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WAT PATHUMWIHAAN OF BAAN MAALAJ

A Study of Siamese and Chinese Buddhists in a Malay State

By

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A thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
at the Australian National University.

July 1987
Declaration

Except where otherwise indicated this thesis is my own work.

[Signature]

Mohamed Yusoff Ismail

July 1987
Whether the Tathāgathas appear or not, O Bhikkhus, it remains a fact, an established principle, a natural law that all conditioned things are transient (anicca), sorrowful (dukkha) and that everything is soulless (anatta). This fact the Tathagatha realizes, understands and when He has realized and understood it, announces, teaches, proclaims, establishes, discloses, analyses, and makes it clear, that all conditioned things are transient, sorrowful and that everything is soulless.

ANGUTTARA NIKAAYA Part I, p. 286.\(^1\)

\(^1\)Quoted from Narada (1973:296).
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ABSTRACT

Theravada Buddhism is the religion of the Siamese of Kelantan, but it is also adhered to by the majority of the rural Chinese population of the state. This study establishes that it is through their identification with Buddhism that the Siamese have been able to assert their ethnic identity vis-à-vis other groups in the larger society, namely the majority Malays who are Muslims, and the Chinese.

Siamese conception of and commitment to the Buddhist religion differ considerably from that of the Chinese as demonstrated by the fact that on the whole Theravada Buddhism is perpetuated and maintained by an exclusively Siamese religious elite, consisting of monks, ex-monks and ritual specialists. Together they become the custodians of the sacred knowledge of the religion and the keepers of the Siamese Buddhist tradition.

Although the Chinese appear to be very supportive of the temple and monkhood they are not normally as fully committed to the religion as the Siamese are. This study examines the social organisation of a Buddhist temple in order to demonstrate the level of commitments and involvement of the Siamese in maintaining the continuity of a Theravada tradition. It concludes by showing that even though Buddhism finds support particularly among the rural Kelantan Chinese, it is among the Siamese that it flourishes and becomes crucial and meaningful because it underwrites the very basis of Siamese ethnic identity. The continuity of Theravada Buddhist tradition ensures such identity.
TRANSCRIPTION

A Note on the Spelling of Thai Words

Transcription of standard Thai words is based on Haas (1964) but with some modifications. Four special symbols used by Haas have been replaced by the combination of letters found on the English typewriter keyboard. These are ae, au, oe and ng and the first three are not diphthongs in the usual sense.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Haas' Symbols</th>
<th>Substitute Symbols</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>£</td>
<td>ae</td>
<td>mae mae, &quot;mother&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>o</td>
<td>au</td>
<td>khau khow, &quot;ask&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>oe</td>
<td>doen djan, &quot;walk&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n</td>
<td>ng</td>
<td>ngoan njan, &quot;work&quot;</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Long sounds are indicated by doubled vowels, such as aa, ii and ee. For the sake of neatness, clusters of the vowels mentioned above, which replace Haas' special symbols, are not duplicated if they already have long sounds.

Final consonants ง, ว, ฃ, ฅ and ฅ are represented by 't'. The sound of the Thai alphabet ก is represented by k instead of g if it occurs at the end of the syllable. No glottal stop indicators are used.

Following Haas, j is pronounced more like y in the English "yell" if it is at the beginning of a syllable and similar to i if at the end of a diphthong.

Consonant c is not aspirated unless followed by an h. Likewise all consonants preceding an h are aspirated. Hence, ph is aspirated while p is not.
Some words and place names have been spelt in styles other than that of Haas, such as bhikkhu (monk) (Haas: phigsu); bhikkhuni (female ascetic) (Haas: phigsunii) and baht (tical, monetary unit) (Haas: baad). I follow the former convention instead.

As Thai is written with no spacers between words, students of the language often encounter the initial problem of separating these words from each other. This problem is made even worse if one has to follow the same style in the transcription. For this reason I have taken the liberty of separating some terms which in the form of having no spacers prove quite difficult to pronounce. Hence, ton ngoen is written with a spacer instead of tonngoen; wan aasaalahabuuchaa instead of wanaasaalahabuuchaa; thaut phaa paa instead of thautphaapaa; phaa aabnaamfon instead of phaaaabnaamfon; and Phra In instead of Phrain.

I have made no attempt to reproduce the exact phonology of the Siamese dialect of Kelantan, hence, no tonal marks are used.¹ Malay words are spelt according to the national spelling system currently in use, except where they occur in original quotations.

¹For more details on the local Thai dialect, see Kershaw (1966) and Golomb (1978).
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

This thesis concerns aspects of Buddhist religion and its organisation in Kelantan. This state of Malaysia is largely populated by Malays who are Muslims, but Theravada Buddhism is widely practised among the non-Malays, in the main, among the Siamese and, to some extent, among the Chinese.

There have been many studies on Kelantan society (e. g. Firth 1966; Roff 1974; Kessler 1972, 1974, 1978; Nash 1974 and Winzeler 1974, 1981) but, the majority of these, with the exception of Kershaw (1969), Golomb (1978) and Winzeler (1974, 1981), are largely studies on Malay society. That the Siamese have been largely ignored by many is due perhaps to an overwhelming emphasis in most literature that Kelantan is largely a Malay area -- the presence of Siamese Buddhist temples and monks creates an unwelcome intrusion into the central orientation of these studies; as such one either ignores them entirely or at the most one gives them some brief mention here and there. The consequence of downplaying this social diversity has inadvertently given rise to the following stereotype: Kelantan society is overwhelmingly Malay and Islam is the overriding factor in social, economic and political spheres.

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1For a brief anthropological introduction to Kelantan, see Downs 1967, Roff 1974 and Firth 1966.
2The population of Kelantan according to the 1980 Census of Population and Housing consists of the following: Malays 798,761 (93.1%), Chinese 44,967 (5.2%), Siamese 7,557 (0.9%), Indians 6,122 (0.7%) and others 784 (0.1%). For more details see Table 2-1 on page 40.
3Although others have used the term "Thai", for the purpose of this thesis, I use the term "Siamese" due to reasons stated on page 24 below.
4See also Kershaw (1981:83, note 26) for a similar observation. In fact, there has always been a tendency for many researchers who work in Kelantan to concentrate their studies on a specific geographical area of the state, namely, the district of Pasir Mas, as if Kelantan is Pasir Mas and Pasir Mas is Kelantan.
In the light of this impression, the presence of the Siamese in Kelantan and the flourishing of Buddhist practices seem to be a paradox, for Kelantan Malays are generally noted for their strong adherence to orthodox Muslim practices. This orthodoxy gains prominent expression in politics: a political party with a strong commitment to Islamic fundamentalism ruled the state until quite recently; in terms of national politics the party is an enfant terrible that continues to embarrass the ruling federal government by demanding radical changes in line with its staunch, and at times very extremist, Islamic orientation.\(^5\) Despite all this, Buddhism seems to thrive well in Kelantan.

I have chosen to study this specific aspect of the Siamese society for two main reasons: firstly, Siamese Buddhist religion, as embodied in the long-established institution of monkhood and temples, has been part of the rural scene in Kelantan for several hundred years. Siamese settlements are found in many areas of the state, and in the northern part of the neighbouring state of Terengganu.\(^6\) No one is really sure when the Siamese first came to this part of the region. In some places the Siamese had been there before the Malays ever established their settlements. The present village of study is more than one hundred years old.\(^7\) As a matter of fact, the Siamese cultural and political influence has been taken for granted by most Malays.\(^8\) Not only that, the Siamese as a distinct ethnic group occupy a special position within the Kelantan rural society; they constitute one of the few non-Malay groups which have legal title to land in Malay

\(^5\) For details on this particular opposition party, Parti Islam Se Malaysia -- also known as PAS or PMIP -- see Kessler (1978), Funston (1976; 1980) and Khoo (1980).

\(^6\) The spelling of "Terengganu" follows the system currently being used in Malaysia. In historical documents the spelling is "Trengganu". I use the old spelling if it occurs in the original quotations, otherwise the new spelling is used instead.

\(^7\) See Chapter 2.

\(^8\) Kelantan was under the indirect influence of Siam until it became a British protectorate early in the present century (see Chapter 2). Due to this kind of relationship between Siam and Kelantan, and due to the geographical proximity of the state to the Siamese kingdom, it is not surprising that some aspects of Kelantanese culture have been considerably influenced by the Siamese; for instance, the local Malay dialect of Kelantan is interspersed with many Siamese terms (see Pepys 1916; Brown 1956; Baker 1939 and Sturrock 1912); further, Kelantanese Malay magic and ritual include components which are Siamese in origin. The Malays acknowledge such influence by referring to shadow-puppetry in their communities as wayang Siam. Whether Malay or Siamese a puppeteer precedes a performance with the same ritual and draws on the same repertoire of stories. Buddhist ritual objects, such as the monks' bowl and sacralised water (naammom), often become the source of magic and fear for the Malays. See Appendix D; see also Ghulam-Sarwar Yousof (1983:107); Gimlette (1920) and Cuisinier (1936:2).
My main concern in this thesis is with Buddhist religion as it is practised in a Kelantanese village. To date there are two major studies on the Siamese of Kelantan. Kershaw (1969), in his study of a coastal Siamese village of Semerak, highlights the problems of socio-political integration of the Siamese into Malaysian social and political cultures. The study has brought to attention the political perceptions which the Siamese have of themselves in the context of multi-ethnic politics of Malaysia, and the consequent anxiety among the Siamese of being in the position of a minority group.

The work by Golomb (1978) has contributed very significantly to the understanding of how the Siamese perceive themselves vis-à-vis others in the larger multi-ethnic society. His monograph is a study of multifaceted interaction between Siamese and Malay villagers. The resulting pattern of social and inter-ethnic behaviour of the Siamese as an outgroup community within the larger, predominantly Malay, society emphasises the persistence of Siamese ethnic identity.

I have also conducted a study of a Siamese community in Kelantan in 1976 for an M.A. thesis, submitted to Monash University (Ismail 1977). The emphasis of this study was on the relatively subordinate status of the Siamese within the larger framework of Malaysian, and in particular, Kelantan, society. As a minority, the Siamese are dependent on the goodwill of other dominant groups, namely the Malays and the Chinese,
for access to social, economic and political resources (see also Ismail 1980a, 1980b and 1982).

The present study is a complement to the work already done by Kershaw and Golomb. It addresses itself to aspects of religion and rituals among the Siamese. Specifically this study will show how Siamese Buddhism survives in Kelantan and how it accommodates itself to the local society which is predominantly Malay and Islamic. The main contention of this study is that Siamese Buddhism has a firm base because of the needs it fulfills in defining Siamese ethnic identity. Moreover, Siamese Buddhism thrives well in Kelantan because it also receives support from the local Chinese population.

The significance of Buddhism in underpinning Siamese ethnicity can only be understood if we consider the fact that in plural societies there is always the need to emphasise ethnicity, be it through religion, language, geographical places of origin, or by any other means whatsoever. Insofar as the Malays are concerned, their ethnicity has been constitutionally defined, but not so for the Chinese or Siamese. The need to belong to a particular ethnic group and to be identified with it has always been a salient feature of Malaysian society. Ethnicity is of such an importance in Malaysia that it virtually underlies nearly every aspect of its social, political and economic life. In fact, ethnicity if of such an importance in Malaysia that most Malaysians see themselves first as either Chinese, Malays or Indians, and secondarily only as "Malaysians". As a matter of prime consideration the ideology of multi-ethnic society makes it "... virtually impossible to be ethnically 'neutral' by claiming no intervening ethnic status at all." (Nagata 1974:333). Religion is one of the criteria which define ethnicity and Buddhism has always been crucial in defining Siamese ethnic identity.

