his senior friend and supporter Phra Panyaaphisaanthen "Nuu" was *jao-aa-waat*. Man first went to the capital according to two different accounts either to accompany his travelling companion of the same name as they had been staying together in a Burmese forest, or more credibly at the invitation of *Jao Khun* Ubaalii probably in 1914. Whilst in Bangkok Man would take the opportunity of discussing practice and doctrine with Ubaalii at Wat Boromniwaat.

By and large it was Ubaalii who was responsible for promoting Man in the capital to monastic and lay elite. One informant suggested that Ubaalii volunteered to spread the *Thammayut* in the Northeast reassuring the Bangkok administration of the possibilities in selected *monthon*. He was particularly concerned about improving education (see earlier comments). The *Thammayut* were seemingly uneasy about the Northeast, particularly its wandering monks. Ubaalii asked Man at times to help although it seems Man was never a willing participant and may have left *pheuay phrae* matters to some of his capable pupils. Two monks were particularly active in "missionary" work, Mahaa Pin and Phra Thammajedii. Occasionally when Mahaa Pin went to an area to help establish the reform *nikaai* it was to find that Mahaa Juum (Phra Thammajedii) had already been before him, suggesting little coordination between Bangkok monastic lines in the *Thammayut*. Whilst in the capital these monks and Ajaan Sing, had a not insignificant role to play in promoting Man. In Mahaa Bua's account of Man, they were referred to as his "right-hand men" (at least on his bureaucratic arm).

A story from Ubaalii's autobiography gives the impression of the respect and influence he had among elite in the capital. During the First World War Ubaalii wrote a booklet called *Thammawijayaanusaat* on the occasion of the cremation of the wife of one of the Thai princes in which he condemned military knowledge and associated violence. This was seen by Wachiraawut (Rama VI) as an affront to the state and hence the king's power and authority (Chaiwat 1984). He was subsequently demoted and kept under "temple arrest" for a few months. However, it wasn't long before he was promoted again, and, according to his autobiography was one of the few monks the

king cancelled his appointments to visit. Seemingly always independent-minded, Ubaalii was never fearful of the king, and if summoned to the palace, instead of carrying his regalia of office as was the custom, he (according to one source) would go in his usual attire as a *thudong* monk.

In conclusion, this paper has focused on the historic background and domestic changes taking place in the Fifth Reign affecting the Greater Thai Sangha. I have drawn on brief biographical sketches of three prominent Northeastern monks insofar as they have all been connected with the growth and consolidation of the *Thammayut* intersecting with Man's lineage of forest monks. The tradition of forest-dwelling in Southeast Asia has a long history and Man, although imbedded in indigenous regional context, as *arahan* and great teacher was also a faithful representation of primitive orthodox tradition. The modern revitalisation and re-affirmation of the forest-dwelling tradition spear-headed by Man emerged during the period of national monastic reforms.

The Northeastern forest tradition at the beginning of the twentieth century has to be focused within religio-political configurations of centralised educational and monastic reforms through administrative lines cast by the *Thammayut*. These effectively worked to undermine any sense of regionalism, traditional social-order and institutions, including not least, the parochialised, dispersed and utilitarian local Sangha.

The prevalent pattern in the Northeast which bound the periphery and the capital tightly together was for promising *Isaan* scholar-monks to be brought to the capital by kin or non-kin elite patrons for advanced Pali studies. After a few years these monks would normally be sent back with an official rank to teach. The stress on education was felt at all levels in the Sangha hierarchy, evidenced by an official announcement in 1928 by the *Sangkharaat* (then Chinawornsiriwat) directing all monks to take an active part in religious teaching in schools. A follow-up announcement was issued the same year by the *Jao Khana Monthon Nakhorn Raatchasiimaa*, who was also acting head of *Monthon Udorn*, to the Sangha under his jurisdiction (*Thalaengkaankhanasong*, 1928: 228-9; 349-52). It would appear that only in the Northeast were specific guidelines issued by *Jao Khana Monthon* in carrying out this directive.

A few of these educational monks became leading disciples of Man, leaving behind them *pariyat* and administrative careers for a more austere and frugal life. But many of the master's pupils had little or no formal education and simply took to the ascetic life impressed with wandering monks passing through their village.

Some of the high-ranking *Thammayut* monks were related through affinal or consanguineal ties and close network of formal ordination lines to Man and some of his ascetic pupils. It should be remembered that Man's own *upatchaa* was personally selected by Mongkut to firmly plant the reform movement in *Monthon Isaan*. Man however was successful at freeing himself from promotional and administrative

"duties". Many of the master's pupils who had been scholar-monks tended to maintain links in the clerical bureaucracy, although this was largely one-sided and they were on occasions asked to help establish *Thammayut samnak*. However the concerns of the forest monks were in teaching normative religion and meditation and not in "missionary" work for the *Thammayut*, evidence by Man's emphasis on detachment from *nikaai* concerns. There had been one or two *Mahaanikaai thudong* teachers who had impressed Man, and accounts by some of his *Mahaanikaai* pupils (such as Ajaans Chaa, Mii, Thongrat and Kinnarii) support his apolitical position. Nevertheless as time went on there were elements in both the *Thammayut* establishment and the forest tradition who began to see the one as inseparable from the other.

Despite some open hostility and resentment to the wandering forest monks around the turn of the century, by and large the *Thammayut* and affiliated lay elite gave Man's lineage a new institutional meaning carefully framed and preserved as "National Saints".

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