On being Malay, for instance, Banks (1975:27) observes as follows, "To be Malay meant to be a Muslim and to practice [sic] Malay customs, which meant primarily to abide by the Malay customs concerning the major rites of passage: birth, circumcision, marriage and death" (parentheses mine). The Federal Constitution of Malaysia includes as the criteria of being a Malay, the Muslim religion, the Malay language and the Malay custom. See Davies (n. d.), Kershaw (1984) and Raja Mohar Raja Badiozaman (n. d.) for a further elaboration of the constitution regarding the definition of a "Malay".

On this, see also Strauch (1981:245).
At this stage it is most appropriate to introduce the main argument of this thesis: that it is mainly through Buddhism that the Siamese of Kelantan have asserted their ethnic identity vis-à-vis the majority Malays of the state who are Muslims. Theravada Buddhism is to Siamese ethnic identity as Islam is to Malay ethnic identity. This point leads to another side of the argument. In Kelantan Theravada Buddhism is also adhered to by Chinese. However, adherence to Theravada Buddhism is not really crucial in underlying the ethnic identity of the Chinese who define their distinctiveness by other means.¹⁴

This thesis will further argue that the Siamese conception and commitment to the religion differ in many ways from those of the Chinese. This is the distinguishing feature that differentiates ethnically Siamese Buddhists from Chinese Buddhists. In the first place the state's order of monks is dominated by the Siamese and the general pattern of religious activities is conducted in the Siamese tradition. The continuity and the very survival of Theravada tradition in Kelantan are ensured by the Siamese rather than Chinese. Nevertheless on numerous occasions Chinese do take great interest in temple rituals not only by attending most of them but also by sponsoring some of them. However, there are certain limitations to their full involvement in the Buddhist religion. For instance, while the Chinese are known to become monks, a great many do so for a brief period, as a token of their adherence to the Theravada tradition. In contrast, the Siamese are normally ordained for a much longer duration. Whereas the Chinese are noted for their extravagant expenditure in sponsoring temple ceremonies and in giving financial support to various temples, the real body of knowledge regarding Theravada Buddhism is invested in the persons of village intellectuals and the members of a religious elite which is almost exclusively Siamese, such as the abbot, senior monks, ex-monks, temple instructors (aacaan wat), lay ritual specialists and a select group of other laymen.

¹⁴Such as through their ancestry, language, dialect groups and geographical places of origin in China. On this, see also Clammer (1979:10).
who constitute the temple's steering committee, the sangkhaarii.\(^\text{15}\)

There is yet another side to the argument of this thesis. The involvement of a particular group of Chinese in Siamese Buddhism also has implications for social and cultural identification. This particular group of Chinese who appear to be full-fledged members of the local Buddhist congregation are distinguishable from the general, wider group of the Chinese population which typifies the west coast states of Peninsula Malaysia. These people are known locally as Kelantan Chinese, and noted for their ease of assimilation into the local culture of the Malays. They may be identified as a group quite separate from the rest of the Chinese population of Malaysia. Their "front stage" behaviour (Raybeck 1980:252, 254, following Goffman) is characteristically Malay in most respects. Their main distinguishing characteristic, however, lies in the fact that while they have their own system of religious belief they also adhere to Siamese Buddhism. In general, Kelantan Chinese are also known as Cina kampung while Chinese who belong to the mainstream group are commonly referred to in Kelantan as Cina bandar. More will be said later about these two groups.

On the other hand, despite their Malayness and their close association with Siamese Buddhism, Kelantan Chinese could still theoretically identify themselves with the general Chinese community of Malaysia by other means. There is a measure of fluidity here with regard to Chinese ethnic identification since being Buddhists does not entail a loss of Chinese identity.\(^\text{16}\) The fluidity in terms of ethnic identification and socio-cultural behaviour of a Kelantan Chinese is in fact double-sided: on one hand he remains

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\(^{15}\) This specialised role of the Siamese as custodian of Theravada Buddhism can also be seen in the staffing of temples outside Kelantan. In Singapore (where there is no sizeable Thai community) Buddhist temples that cater to a mostly Chinese congregation are staffed by Siamese monks (cf. Wee 1976:156), who are brought over either from Thailand or Kelantan. Many Siamese monks from Kelantan have a sojourn or two in Singapore or Kuala Lumpur as part of their missionary duty. The was a case of another Siamese monk from Kelantan who had been invited to establish a temple in Johor Bahru, just north of Singapore, where the lay supporters are also Chinese.

\(^{16}\) Likewise, no matter how Malay a Kelantan Chinese has become in terms of his cultural and social behaviour, he remains a Chinese; the fact that he is not a Muslim rules him out from being a Malay.
distinguishable from the rest of the larger Chinese community of Malaysia, and on the other he may identify himself with the mainstream Chinese if he wants to.

**Ethnicity and Malaysian Society**

Malaysian society is never considered homogeneous because of the existence of various "ethnic" groups. The term 'plural society' is used here to describe the particular form of society in which there are fundamental cleavages and discontinuities in its social structure based on cultural, racial or ethnic diversity. Following Smith, pluralism is meant as a condition in which the members of a common society are internally distinguished by fundamental differences in their institutional practices.17 Furnivall’s conception of a plural society can be discerned from the following quotation,

In Burma, as in Java, probably the first thing that strikes the visitor is the medley of peoples -- European, Chinese, Indian, and native. It is in the strictest sense a medley, for they mix but do not combine. Each group holds by its own religion, its own culture and language, its own ideas and ways. As individuals they meet, but only in the market-place, in buying and selling. There is a plural society, with different sections of the community living side by side, but separately, within the same political unit. Even in the economic sphere, there is a division of labour along the racial lines. (Furnivall, quoted in Smith 1965:75)

The necessary conditions for pluralism according to Smith is the existence of a duplication of various institutional features such as marriage, the family, religion, language and education, which belong exclusively to a particular ethnic group and which are not normally shared with members of different groups. As such pluralism constitutes a kind of relationship in which there is a clearly demarcated line regarding ethnicity and identity which separates one ethnic group from the other.

In Malaysia, pluralism exists along similar lines,18 but the classification of the population into ethnic categories is based on dialect differences, geographical places of origin and religious affiliation. For instance, the Malays as an ethnic group may consist of diverse groups of people that display cultural traits which are essentially Malay.

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18 See also Freedman (1960).
Hence, within the broad definition of "Malay", Javanese, Sumatran and other indigenous people from Indonesian islands are included in the same ethnic group. However, as an ethnic category, "Malay" is also defined in terms of religious affiliation. The Malaysian constitution defines a "Malay" as one whose religious faith is Islam, who subscribes to the Malay custom, who speaks Malay, and who habitually lives a Malay way of life.\(^\text{19}\)

Nowadays the term "bumiputra" (literally means "children of the soil") is most often used for a broader ethnic category which includes other people who are not Muslim but whose cultural traits and practices are just as indigenous to the region as those of the Malays. Hence, aboriginal groups of the Malay peninsula and indigenous groups in Sabah and Sarawak are also classified as "bumiputra".

The Chinese, despite dialect variations among themselves and differences in geographical places of origin, are grouped together under one ethnic category. This simplistic kind of categorization of people takes no account of the fact that the Chinese on the whole are not a homogeneous group of people. There have always been differences not only in term of dialect, but also in the level of assimilation and acculturation to the local social and cultural conditions. To illustrate this there are Chinese who belong to the older wave of migration and who have been in this part of the world for many centuries. Their cultural and social behaviour distinguishes them from those Chinese who belong to the new wave of immigration of less than one century.

Wang (1978:8) has grouped the Chinese of Southeast Asia into three different categories, in terms of their attitudes towards China, their attitudes towards the indigenous society they live with and in terms of the various Chinese communities they are members of. He identifies at least three groups, with varying ranges of commitments toward China and towards the host country in which they live. The fourth group, which

\(^{19}\)By this definition alone virtually all those whose religious faith is Islam, including migrant Arabs and Muslim Indians found in Malaysia are technically Malays. In fact, because of this religious factor, Arabs and Muslim Indians are accorded special status within the Malay society and their subsequent generations eventually become Malays or claim to be so as a matter of expediency. On this see, for instance, Nagata (1974:341) who gives a good account on the oscillating nature of ethnic identification among the Indian Muslims and Arabs primarily for the sake of acquiring special privileges which are accorded to the Malays.
Wang prefers not to call "Chinese" at all, have "... for all intent and purposes completely assimilated to the indigenous populations and are only pointed to from time to time as people who were originally Chinese" (ibid.:9).

My data from Kelantan studies indicate that the majority of the Chinese who have been in Kelantan for many centuries, particularly those in the rural areas, can almost be grouped into this fourth category of Wang's classification. But this rule does not necessarily apply in all cases. Even within the same Chinese family some reverse process of assimilation may often occur, for example when descendants of totally assimilated Chinese may become more Chinese than their parents. In the light of recent mass migration of Chinese especially during the late 19th century onwards, the process of resinification of this fourth group of Chinese is bound to take place. In fact, a growing concern among older members of Kelantan Chinese is the fact that many of the younger generations are becoming less Malay and more Chinese than generations preceding them.20

Categorization of people into the Indian ethnic group tends to be simplistic too, because it also includes people from Pakistan, Sri Lanka and everyone else from the Indian sub-continent.21 Even more simplistic is the category of "Others" which includes Eurasians, Europeans, Portuguese and Siamese.

Notwithstanding the formula for ethnic categorization used by Malaysian authorities, for the purpose of this thesis, I have subscribed to De Vos's usage of the term "ethnicity":

An ethnic group is a self-perceived group of people who hold in common a set of traditions not shared by others with whom they are in contact. Such traditions typically include "folk" religious beliefs and practices, language, a sense of historical continuity, and common ancestry or place of origin. The

21 The 1980 Housing and Population Census of Malaysia, however, makes some changes by reclassifying those from the sub-continent into different groups to reflect the real differences in terms of ethnicity between these people.
group's actual history often trails off into legend or mythology, which includes some concepts of an unbroken biological-genetic generational continuity; sometimes regarded as giving special characteristics to the group (1975:9; emphasis, mine)

De Vos lists several criteria for ethnicity, such as territoriality, economic base, religion, aesthetic cultural patterns and language. Any one or more of these criteria may be used to emphasise ethnic identity.

In brief, the ethnic identity of a group of people consists of their subjective or emblematic use of any aspect of culture, in order to differentiate themselves from other groups. These emblems can be imposed from outside or embraced from within. (ibid.:15)

De Vos' definition of ethnicity seems to be very broad; almost anything could be used for the purpose of defining ethnicity. However, this has always been the case when dealing with the concept of ethnicity, which by itself is very subjective in the sense that a criterion that underlies the basis of ethnicity between particular groups of people may become irrelevant with other groups. Hence, the actual working of various criteria that determine ethnicity depends on situations. For instance, when religion is already a shared attribute between otherwise two different groups, then other objective criteria will have to come into force in order to differentiate the two groups from each other. For example, while the Malays and the Muslim Indians both profess the same religion, their emphasis on ethnicity is now focussed on such criteria as language, geographical places of origin and cultural traits instead of Islam; religion as a factor for ethnic differentiation becomes irrelevant in this case. However, quite commonly, when a religion has sectarian differences, and when different ethnic groups subscribe to different sects, these very differences are sometimes emphasised for the sake of making clear the basis of further differentiation, such as in the case of Mahayana and Theravada Buddhism, and as in the case of Suni and Shi'ite Muslims.22

Apart from that, Siamese ethnicity can be seen in relation to other things as well.

22Barth (1969:14) also says that the various criteria for ascribing 'ethnicity' vary according to circumstances, "... some cultural features are used by the actors as signals and emblems of differences, others are ignored, and in some relationships radical differences are played down and denied."
Geertz's usage of the term 'primordial attachment' (Geertz 1973b:259) can also be applied to the Siamese case; hence Siamese ethnicity encompasses various cultural elements which are considered typically Siamese, such as the Buddhist religion, the temple, the Siamese language, the cultural preferences and the incorporation of a 'primordial attachment' which is exclusively Siamese.

There is yet another important aspect to ethnicity. This involves the process of claiming and counterclaiming. In this respect the notion of ethnicity proposed by Barth is most apt here. Ethnicity necessarily entails the critical features of self-ascription as well as ascription by others (Barth 1969:13). This notion by Barth is basically similar to what Tom Harrison has called "subjective" (self-imposed) and "objective" (externally imposed) aspects of ethnic classification (Harrison in King 1982:23). Ethnicity is, therefore, a two-way process; firstly one identifies oneself with an ethnic group by assuming social and cultural behaviour associated with that particular ethnic group; at the same time such identification is recognised by others, particularly by those already in the group one is identifying with and by those outside it. Once a claim is validated, other objective criteria, including stereotypes and prejudices, associated with a particular ethnic group set in, thereby helping to define further the ethnic category and strengthen its attributes.

Ethnicity, Buddhism and the Siamese

By the definition used above, the Siamese of Kelantan are clearly an ethnic group. However the most important question is who are the Siamese and what, therefore, constitutes Siamese ethnic identity and how does one differentiate them from other ethnic groups? The solution to this problem tends to be very elusive. One can involve objective criteria such as religion, language or physical attributes to describe an ethnic group but

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23 According to Barth, "A categorical ascription is an ethnic ascription when it classifies a person in terms of his basic, most general identity, presumptively determined by his origin and background. To the extent that actors use ethnic identities to categorize themselves and others for purposes of interaction they form ethnic groups..." (1969:13 & 14).

24 According to Harrison, ethnicity, as a concept, is related to "... 'identity' from the view of those who are the object of the study, and 'identification' from the perspective of those who are studying the people in question" (ibid.).
these alone are not adequate. It needs to be supported by the notion of "self-prescription" and "ascription by others" as suggested by Barth.

To illustrate this, any legitimate claim to an ethnic identity basically involves two things. Firstly, a group or an individual must admit its sense of belonging to a particular ethnic group (Barth's "self-ascription"). Second, other ethnic groups within the same social system must recognise such a claim and honour it as such (Barth's "ascription by others"). These are basically two processes which cannot be separated from each other. Thus where only one of the two conditions obtains then there is a room for uncertainty regarding one's ethnicity. For instance, a Siamese who can easily pass as a Malay (by virtue of his physical attributes, or by his ability to behave in manners most appropriate as a Malay), can claim to be one, so long as he is recognized as such by the Malays themselves or by other groups. But the moment his real identity is disclosed, his claimed "ethnicity" does not hold good anymore and others can rightly question the validity of such a claim. In a multi-ethnic society, to claim to be a member of a particular ethnic group is one thing, but to be recognised as such by others is another.

For the purpose of this study the term "Siamese" refers to that particular group of people who openly claim themselves to be Siamese and are recognised as such by others. Such a claim is often supported by behaviour and mannerisms which are considered most appropriate for Siamese not only by the Siamese themselves but also by other ethnic groups. Foremost in the consideration of Siamese ethnic identity is the notion of a Siamese culture as embodied in the language, religion, historical sense and tradition and other attributes considered typically Siamese.

In Thailand, religion is one of the defining characteristics of ethnicity. Because of the predominance of Buddhism the fact of being a Thai (or Siamese) is equal to being a

25 This is even applicable in the case of a converted person who has become a Muslim. Malays are quite noted for their subtle prejudice against a convert. Although people may not refer to him as a mualaf (convert) in his presence, behind him people appear to be less constrained from making remarks about his ethnic origin. The same prejudice, however, does not normally apply to the succeeding generations of the convert.
Buddhist. Likewise, in Kelantan, Siamese ethnicity has always been closely identified with Buddhism. Although some Chinese and Indians (and some Sri Lankans) are also Buddhists the Siamese emphasise the religious basis of their ethnicity by playing a dominant role in the organisation of the Buddhist religion in the state. Nearly all Buddhist temples are staffed by Siamese monks, and even the temple's lay committees are predominantly Siamese. While Chinese and Indians may also practice other forms of religions, such as Christianity and Hinduism, no Siamese in Kelantan are known to practise any religion other than Theravada Buddhism.

Buddhism is the hallmark of Siamese ethnicity and it distinguishes them from the rest of the population. For instance, whenever there is a conscious need for the Siamese to emphasise their ethnicity vis-à-vis that of other groups, they do so by making references to the Buddhist religion and its associated symbols (such as temple and monkhood) and things which are culturally Siamese. While Siamese ethnic identity is based on Buddhist religion, the institution of temples and monkhood ensures the perpetuation of that identity. To put it briefly, a spontaneously flourishing Buddhism ensures the existence and continuity of a Siamese ethnic identity in Kelantan and vice versa (Kershaw 1969:72). Kershaw summarises this further by saying,

Concerning religion, then, the Thai [i.e. the Siamese] neither wish to cease to be Buddhist nor do they believe that it is possible to cease to be so. Buddhism is technically an option, but since one's ancestors were also Buddhists, this too has become part of a Thai's nature. Indeed, if the Buddhism [sic] be taken away, there is very little distinctive left besides the language. Buddhism has been effectively assimilated to the definition of a Thai, and the motives for observing Buddhist precepts are inextricable from the ancestral tradition. (ibid.:166, emphasis, original; parentheses, mine)

It can be seen that insofar as it concerns the Siamese the concept of ethnicity is related to religion; it is one of the many things that identify the Siamese and distinguish them from others in the wider society.

26 Even Buddhist temples, particularly Theravada ones, that are established outside Kelantan, where there are no concentrations of Siamese population, such as in Singapore and Kuala Lumpur, are staffed by Siamese monks. See footnote, page 6 above.

27 I have mentioned Theravada school because in Kelantan there are no Mahayana Buddhist temples as such. The latter temples may be found in other parts of Malaysia and Singapore, especially in association with Chinese temples, but none, staffed by full time monks, are known to exist in Kelantan. In general the Chinese identify with either school of Buddhism. The Siamese of Kelantan identify exclusively with the Theravada tradition.
As an ethnic group, the Siamese are also a minority and hence, Siamese Buddhism is a minority religion. One of the dilemmas of a minority existence is the constant threat of being absorbed into the bigger majority groups, particularly through forced assimilation. However, the Siamese have been able to withstand such a process of assimilation basically on account of their strong adherence to and identification with the Buddhist religion. Buddhism in this context, therefore, acquires an even more important role than that in Thailand.

In this respect, Golomb (1978) observes that there is generally a marked intensification of religious observation among the Siamese of Kelantan and he attributes this to the fact that in a plural society like Malaysia, such an intensification is bound to happen for it helps to strengthen the ethnic boundary. On this Golomb says,

... the small size and isolated location of (Siamese) ethnic communities like Siam village (Golomb’s field place of study) not only generate pressures for increased conformity to ingroup cultural norms, but also encourage enhanced expressions of ethnic individuality through the activation of stockpiled rituals and other Thai cultural reserves. (p. 130; parentheses, mine)

On this account alone it is not at all surprising to note that attendance at and participation in temple rituals tend to be greatly stressed because it is through this means that Siamese ethnicity is expressed. The Buddhist religion and its associated symbols, such as the temple (wat) and the monkhood (sangha), become very crucial as a means of strengthening the Siamese claim to their ethnic identity (Ismail 1977 and 1980a).

So far I have made a statement that Buddhism underlies Siamese ethnic identity but I have also said that the Chinese too, especially the rural-based Chinese Cina kampung and some town-based Chinese Cina bandar, adhere to the same religion. This appears problematic. How can the Siamese differentiate themselves ethnically from the Chinese when they both share the same belief system? The answer to this can be seen in the following argument: although both are followers of Theravada Buddhism, there is a fundamental difference between the two in terms of their levels of commitment and adherence to the religion. While the Chinese support Buddhist temples generously and attend temple ceremonies with predictable regularity it is the Siamese who play the
crucial role in the custodianship of the ritual and knowledge of the religion, hence its persistence and continuity. Going back to De Vos, this is the "set of traditions" which the Siamese do not share with "others". There are, therefore, certain traditions cherished by the Siamese which form the basis of this ethnic differentiation. Thus while Chinese are also ordained, it is the Siamese who persist longest in the monkhood; while the Chinese bring material support to the temple, it is the Siamese who control the distribution of the gifts and their eventual use; whereas some Chinese are devout temple goers, it is the Siamese who determine the precise running of temple events and ceremonies. These are the defining characteristics in terms of religious adherence and commitment that differentiate Siamese Buddhists from Chinese Buddhists.

Special Attributes of Siamese Buddhism in Kelantan

The fact that Kelantan is basically a Muslim state means that the practice and organisation of local Buddhism must take place in a very specialised and adapted context, in a way which may differ from that of Thailand. The greatly emphasised social function of religion among the Kelantan Siamese becomes apparent when one considers the following factors:

Firstly, Buddhist temples in Kelantan are symbolically important to the Siamese people and, despite all odds against them, they are maintained in a fair degree of style and grandeur, although not necessarily similar in degree and magnitude to those of Thailand. While some of the more traditional functions of the temple may no longer exist, its functions in the social and religious spheres have never really diminished. The temple and the monkhood may even have acquired some new meanings and roles which would probably not be of such significance had the temple been in Thailand itself.

Secondly, despite the fact that Siamese temples in Kelantan receive no direct financial assistance from the state or federal governments, most of them are managed in a relatively comfortable manner with minimum financial and economic constraints. Temple funding partly comes from the local Siamese population but a significant proportion also comes from the local Chinese. In fact one is tempted to say that had it not been for the
Chinese many of the temples would have to be run on a constrained budget. Hence the very survival of these temples depends very much on their ability to attract Chinese patronage.

Thirdly, while in Thailand it can be safely said that social mobility in the larger society can be easily acquired if one has been previously ordained as monk (because the elevated status so gained is supposed to be of some help), the same may not be totally applicable in the case of Kelantan. Yet ordination activities in Kelantan temples are held quite regularly. This suggests that monkhood, even in Kelantan, still holds great significance despite the fact that in Kelantan monastic experience does not usually contribute to social mobility within the larger society as it does in Thailand. Furthermore, ordination ceremonies involve great expense and capital outlay, yet they are always regarded with seriousness and deep sense of commitment by the Siamese in recognition that such activities not only promote their religious interests but also advantage them in other ways.

Moreover, the organisation of Buddhist religion in Kelantan must differ from that of Thailand if one takes into account that while Buddhism is the state religion in Thailand, in Malaysia it is not. This by itself contributes to certain complexities in the practice of Siamese Buddhism in an environment where the majority of the population is Muslim.

However, these complexities are self-resolving, for the nature of Buddhism practised by the Siamese is not, as shown by Tambiah (1970), a totally exclusive religion, but is indeed very accommodative. For instance, there are certain practices which can be traced to pre-existing religious beliefs, particularly to the prevailing forms of animism which pre-dated Buddhism. A common theme running through most of the religious systems of Southeast Asia is that "... almost all the communities that claim allegiance to Islam, Christianity, or Buddhism also have recourse to animistic beliefs and practices" (Benjamin 1979: 24). In Kelantan a similar phenomenon exists; to a limited extent the Siamese religion incorporates the local elements of animism, those which typify the Kelantanese Malays, those of the local non-Malays, and those of Southeast Asia generally.
Even more complex is the fact that Siamese religion in Kelantan also tolerates some elements of Chinese religion. For instance, a few Siamese temples in Kelantan give special places to Goddess Kuan Yin (who is definitely non-Siamese in origin)\(^{28}\) and other local Chinese deities. This is especially true for temples which have a considerable number of Chinese supporters. Apart from that, it is not uncommon for the Siamese monks to officiate at Chinese mortuary rites (Golomb 1978:85).

There is also a political symbolism involved here: the formal Buddhist ecclesiastical organisation of Kelantan recognises the sultan of Kelantan, \textit{albeit} a Muslim, as its patron and protector of Buddhist religion in the state. The appointments of the Chief Monk and ecclesiastical district heads are endorsed by the sultan (Ismail 1977:77; 1982:255). This procedure illustrates the kind of accommodation the Siamese have made in order to give their ecclesiastical body some kind of political legitimacy, perhaps similar to that which exists in Thailand where the king plays the same role. Thus, "... in the absence of a Buddhist king, a Muslim ruler has been able to lend a 'transcendental' dimension as the protector of the Buddhist religion in the state" (Ismail 1977:76).

This particular relationship between a Muslim ruler and a Buddhist community of monks (\textit{Sangha}) at first appears rather odd, but there is nothing exceptional to this. The role of the ruler is merely symbolic. Tambiah (1970:74) in his study of the religious system of northeast Thailand shows that,

The king was indeed the protector, defender and patron of the \textit{Sangha}, and at the apex of the society there is a fusion of politics and religion, spiritual and secular power, ...the king gave patronage to Buddhism: he built monasteries and temples, and endowed them with land. But he interfered little with ecclesiastical matters, and wherever monasteries were endowed with property they enjoyed autonomy in administering them, as well as judicial and fiscal exemptions and other immunities.

In Kelantan, similar conception of the state-\textit{Sangha} relationship in the political sense is only modified by the presence of a Muslim ruler; while a temple (\textit{wat}) does enjoy

\(^{28}\) Although she is highly relevant in terms of the belief system of Mahayana Buddhism.
from the state the benefit of not having to pay any taxes for the land on which it stands, the ruler does very little to interfere in the running of the day-to-day affairs of the monks and the wat, apart from giving his endorsement to the appointments of various ecclesiastical heads within the Sangha.

**Other Important Considerations in the Study of the Siamese of Kelantan**

There are two other important considerations that demand particular attention in the study of Siamese of Kelantan. Such an enquiry needs to consider these people by reference to the processes of change which most of West Malaysia's predominantly Malay rural society has experienced to some degree in recent history. But the investigation must also focus on a phenomenon which is largely specific to the region where I carried out my fieldwork: the rural population of Kelantan includes Chinese whose support of Buddhism appears to be highly relevant to the persistence of Siamese temples and the monkhood.

The process of change that has taken place over the years has affected greatly the rural society to the extent that the term 'peasantry' itself may not be applicable anymore. The real effect of the growth of the cash economy in Malaysia (Swift 1965, Downs 1967 and Firth 1966) has been the erosion of many of the social and cultural practices by which observers could once readily identify rural cultivators as 'peasants'. Many villages have been drawn into the larger market economy of urban areas to some extent so that, while these villages have ceased to be literally peasant in every respect, they have not yet actually been fully urbanised. The implication of this is that in these villages, particularly those peripheral to urban centres, economic and social relationships are geared more towards the urban centres than towards their own neighbourhoods. Subsequently, traditional values that used to govern social relationship at the village level either become redefined or are replaced; the basis for a sense of village community has become eroded. In fact, for all intents and purposes, many of these villages have become

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29 Land on which stands a temple is considered similar to a *wakaf* land, that is, land specifically endowed for public use, e.g. for the purpose of erecting a mosque on or for public cemetery.

30 I have used the term 'peasantry' with only some of the connotations of the concept in conventional anthropological terminology; it may no longer be an exact fit to describe the present community we are dealing with.
more of a "dormitory" for people who work in urban centres, to which they return for the night, mainly for rest, before the start of another working day.

The emerging pattern of rural economy and the mismatch between it and the established pattern of social relationships within the village mean that there is a need to re-define the concept of community. While people still live within an environment which is very village-like, their occupations may take them well outside the village boundaries. Although they return to the village regularly (daily for some, weekly or even monthly for others) they do not really belong to the village community except in a narrow and specific sense. When rural occupations become cash-oriented those institutions that help to bring rural folk together, such as the communal sharing of labour, become bothersome if not irrelevant. In this sense the whole of the village community is no longer a single organic entity but rather divided into separate units, with each confined to different households and family groups. Yet the pattern of residence in these Kelantan villages still conforms to rural style and does not indicate a great measure of urbanisation. The concept of neighbourhood still endures although highly modified by urban values. Thus, while the concept of peasantry is not entirely appropriate for the people I studied, they nevertheless conceptualise their identity as if they are peasants (chaaw naa; Malay: orang kampung), asserting their occupations as being of rural type (tham naa; Malay: kerja kampung).

In most Siamese villages, the temple institution becomes crucial because it is through this institution that the Siamese concept of community becomes meaningful, even when everything else in the rural society is breaking down and changing. Indeed, the more these changes occur, the more important the temple becomes. This study, therefore, examines the role of temple institution and the Buddhist religion in defining the parameters of this rural community.

We now come to the second factor in this study: the rural Chinese of Kelantan. More than fifty percent of the Chinese in Kelantan live in urban areas. The majority of urban-dwelling Chinese belong to the recent group of Chinese migrants that typify the
majority of west coast Chinese. Chinese who live in rural areas are descendants of those who have migrated in the eighteenth century and and presumably earlier (Raybeck 1980:250). Although statistically, both "town" and "rural" Chinese are classified as a single ethnic group, basically there are fundamental cultural differences between the two.

Rural dwelling Chinese, because of their long association with the local Malays, are more oriented towards the local culture compared to the recently arrived group of Chinese. In Malacca a group of "old" Chinese, known as Baba Chinese can trace their ancestry to fifteenth century. In Indonesia the "old" group of Chinese, who have adopted the indigenous culture while still remaining Chinese at the same time, are known as peranakan. The second group, the "new" Chinese, are called totok.31

In Kelantan, the term peranakan is seldom used to describe the Chinese who belong to the earlier immigration.32 Nevertheless, Kelantanese generally make quite a clear distinction between the two groups of Chinese. The "older" Chinese group are called by various names, but all these terms point to one thing, namely, the level of assimilation this particular group has gone through. Hence, the following terms are used for the "old" Chinese: Cina kampung (village Chinese), Cina Kelantan (Kelantan Chinese), Cina tempatan (local Chinese) and Cina sini (Chinese of here). Some Kelantan Malays even refer to the earlier group of Chinese as orang Cina kita (our Chinese) (Raybeck 1980:254).33 The recently arrived Chinese, the "new" group, are known in Kelantan either as Cina luar (outsider Chinese) or Cina benua (literally: Chinese of the "Chinese" continent).34 The Siamese also make a clear distinction between the "old" Chinese,

31 On Baba Chinese, see for instance, Tan 1979.
32 Only researchers tend to use "Peranakan" for want of a better term. Tan (1982:31) for instance, used the term but not without any cautionary remarks when describing the acculturated Kelantan Chinese, for there is no exact term applicable to their case.
33 Other authors refer to the earlier migrant Chinese by various terms. For instance, Kershaw uses "old Chinese" or "peranakan Chinese" and Winzeler, "rural Chinese". Chinese who belong to the latter immigration period are also known as "town Chinese" (Tan 1982:28) or "urban Chinese" (Winzeler 1974:50). In a more derogatory term, "urban" Chinese are also referred to as Cina Tok Pek (Tan 1982:29-30, footnote 8.)
34 Apparently in the conception of traditional Kelantanese view, China is referred to as a continent (benua). In classical Malay literature and oral traditions this is also the usual term used. Thus benua China means the "Chinese kingdom" (literally: the Chinese "continent").
whom they call ciin bok, and the "new" Chinese, whom they referred to as ciin myang (see Golomb 1978:82).

The Kelantan Chinese are noted for their close association with the Malays, and their adaptability to and superb knowledge of the Malay culture. Most often their children are educated at Malay schools, some even taking Islamic religious studies as an elective. Most of their "front stage" behaviour is overtly and deliberately Malay to the extent of speaking Malay even at home among themselves. During the course of time a number of these earlier migrant Chinese have converted to Islam with their subsequent descendants "becoming Malays". In fact, it had been a widespread practice for people who became converts to receive the special honorary title of 'Che' as part of their adopted Muslim names.35 This title is hereditary and many Kelantan Malays who bear this title are supposed to be descendants of converted Chinese or other non-Malays.36

I have used the term "Kelantan Chinese" interchangeably with "rural Chinese" (Cina kampung) for want of better terms. The word "rural" here does not necessarily mean that all the earlier migrant Chinese are to-day rural dwellers, but rather that they have adapted to rural Malay culture to the point of acquiring many Malay folk attributes. The urban Chinese by contrast are not Malay in behaviour and mannerisms. Chinese of earlier migration who display overtly Malay folk behaviour may also live in town areas and engage in trades and the professions, but their mannerisms and cultural behaviour make them easily distinguishable from the rest of the Chinese population in the town. Apart from this, the rural Chinese of Kelantan have special privileges with regard to land ownership. Like the Siamese they are among the few non-Malay groups with legal

35 The term 'Che' in standard Malay (now spelt 'Cik') is an abbreviation of 'Inche' and equivalent to the English 'Mr.', but in Kelantan this term is actually part of a person's name, originally given to people who have converted to Islam. On the origin of this title, see also Golomb (1978:205, note 4).

36 Considering the close association the "old" Chinese have with the Malays, one can expect that Cina kampung would be more likely to become converted to Islam rather than Cina luar or urban Chinese would. This is even more so since Cina kampung are already familiar with the intricacies of the Islamic religion and the Malay way of life. After all most of the "front-stage" behaviour (and to some extent, "back-stage" behaviour) of Kelantan Chinese is already Malay in most respects.
titles to ownership of lands in Malay Reservation areas. Because of this many do have "ancestral homes" in rural villages of Kelantan to which they return regularly, typically during Chinese festive occasions such as Chinese New Year. This is another criterion that sets them apart from the mainstream Chinese.

Despite their close association with Malays, rural Kelantan Chinese do not readily become Muslims. They have their own system of worship as typified by belief in the guardian gods of the village and patron deities of the house. Apart from the worship of respective village deities, the rural Chinese also patronise Siamese temples and take part in Buddhist rites and ceremonies.

It is in this sense that the Siamese temple has also become the basis of identity for the rural Chinese vis-à-vis the larger, mainstream Chinese group. It is mostly rural Chinese of the earlier migration period who patronise Siamese temples and through their participation in the rituals they are able to become members of the same religious and social community as the Siamese.

However, the question that still begs an answer is why the rural Chinese need to identify themselves with the Siamese religious tradition in the first place? The choice for this can be seen in the following argument. Although theoretically the rural Chinese may identify themselves with the larger Malaysian Chinese community there are, however, real barriers to their doing so. For a start the rural Chinese are different from the mainstream Chinese not only linguistically, but also culturally -- they are more established in the rural areas, more enculturated by the norms and values of the local population and feel more at ease among the rural folk. Secondly, the rural Chinese, with few exceptions, are more socially and economically tied to land unlike the majority of the mainstream Chinese who are involved in urban types of occupations such as trades, retailing, business and the professions.

\[37\] For more details of this see, for instance, Chia (1981) and (Tan 1982:42).
Given the rural nature of their orientation, the Chinese of the older immigrant group are more inclined to identify themselves with the Siamese rather than with the mainstream Chinese. Their identification with the Siamese is the natural choice. Kershaw gives two reasons for this; firstly, because of the hostility the Malays had towards the earlier Chinese immigrants, especially regarding intermarriage with them, previous generations of the rural Chinese tended to seek marriage partners among the Siamese; secondly, they chose to be involved with the Siamese because of their familiarity with Buddhism, even if not of the Theravada kind (Kershaw 1973:5 fn. 12). For these reasons, it has been quite usual for many of the earlier migrant Chinese to establish their residence close to or in Siamese villages (cf. Tan 1982:34, Kershaw 1973:5). Because of the close relationship, biologically and socially, between the rural Chinese and the Siamese, the former are often referred to by other Chinese groups as Hokkien-Siam (Chia 1981:5), or ciinthaj (Kershaw 1973:5). This is another attribute which sets the rural Kelantan Chinese apart from the rest of the larger Chinese community.

The long-established kinship relationships between the rural Chinese and the Siamese should also be mentioned here. Such ties are constantly being recognised and validated, and these become most obvious at temple functions. A significant proportion of the rural Chinese who participate in such functions acknowledge their kinship ties with the Siamese, no matter how remote they are now. A Buddhist temple, therefore, becomes the focal point which brings together Siamese and Chinese of Kelantan under the same religious interest. On this Winzeler (1981:6) observes,

... the long standing presence of Thai Theravada Buddhist temples and monasteries has meant the local existence of a Buddhist tradition on which [sic] the Kelantan Chinese have been able to identify, in a way not characteristics of the Chinese of most of other regions of Malaysia, or of Indonesia.

Hence attendance at temple ceremonies ritualises this special alliance between the rural Chinese and the Siamese. In fact, whenever rural Chinese are found living in Siamese villages or close by, they will be recognised by outsiders, and regard one another, as members of the same locality group or village.
The Usage of "Siamese" Terminology

In this thesis, I have used the term "Siamese" in preference to "Thai". Although others (e.g. Kershaw, Golomb, Winzeler and Tan) have used the latter term, I find this inappropriate. As I have argued elsewhere, (Ismail 1977, 1980 and 1982), the term Thai is necessarily of recent import in Kelantan, just as it is in Thailand itself. As an ethnic group they have always been known as Siamese not only in Kelantan but also in other parts of the northern Malay states. The term "Thai" is seldom used in everyday parlance of the people particularly among other ethnic groups who prefer to use "Siamese" instead. The term "Thai" has recently become quite fashionable especially among the few who have received formal schooling in Thailand or who have spent some time as monks there, but its actual usage in Kelantan is very limited.

Thailand is most frequently referred to as "Siam" by most Kelantanese. Hence, the kingdom is commonly known among Kelantanese Malays as Balik Siam or Balik Barat. The term orang Siam is the Malay word for the Siamese people. Whenever there is a need to differentiate the Siamese of Kelantan from those of Thailand, then orang Siam sini is used for the former in contrast to orang Siam Bangkok or orang Siam barat for the latter. Most interesting, however, is the fact that among themselves the Siamese persistently use the term "khaek" to refer to the Malays, although there is a restraint in this very usage within the earshot of the few Malays who are known to understand the Siamese language. In Thailand khaek in its formal sense means "guest" but it now carries a derogatory connotation especially with respect to the Malays of Southern Thailand (Burr 1972:185).

There is another point regarding the Thai/Siamese terminology which I think is

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38 See, for instance, Pitsuwan (1982). The term "Thailand" (with emphasis on "Thai"), was first introduced in June 1939 during the time of Pibul Songkhran to replace the more neutral term "Siam" (Ibid: 89). It was during this period that an intensified effort was made to create a sense of Thai nationalism in the face of new challenges from the rapid process of modernisation.

39 "Orang barat" conveys the popular meaning of someone from Thailand or further north of the Malay Peninsula. In Kelantanese Malay dialect, "barat" does not mean "west" as in standard Malay, but rather north and northeasterly, (see Brown 1956:166; Pepys 1916:306).
very relevant to our case here. Richard Davis (1984), in his study of northern Thai makes a clear distinction with regard to the usage of the terms "Tai", "Thai" and "Siamese". The term "Tai" (in non-aspirated form) is the name of a language family that links together the Lao, the Shan, the Lue and the Phuan, whose territorial distribution transcends national boundaries. The second term "Thai" (in aspirated form) carries the connotation of "being part of the Thai nations-state" meaning that any ethnic group that live in Thailand is, therefore, "Thai" in this all encompassing term. Hence, the Muang are first and foremost Tai, but because they are in Thailand, they are also "Thai". Yet the term "Thai" also applies to various ethnic groups that are not of Tai language group but who live within the same territorial boundary of Thailand. For instance, the Malays of Southern Thailand, who are not of the Tai language group, are nevertheless "Thai" in this political sense. "Thai Islam" is now the official term currently used for the Malays of Southern Thailand who are "Thai" by virtue of political and historical circumstances.

On the other hand, the term "Siamese" refers to one of the ethnic groups (or a unit within a larger grouping) which together make up the Thai nation-state as a whole. But because the Siamese are culturally dominant, characteristics which are basically Siamese are often taken as representative of Thai national culture. While the majority of Thais are Siamese there is a fundamental but subtle difference between being Thai and being Siamese. Many writers have not considered this seriously and it is at this very confusion that Davis addressed his criticism when he says,

... Too many community studies carried out in Siamese villages in the central plains claim to make observations about typically "Thai" behaviour, ignoring the wealth of cultural variations between different regions of the country, when in fact they are describing Siamese behaviour. (Davis 1984:24)

It is also in the light of this point that I have used the term "Siamese" when referring to the Siamese of Kelantan, who, while belonging to the Tai language group, are not necessarily Thai -- in the sense of not being legally and politically part of Thailand.
The Fieldwork

The field work for this study was carried out in Kelantan, this choice being partly determined by the fact that Siamese people of Malaysia are mainly found in the northern states of the peninsula, of which Kelantan is one. There are also Siamese settlements in the northwest coast states of the Malay peninsula, such as in Kedah, Perlis and northern Perak.

I spent a period of twenty months in Kelantan (from April 1982 to October 1983) mainly in the village of Baan Maalaj, in Bachok district. Prior to that, for the first three months I stayed in a temple where the Chief Monk of Kelantan resides. I made contact with many Siamese monks and laymen and eventually moved over to Baan Maalaj in the same district where my own family has been living for generations. While in the field I also visited various Siamese settlements in other parts of the state, in the neighbouring state of Terengganu and in Narathiwat province of Thailand, particularly in the land settlement scheme popularly known as the nikhon, which contains a large number of settlers originating from Kelantan. Although these pioneer settlers are now Thai citizens, they still maintain close relationships with their relatives in Kelantan, returning to their original Kelantanese villages on regular occasions to attend temple functions and to make merit. In fact, for all practical purposes, they are significant supporters of temples in Kelantan although they also patronise the temple in the land settlement scheme and the one in the next nearest town of Waeng.

My fieldwork benefited greatly from my previous experience with the Siamese in 1976 when I conducted a research in Aril for an M.A. thesis. When I returned, in 1982, to my first village of study, many of my friends among the monks, including the abbot of the village temple, had resumed laylife, but this proved to be of some considerable advantage to me, for they were then able to help me in many ways, particularly as ex-monks who now could accompany me on distant trips for many days without having to consider the monastic rules relating to travelling and spending time outside the temple. My close association with the Siamese of Aril gave me the advantage of being readily accepted by
the people of Baan Maalaj. In fact, one of my main informants in Baan Maalaj was a
close friend of the former abbot of Aril. As a general rule the majority of people in Baan
Maalaj and Aril know one another very well.

Like Aril, Baan Maalaj is not very far from my natal village. Many of the Siamese
and Chinese villagers from both Aril and Baan Maalaj are close business associates of my
wife's late father, who was a rubber dealer. There are also a number of Chinese families
who live in my natal village; some are our immediate neighbours and friends. They
belong to the older group of Chinese mentioned above and had been living in the village
for many generations. They attend temple functions regularly, either in Aril or Baan
Maalaj. It was through them that my identity was further re-confirmed. Hence I was not
really a total stranger in either of the Siamese villages I studied, although initially I was
treated with some suspicion, particularly by the younger generation who knew me least,
and by those who thought that I was a government agent sent to investigate the size of
land holdings in Baan Maalaj.

There was some justification for this suspicion, for at the time my research began
there had been some disquiet among the Siamese as well as the neighbouring Malays
regarding the rumours that the government might be acquiring lands for its development
projects. The cause of the rumours was not far away from Baan Maalaj. About 4
kilometres away is a small fishing village located at a rivermouth and plan was already
under way to develop it into a regional port. Word began to spread around that the
government was about to acquire lands as part of the development. The Siamese
themselves felt that they were in a more vulnerable position than the Malays, because of
the long-standing Siamese presumption that the Malay government, given the choice,
would acquire lands belonging to other ethnic groups first, Siamese including, rather than
those of the Malays.

Already a Chinese household from another district had moved to Baan Maalaj
because its land had been acquired by the government for an industrial zone. Although
Malay lands were the ones mostly alienated and high prices were paid by the authority as compensation, the Chinese household had little reason to be happy because it could not use that money to buy just any piece of land in Malay Reservation areas. In contrast a Malay in such a situation could easily buy another piece of land just about anywhere in the state. The head of the Chinese family felt that the best that he could do under the circumstances was to settle down temporarily on their relatives' land.

So when I was about to collect data on land holding in Baan Maalaj, I sensed some resistance which was manifested in a very polite way. I became more aware of such reluctance when I related this underlying current of uneasiness to earlier incident at a temple function, soon after my arrival in the village.

A mad woman was among those attending the temple ritual one morning. While I was photographing the proceedings she confronted me and began to assault me verbally, shouting at the top of her voice and waving her folded umbrella threateningly. Her frenzied behaviour obviously caused some disturbance to the chanting monks and the solemn crowd of people in the midst of the religious function. But an interesting thing was that she was accusing me of being a government agent -- a mata-mata gelap (Malay: detective) -- sent to catch "bad people". To be frank I was really scared at the moment because there was no telling what harm she could have done to me or my camera; the sound of her shrieking voice was even more frightening.

I feared the humiliation of a blow from her umbrella rather than the pain. Somehow I managed to control myself and told her nicely that I was merely taking pictures. To this she quickly responded, "Oh yes! You are taking pictures alright. But you are coming to take our lands and catch our bad people too!" At that instant I asked her, "Who told you that?" She shouted back at me, "Everybody in the village is talking about it. You just asked any of these people in there," pointing to the crowd in the sermon hall. By then everyone in the hall had turned their attention away from the monks to the little drama outside. Suddenly I found myself looking into a hall full of
some hundreds of bewildered pairs of eyes gazing towards us. But before I realised it some elderly men rushed out of the hall and rescued me by leading the mad woman away and calming her down.\footnote{These people later turned out to be members of the sangkhaarii and subsequently they became my constant companions and informants during the fieldwork.}

The real shock of the incident did not come to me until after a few months later when I was going around the village to conduct a house-to-house survey. At first I also wanted the survey to record the size of each household's landholding. It was during the course of this interview that I sensed the reluctance on the part of many villagers to answer questions regarding land whereas other questions were answered with relative ease and sincerity. Almost no one reported the exact size of their landholding. Many simply answered by saying, "Yes, we do have land, but not much; just enough to make a living." More detailed enquiry elucidated responses such as, "Just two to three pieces, very small lots, not worth working on actually... But we don't have anything else..." From then on I restrained myself from pursuing any longer questions regarding land.

There had also been initial suspicion from others in the village too. After I had been in the village a few months, a friend confessed that the people had been unwilling to give me information about their religion because of a previous incident involving a Malay in another settlement. I was told that this particular man had many Siamese friends whom he regularly visited in Baan Maalaj. One day he asked about the Siamese about their religion and the kind of activities they have at the temple. Unsuspectingly the Siamese told him what he wanted to know.

However, this man in turn re-told whatever that he had thus learnt to a gathering of people in his village's mosque. The way he communicated with his audience really angered the Siamese, because apparently the Malay mocked Buddhist practices to the delight of his listeners. Eventually the event in the mosque came to the knowledge of the Siamese. They were irritated with the Malay for betraying their friendship. After this
incident many Siamese became cautious and suspicious of any strangers especially Malays, who appear to be interested in the Buddhist religion.\footnote{This suspicion is not without reason for the Siamese firmly believe that no Malay in his right state of mind would want to adopt the Buddhist religion. Hence, any Malay who goes around the village expressing his interest in the Siamese religion ought to be handled with extreme caution, because the chances are that he is not serious at all -- he is only main-main (Malay: mucking around).}

Apart from the occurrences just described, I managed to do my research without much difficulty. Initial suspicion was only short-lived as my real purposes became known to more and more people in the village. As I began to gain more and more proficiency in the local Siamese dialect the people began to see the seriousness and sincerity of my research. In Baan Maalaj I was most fortunate to be given the use of a monk’s quarters by the abbot.

Outline of Chapters

In Chapter 2, I discuss some general aspects of Kelantan society which are directly relevant to the Siamese. In historical terms the Siamese established themselves well before the influx of other migrant groups. In the same chapter I also discuss the relationship between the Siamese and the Chinese in terms of political alliance, in which the Chinese usually play the leading role as patrons of the Siamese. In demographic terms the Chinese and the Siamese are outnumbered by the Malays, but because Kelantan rural Chinese are able to identify themselves with the larger, mainstream Chinese of the west coast states, they also have some influence, although very limited, in state politics. The Siamese in this regard rely heavily on the patronage of the local Kelantan Chinese for political leadership.

Chapter 3 concerns the village of study, Baan Maalaj. An important point about the village is that about half of its population consists of Chinese, yet the village is characteristically Siamese because in the absence of any other distinctive marker, the temple has emerged as the main focus of social and religious life of the village. The main feature of the village economy is that it is no longer based on rice but rather on
commercial growing of tobacco. Although this has radically changed the pattern of economic life of the village, the people of the village see themselves as members of the same community and the temple provides the basis of such identification.

Chapter 4 deals with a general view of the organisation of the state's Order of Monks (Sangha) and the discussion serves to illustrate the pre-dominance of the Siamese in matters pertaining to Theravada Buddhist religion and it also demonstrates that Kelantanese Sangha is essentially an extension of Thailand’s ecclesiastical organisation. This chapter also discusses the importance the Siamese attach to ordination as one of the means of maintaining a Buddhist tradition.

Chapter 5 examines these roles more closely by looking at the organisation of the temple in Baan Maalaj. Although members of the clergy are exclusively Siamese the temple receives support from most households in the village regardless whether they are Siamese or Chinese. Likewise the temple also receives support from people outside the village which forms part of its larger congregation, including Siamese and Chinese from other places. Despite the overwhelming support of the Chinese the temple remains an institution which is characteristically Siamese, for the conduct of most of its rituals are done in the popular Siamese tradition.

In Chapter 6, 7 and 8 I take up this point in more detail. The participation of the Siamese in various temple functions serves to illustrate the level of adherence and commitment to Buddhism. In the running of various temple events it is the Siamese who assume the crucial role. While the Chinese contribute money generously to the temple the select group of people who make the major decisions and supervise the running of events during these functions are almost exclusively Siamese. Chapter 9 is the conclusion.
CHAPTER 2
THE RESEARCH AREA

Introduction

This chapter describes the setting of the field research and comprises several sections. The first outlines the historical ties that existed between Kelantan and Thailand during the early part of the present century and before. This is to demonstrate that the Siamese social phenomenon is not a new import in Kelantan. In fact, it will be argued, the previous dominance of the Siamese kingdom over the Malay states facilitated the southward movement of Siamese people and the establishment of their settlements in this part of the peninsula.

I will also discuss briefly the population structure of Kelantan and highlight the minority status of both the Siamese and Chinese in demographic terms. A most important characteristic of the Siamese population of Kelantan is that they are mostly confined to the rural areas. This characteristic differentiates them from other migrant groups which reside mainly in urban centres, or on plantations and in mining belts of the West coast states (e.g. most of the later immigrants from China and the Indian sub-continent).

By being a rural minority and lacking an urban elite the Siamese, unlike the Chinese, exercise little, if any, influence on the affairs of state and government which may affect their welfare. This is demonstrated in the next section which discusses the extent of Siamese involvement in local party politics. Despite their apparent lack of concern the reality is that Siamese interest in the political process of the country is often represented by other dominant ethnic groups, particularly by the Chinese who appear to have assumed the role of "champion" and "broker" for the Siamese cause.
Figure 2-1: Peninsular Malaysia and Southern Thailand
The Historical Link between Kelantan and Siam

The Kelantan river plain together with the greater Patani region, comprising the southern Thai provinces of Narathiwat, Patani, Yala and Songkhla constitute a distinctive ethnographic area. Though it is an ethnically variegated area, it is one in which Malays predominate. On both sides of the international border Thai and Malay cultures influence each other in various ways.

The cultural diversity of the region can be partly attributed to Siamese influence, the extent of which varied from period to period. Local Malay politics prior to the twentieth century were dominated by Siamese sovereign power. The support of the Siamese king and his princely representatives was crucial to the outcome not only of wars between Malay rulers and district chiefs but also of feuds for succession to Malay thrones.

The role of Siam in the affairs of Malay states has been adequately covered by various scholars. However, the point that is relevant to the present study is that the mere political presence of Siam, as some kind of super-power which the Malay states had to acknowledge, was highly conducive to the movement of Siamese settlers southwards into the Kelantan river plain. Hence, the original Siamese settlers seemed to have been able to enjoy some kind of advantage and freedom which resulted from the presence siamoise at the higher level of diplomacy between Kelantan and Siam. Given this it was most unlikely for anyone to express an open hostility or even resistance to the coming of the Siamese peasants, least of all the local chiefs, for fear that opposition raised against Siamese settlements in Kelantan could possibly cause a strain in the relationship between local Malay rulers and their Siamese overlord. The local Malay rulers could ill-afford

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such tension since they lived under constant surveillance by Siam.\textsuperscript{2} Nor are there any recorded cases of Malay opposition against the establishment of settlements by the Siamese in Kelantan.

It seems that the establishment of peasant settlements in Kelantan was not in any sense an outcome of "colonial" policy on the part of the Siamese kingdom. Whatever political interest the Siamese kingdom had over the Malay states was not for the sake of establishing Siamese settlements but for the purpose of gaining military and material support in its campaign against its Burmese neighbour and the British. Certainly no Siamese villages are known to have been established by royal decree from Bangkok. Kershaw (1973:4) expresses this view:

The migration of the Thais to Kelantan occurred, however, during epochs beyond memory, when Kelantan shared with Patani the character of a Malay state under the loose suzerainty of Siam. I do not believe that the Thai's ancestors came, for the most part, in the service of Siamese power, but rather as farmers moving slowly southward from Patani, itself essentially a part of the Malay world.

The earlier history of Kelantan prior to the beginning of the present century supported the general picture that Siam had influence, although of varying nature and degree, in the internal affairs of Malay states.\textsuperscript{3} Historically Kelantan is related to Thailand through its close ties with other Malay states in the southern part of present-day Thailand, particularly Patani. On this Wyatt (1974:3) writes,

\textsuperscript{2}In fact, there was even an attempt to exploit this situation during the Kelantan civil war of succession in 1839. One of the contenders for the throne, Tuan Senik, wrote to the royal court in Siam that Siamese people and monks in Kelantan were being ill-treated by his rival, Tuan Besar (Skinner 1965:37, 43). Apparently Senik thought that he could thus influence Siamese authority against Tuan Besar. But nothing eventuated, for the Siamese were pragmatic in their dealings with the Malay states and "... well able to separate political and economic interests from religious affairs" (Skinner 1984; personal communication). Nevertheless, the attempt made by Tuan Senik testifies to the fact that local rulers and chiefs considered Siamese settlers in Kelantan as a special group of people whose presence must at the least be tolerated, if not properly accommodated. The account by Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir Munshi also mentions that it was customary for the Siamese king to be the last person to decide on the next successor to the throne of Kelantan in the event of a dispute. (See Abdullah bin Abdul Kadir (1960:60), Kassim Ahmad (1960:74), Klinkert (1889:45)).

\textsuperscript{3}Skinner (1965) gives a detailed account of how the internal rivalry for the state throne of Kelantan, which resulted in the civil war of 1839, was eventually put to an end by direct involvement of Siam. For accounts by other writers see also Wyatt (1974) and Chan Su Ming (1965:159).
... The history of Patani and Kelantan cannot be written without reference to Siam, which so often involved itself, and became involved, in those states. Neither is Thailand absent in the records of the twentieth century. The kingdom was an active participant in the affairs of Trengganu, Kelantan and Kedah almost from the fall of Ayudhya in 1767; it was recognised, and acted as, the paramount power in, and suzerain of, those states down to their transfer to Britain in 1909, and briefly occupied them again in 1943-45 under Japanese sponsorship.

The structure of power relations between Siam and the Malay states during early and middle of the nineteenth century is best described by Vella (1957:61),

For the essential ingredient in the relationship between Siam and its Malay vassals was the superior physical strength of Siam. The Malays have no bond of language, culture, or religion with the Siamese; they did not look for Siamese leadership in such matters. The bond was one of power; Siam was strong and united; the Malay states were weak and divided.

Vella also asserts that there had been variations in the suzerain-vassal relationship, "The nearer vassals were subjected to greater control than the ones farther from the Siamese territory, and all vassals were closely bound to Bangkok during the period when the Bangkok government was strong" (ibid.). Kelantan was one of the vassal states at the outer fringes and as such had managed to escape the stringent political control of the Siamese. Yet the Siamese influence still manifested itself at the most crucial moments, such as during the feuds for succession to the throne. Apart from that, Kelantan had to send to Bangkok the triennial tribute of gold in the form of a ceremonial tree (Malay: bunga mas). In addition, Malay rulers and principal officers of Malay sultanates were given titles and insignia of office by the Siamese king (Vella 1957:60).

Siamese influence in the affairs of the northern Malay states caused the British

4Thus the real power of Siam over the affairs of the Malay states during the late nineteenth century depended on its ability to enforce its suzerainty over these states so that a powerful ruler at the centre could exert more influence and control over the peripheral Malay states, but if this power were to wane "so too did submission on the part of the dependency." (Sharom Ahmat 1971:97). Similar views are also expressed by Chan Su Ming (1965:159).

5The habit of sending a tribute of gold and silver to Bangkok, in the shape of the controversial tree called bunga mas has been interpreted in various ways. While some writers insist that the bunga mas was sent as a mark of friendship, others argue that the gift was symbolic of the Malay states' political submission to the Siamese. On this, see Khasnor Johan, (1966/66) and Ismail Bakti (1979). See also Cushman and Milner (1979:7 note 41), Gullick (1963:35), Wyatt (1974:5,6,17), Banks (1980:99) and Bonney (1971:11-12).
considerable concern. They sought to contain Siamese power and to consolidate British interests in the area through the Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 1826. The main purpose of this treaty was to limit Siamese influence to the southern border of the Malay states of Kedah, Perlis, Kelantan and Terengganu (Gullick 1963:29, 35; and Sadka 1968:39), thus keeping other Malay States (later as known as Federated Malay States) free from Siamese intervention. The signing of the 1826 treaty was the first step in the design of the British for further expansion of their sphere of influence to include the northern Malay states. The next step was taken towards the end of the nineteenth century when the real influence of the Siamese in the Malay states was further curtailed by the signing of a treaty on 6th of October 1902 whereby a British officer was appointed as a resident to advise the Kelantan government (Mohamed b. Nik Mohd. Salleh 1974:40). The system of residency did not last for long because further transfer of power from Siam to the British took place again with the signing of the Anglo-Siamese Treaty of 10th March, 1909. By this instrument all Siamese rights of suzerainty, protection, administration and control over Kelantan and Terengganu, were transferred to Great Britain (ibid.:55).

The two treaties arrested direct influence of the kingdom of Siam in the Malay states, but the long involvement of the Siamese prior to the coming of the British had a lasting cultural impact. A considerable degree of "Siamization" had taken place. In Perlis the Skeat expedition of 1899-1900 reported the absence of any regalia displayed by its Malay king, save for "a written authority (chap) given by the Siamese government" (Skeat 1953:136).
In Kedah the effect of Siamese influence as early as the fifteenth century is evident from the synthesis of Siamese and Malay cultural attributes. A case in point concerns people known as the Samsam. Banks (1980:107) mentions them in reference to the long period of Siamese involvement in Kedah; "Siamese forces came to Kedah under hostile circumstances, settled, converted to Islam ... but maintained the Thai [sic] language and some Siamese customs." Eventually these Thai-speaking Muslims became legally Malays by virtue of their religion and are recognised as such by the state's legislation. In contrast, Thai-speakers who remain Buddhists are recognised as Siamese, an ethnic category distinct from the Malays. The existence of Thai-speaking Muslims is evidence enough of how strong the Siamese influence was in Kedah.

There are no cases similar to the Samsam on the east coast of the Peninsula and no groups of Muslims are known to use the Siamese language as their mother tongue. Some exceptional Malay individuals speak Siamese well but it has never become the the language of any Malay community. Nevertheless, Kelantanese Malays use Siamese loanwords and draw heavily on the terminology of the Siamese belief system.

No one has determined exactly when the Siamese first came to Kelantan, not even the Siamese themselves. But a safe estimate is that many of their villages were established more than one hundred years ago or at least around the late 19th and early 20th Centuries. Some villages are known to have been in existence for more than 150 years, presumably longer (see Golomb 1978; Kershaw 1969 and 1984; Ismail 1977, 1980a, 1980b and 1982). There are oral traditions relating to Siamese ancestors who were the first settlers. For instance, a Siamese settlement in Semerak attributes its origin to a group of people sent "somewhere from Bangkok" or Sukothai in the search for a king's

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10 For more details on the Thai-speaking Muslims of Kedah and the Samsam, see Banks (1980:107-111). See also Skeat (1953:133).

11 The Samsam have quite a unique position in the local Malay society; despite of their Siamese mother-tongue they are considered Malays by virtue of the Islamic religion which they embrace. But for those who remain Buddhists they are now classified as Siamese. See also Skeat (1953:133) for this unique conversion from one ethnic group to another by a change in the adopted religion.

12 For Siamese loanwords found in regional dialects of northern Malay states, including Kelantan see, for instance, Pepys (1916), Brown (1956), Baker (1939) and Sturrock (1912).
lost white elephant. Since they were unsuccessful in finding the animal they decided to settle down locally rather than return home and risk the death penalty for their failure (Kershaw 1969:81). That incident was supposed to have taken place at a time beyond anyone's living memory.

A Siamese village in Kelantan studied by Golomb has an oral tradition that its original settlers were actually a group of adventurous young people known as the nakleeng who roamed the countryside in search of game and good hunting grounds. They were also accomplished manooraa players who performed at various places that they passed by. It was said that their performance had so impressed a local Malay chief that they were invited to settle down in a village under the the chief's jurisdiction. Ismail (1982:253) mentions that the Siamese village of Aril was originally a settlement which Malays had abandoned. A nakleeng group was invited by the local chief to reoccupy the site which was reverting to jungle so as to control a thriving number of wild pigs.

The Population of Kelantan: the Ethnic Composition

More than 90% of Kelantan's contemporary population is Malay. The Chinese form the second largest ethnic group. Siamese slightly outnumber Indians. Table 2-1 gives a breakdown of ethnic composition of the state.

Although the Siamese were originally immigrant, they nevertheless differ in many respects from other non-indigenous ethnic groups of Malaysia. In the first place, the Siamese are not of recent origin and were established in the state before the massive

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13 For an account of the nakleeng see, for instance, Johnston (1980) and Golomb (1978:19-20).
14 A form of Siamese dance-drama which used to be very common among the Siamese communities in Kelantan and southern Thailand; although it is performed in the Malay dialect of Kelantan its stories "relate the adventures of characters who are not recognisably Malay in origin, in circumstances which are often quite foreign to Malaya" (Sheppard 1959:12). It was thought to have originated from the old Kingdom of Ligor dating back to 400 A.D. Although the ancient kingdom disappeared after about 1250 A.D. when the Siames took control of the country, manooraa was kept alive in many Siamese villages, particularly when it is performed as part of temple functions. For a further account on manooraa see Ginsburg (1972), Nicolas (1924), Sheppard (1959, 1973), Ghulam-Sarwar Yousof (1982) and Kershaw (1982).
15 Downs (1967:120-121) notes that the Siamese population had been nearly constant between 1911 to 1957, around 6,000 to 7,000. This figure does not differ very much from the one for the 1970 census.
Table 2-1: Kelantan: Population by Ethnicity and Stratum, 1980

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>% of ethnic group over total state population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Malays</td>
<td>210,091 (26.3)</td>
<td>588,670 (73.7)</td>
<td>798,761</td>
<td>93.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>26,910 (57.8)</td>
<td>18,957 (42.2)</td>
<td>44,967</td>
<td>5.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siamese</td>
<td>737 (9.8)</td>
<td>6,820 (90.2)</td>
<td>7,557</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indians</td>
<td>2,857 (46.7)</td>
<td>3,265 (53.3)</td>
<td>6,122</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>523 (66.7)</td>
<td>261 (33.3)</td>
<td>784</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>240,218</strong></td>
<td><strong>617,973</strong></td>
<td><strong>858,191</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 1980 Population and Housing Census, Malaysian Government. In parentheses percentage of each ethnic group by rural/urban strata.

influx of the Chinese and Indians during the early part of this century. Secondly, the Siamese are mainly rural dwellers; more than 90% of the total Siamese population in Kelantan live in the rural area. In comparison with other ethnic groups, the Siamese are the least urbanised. Only 9.8% of the total Siamese population of Kelantan live in urban areas, compared with 57.8% of the Chinese and 26.3% of the Malays (Table 2-1).

As can be seen from the table, the Chinese are highly urbanised by comparison with other major ethnic groups of Kelantan, and this pattern follows the trend throughout the country; more than half of the Chinese reside in larger towns (Cf. Hirschman 1972:21).16 Brief mention should now be made on the origins of the Chinese population of Kelantan. While most Chinese who live in urban areas are descendants of immigrants of the later part of nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, most of the rural-based Chinese are

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16 "Urban" area is defined here as a place of 10,000 people and more. See Government of Malaysia, Population and Housing Census of Malaysia 1980 and Hirschman 1972:23.
descendants of those who have arrived much earlier, perhaps as early as the fifteenth century. Chinese immigrants of earlier periods were normally well accepted by local Malays and most settled in rural areas where they are known as "rural Chinese" (Cina kampung) whose social and cultural values have been greatly influenced by the Malays. Although the majority of the "rural" Chinese have adopted much of the local Malay culture they have not become Muslim. Instead they practise certain aspects of Chinese religion while many patronise Siamese Buddhist temples. Even today this earlier group of Chinese consider themselves more Malayanised than the rest of the main Chinese population stream in some ways similar to the Baba group of Malacca, Penang and Singapore.

The Hokkien speakers, who number 26,782, are the largest Chinese dialect group in Kelantan. They comprised more than 59% of the state's Chinese population in 1980. Of the Hokkien speakers, 47% or 12,661 live in rural areas. This number of rural based Hokkien is bigger than the combined total of rural dwellers of other Chinese dialect groups (see Table 2-2).

It is with the "rural Chinese" and the Hokkien speakers that we are concerned here because they typically patronise Siamese temples. Many of their settlements are located quite close to and often form part of Siamese villages. The rural Chinese also have special

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17 For more account on this, see Cushman and Milner (1979:6).
18 There is an exception to this. As in the case of the Chinese settlement of Pulai in Ulu Kelantan, the immigrant Chinese, who were mainly Hakka-speaking, remained characteristically Chinese, experiencing very little assimilation to the indigenous culture. Because of the imbalance in the sex ratio, some of the men married aboriginal (Orang Asli) and Siamese women, but this did not help to assimilate them like other "rural Chinese". For more detail on the Chinese settlement of Pulai, see Middlebrook (1933); for a recent work on the same settlement see Carstens (1980:50, 63). See also Downs (1967:108).
19 For more detailed discussion on earlier Chinese settlements in Kelantan, see Milner and Cushman (1979), Middlebrook, (1933) and Carstens (1980). On Baba Chinese, see Tan (1979). For a brief but insightful account of "rural" Chinese who belong to the earlier group of Chinese immigrants, see Winzeler (1974 and 1981), Kershaw (1981) and Tan (1982). That the earlier Chinese migrant met little opposition from the Malay peasantry could have been due to the fact that the former must have arrived at the time when good agricultural lands were still abundant. On top of that the pattern of residence seems to indicate that the Chinese did not compete with Malays for land, because the former chose to occupy less fertile land, usually quite close to rivers, while the latter preferred, for their padi cultivation, land away from the river (Winzeler 1981:7).
kin relationships with the Siamese because of intermarriage between the two groups during the early years of Chinese migration to this part of the Malay peninsula. Although intermarriage between Siamese and rural Chinese is not as common as it used to be, this special kind of relationship is widely acknowledged today even if neither group can trace it with genealogical precision. However, the special relationship between the Siamese and the rural Chinese is not without some negative effect on the latter. Other Chinese groups, especially those of the west coast and the urban-based tend to consider the rural Chinese comparatively less "Chinese" because of their kinship ties with the Siamese and because of the peculiar version of Hokkien dialect they use when speaking among themselves. Consequently other groups of Chinese often refer to the rural Chinese as "Hokkien-Siam", a term which the latter find very condescending if not quite offensive. The rural Chinese consciously feel that despite their Chinese origin, they are being looked down on by the more recently arrived Chinese. The cultural characteristic of the rural Chinese, of being more acculturated towards the Malays, is also one of the factors which differentiate the rural Chinese from other groups of Chinese.

**Ethnic Politics in Kelantan**

Party politics in Malaysia are ethnically based. Tennant (1975:80) remarks that Malaysian politics as a whole can be described as the politics of pluralism and political parties seem to be always organised on an ethnic basis. For instance, the present coalition of the federal government, Barisan Nasional, is actually a composite of various ethnically-based parties, representing the Malays, the Chinese and the Indians. Indeed, political pluralism is so entrenched that political parties which appeal to all ethnic groups do not really survive for long unless they swing away from their original objective. The exception to this is the case of Gerakan, but then its influence is limited to Penang, the most Chinese of all Malaysian states.

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20 The Kelantanese version of the Hokkien dialect has absorbed many Malay and Siamese terms to the extent that it is little understood outside the rural Chinese circle. Chinese from other parts of the country, particularly from Kuala Lumpur or Penang, even if they are Hokkien speakers, may find some difficulties in understanding the Kelantanese version of the dialect.

21 On the usage of "Hokkien-Siam" see Tan (1982:31) who expresses the same view. See also Kershaw (1981:82, note 23).
Table 2-2: *Kelantan: Chinese Population by Dialect Group, 1980*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dialect Group</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>% of dialect group over total number of Chinese</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hokkien</td>
<td>14,121 (52.7)</td>
<td>12,661 (47.3)</td>
<td>26,782</td>
<td>59.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cantonese</td>
<td>3,897 (62.8)</td>
<td>2,309 (37.2)</td>
<td>6,206</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khek (Hakka)</td>
<td>2,986 (59.3)</td>
<td>2,047 (40.7)</td>
<td>5,033</td>
<td>11.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teochew</td>
<td>1,544 (81.8)</td>
<td>344 (18.2)</td>
<td>1,888</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hainanese</td>
<td>2,264 (79.9)</td>
<td>569 (20.1)</td>
<td>2,833</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kwongsai</td>
<td>130 (18.9)</td>
<td>557 (81.1)</td>
<td>687</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hokchiu</td>
<td>150 (67.9)</td>
<td>71 (32.1)</td>
<td>221</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hokchia</td>
<td>20 (54.1)</td>
<td>17 (45.9)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>0.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henghua</td>
<td>338 (85.4)</td>
<td>58 (14.5)</td>
<td>396</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Dialects</td>
<td>560 (63.3)</td>
<td>324 (36.7)</td>
<td>884</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>26,010 (57.8)</td>
<td>18,957 (42.2)</td>
<td>44,967</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: 1980 Population and Housing Census, Malaysian Government. In parentheses percentage of each dialect group by rural/urban stratum.*
Because Kelantan is overwhelmingly Malay, political parties there usually focus their attention on specifically Malay issues and political factions and rivalries tend to develop within the Malay community itself. Multi-ethnic politics which typify the west coast states have little significance, except in urban areas with heavy concentrations of non-Malays. Inter-ethnic politics are assumed to have only a peripheral degree of significance in many studies of Kelantan.  

Despite the predominance of Malays in state politics, the real interest of the Chinese and the Indians in Kelantan becomes politically significant mainly at the national level. There is, indeed, a reality to national Chinese or national Indian political interests. Chinese political parties, such as the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA), which is the component party of Barisan Nasional, do have their branches operating in Kelantan. In urban constituencies where the Chinese voters outnumber the Malays, candidates who are Chinese contest the elections. However, there is no substantial Siamese population nationally. Scattered Siamese groups in other states such as Kedah, Perak and Perlis practically remain separated from each other with no common political front to represent them at the national level. In each of these states the involvement of the Siamese in politics is also limited; their small numbers give them little chance of political bargaining. Unlike the Chinese, the Siamese never form a majority in any one particular locality decisive enough to attract attention from major political parties.

Despite the apparent apathy of the Siamese towards state issues of politics there have been some attempts by the urban Chinese to politicize the Siamese. For instance, the MCA over the years has been active in soliciting the support of the Siamese. However, there is another paradox here. Although MCA is a partner party in the ruling federal government, MCA's concerns are mainly geared towards urban Chinese. In the view of the Siamese, who are mainly rural based, MCA is no less alien than the Pan

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22 For example, in the collection of essays edited by Roff (1974) on Kelantan there is little mention of the role of ethnicity in the political arena of the state since the main issue tends to be centred on the Malays without due consideration being given to the role of non-Malays. Others considered Kelantan as the bastion of the Malay culture and society; overwhelming attention, therefore, is given to issues which are relevant only in an exclusively Malay context.
Malaysian Islamic Party (PMIP). Hence approaches made by MCA members are met with some degree of scepticism and caution by the Siamese. However, their association with the MCA offers some benefits. The party had actually been successful in playing a brokerage role on behalf of the Siamese, typically at procuring government aid and the ruling party's pork-barrel funds towards subsidising temple facilities. Apart from this the Siamese believe that there is nothing more positive that the Siamese could expect from the MCA. The general feeling among the Siamese, at least in the village of my study, is that if the Siamese have been able to pull through alright during the turmoil of PMIP government of the sixties, there is no reason why the Siamese could not do the same under the present Barisan Nasional government. For the Siamese the real period of political crisis, of being placed under the rule of a political party noted for its staunch pro-Islam and pro-Malay stand, is now over.

Because of their small numerical strength the Siamese do not form a strong pressure group. However, the Chinese, particularly members of the MCA, still feel that by being able to procure Siamese support during major elections, they can demonstrate that they are in the position to manipulate the Siamese and this has some bearing on the existing relationships between the Siamese and the Chinese. If we take into consideration the close ties of religion and to some limited extent, kinship, between the Siamese and the Chinese it is quite logical for the Siamese to affiliate themselves politically with a Chinese party rather than, say, with a Malay party. In view of this it is quite justified for the MCA to feel obliged to look after political interests of the Siamese and become their brokers. Moreover, at the rural level the Siamese and the Chinese feel as if they are of the same people (raw meun kan). Besides, patronage of the Siamese by the MCA, as mentioned above, is not without some mutual benefits particularly to Siamese temples. MCA’s patronage of the Siamese at the least prevents Siamese votes from falling into the hands of the opposition. After all, by supporting MCA the Siamese are also endorsing the ruling federal party, to which MCA is affiliated.

Concerted efforts by the Chinese to involve the Siamese in politics have had some
unfortunate consequences. In 1979, a prominent Chinese businessman from Kota Bharu, who was of rural background, toured Siamese villages to recruit party members for the MCA. He subsequently presented to the MCA central committee a list of the names of Siamese of various villages in Pasir Mas district. The central committee in Kuala Lumpur rejected these nominations on the grounds that the names were not Chinese. This decision came as a surprise and disappointment to the state branch of MCA which had sought to convince the Siamese that their representation by the Chinese was logical because of the close and long association between the two groups in Kelantan. Despite this, the MCA central committee, which apparently had the most tenuous association with the Siamese, could not perceive the latter as useful party members. It is not surprising that the MCA's national leadership failed to appreciate why the Kelantan Chinese sought to recruit the Siamese. While local MCA leaders in Kelantan have a close alliance with the Siamese, they are also radically different in cultural outlook from the national leaders of the MCA. Leaders of the state branch of the MCA have always been mainly Chinese who belong to the older wave of immigrants, and who have adopted much of the Malay culture.

The attempt to recruit the Siamese into the MCA was by no means the first endeavour to mobilise a marginal group into politics. The efforts of Ho Peng Ann to do so have been described in detail by Kershaw (1982). I also become aware of his activities among the Siamese during my fieldwork in 1976 and later in 1982, and what follows is largely based on those observations. Like other Chinese he saw himself as a "broker" of

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23 There is definitely a limitation to Siamese membership in the party basically because MCA is exclusively Chinese. On the other hand in Kedah, I was informed that the Siamese are welcome as members of United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), the dominant partner of Barisan Nasional of which MCA is also a member. How reliable is this information I have yet to verify, but in Kelantan, the Siamese are treated as if they are Malays with regard to their ownership of land in Reservation Areas and more recently, to their participation in an investment trust managed by the government, called, *Amanah Saham Nasional*, the main objective of which is to increase the holding of shares by the indigenous people in the national stock market. Two monks of Baan Maalaj invested in this scheme. I have a strong belief that Siamese from other settlements also participate in this scheme.

24 An example of this can be seen in the case of MCA branches in Kelantan which are the only ones which use Malay as the official medium of communication during party meetings and for party correspondence. This compares with other MCA branches in west coast states which use either English or Mandarin during their official meetings (Asmah Hj. Omar 1985:26).
the Siamese, especially when it came to dealing with the government bureaucracy. However, there is a big difference between Ho and other Chinese leaders who take an interest in becoming self-appointed "brokers" for the Siamese; Ho was a postmaster whereas the latter are mostly prominent businessmen. According to Kershaw (1982:84) Ho was planning to get himself appointed by the state government as "Head of the Thai Community". This ceremonial office is held invariably by a Kelantan Chinese who thereby "represents" the whole of the Siamese community of Kelantan and whose responsibility is "to salute the Sultan on his birthday celebrations" (ibid.). The rivalry for it is actually a game mainly played by the Chinese for the reward of prestige that goes with it. An obvious way of becoming the honorary "Head of the Thai Community" is through the leadership of a voluntary body called the Thai Buddhist Association of Kelantan. Many Siamese are aware of this organisation but they have little interest in its running. Indeed, the voluntary association is the creation and "club" of a few English-educated and urban Siamese who collaborate in the MCA's attempt to secure Siamese votes during major elections. The Thai Buddhist Association depends on the MCA for access to government handouts and financial assistance. Hence, the well-being of the Buddhist Association was assured as long as the Siamese were willing to commit their votes to MCA during major elections; both, therefore, were mutually beneficial to each other.

The brokerage role the Chinese have been playing for the Siamese community is not new. Chinese businessmen usually assist the Siamese to negotiate in matters involving the bureaucracy. Official letters from the government to Buddhist monks and temples were often addressed to Chinese business concerns. An example of this is the correspondence from the state secretariat office of Kelantan to the Chief Abbot of Kelantan dated 8 July 1940 which was addressed to the care of Chop Ban Seng, presumably a Chinese business concern based in Kota Bharu (see, Setia Usaha Kelantan File No. 621/40 and also District Office of Pasir Puteh File No. 119/40, Malaysian National Archive).

In fact, Ho represents the new breed of people who are associated with the bureaucracy (including school-teachers) and who are making headway in the political leadership of Chinese population of Kelantan. This has caused some growing concern among the traditional leaders, the majority of whom are businessmen.

I must emphasise here the ceremonial nature of the post. For the majority of the Siamese this post has little relevance. Like the case with the Thai Buddhist Association the post is another "urban" creation which has no direct bearing on ordinary Siamese villagers. I am quite certain that the majority of Siamese rural folk do not know who is the present "Head of the Thai Community" but they know for certain who is the Chief priest of Kelantan and who their respective village headmen are.

As such, the Thai Buddhist Association is necessarily an urban association with little relevance for ordinary Siamese folks living in rural areas.
Ho's ambition was to become the "Head of the Thai Community" by gaining control of the Thai Buddhist Association. However, he was never an MCA member and to gain access to important positions in the Buddhist association he had to compete with others who were fully endorsed by the MCA. His strategy was not only to attend as many temple ceremonies as possible but also to play a leading role in various temple affairs. He enhanced his reputation among the Siamese by negotiating in 1973 for a visit by Kelantan's crown prince who officially opened the kitchen cum assembly hall at the temple of the village where the family of Ho's second wife resides (Kershaw 1982:85). He gained further prestige by arranging the performances of manoora on the national television network. But some of his actions proved embarrassing and politically self-defeating. In one case he "rescued" a Siamese woman (who wanted to become a Muslim) from the custody of the Majlis Ugama Islam Kelantan (State Religious Council), a daring escapade which irritated not only the religious council but also the government bureaucracy. This was one of several exploits which, as Kershaw reports, antagonised both the authorities and the MCA. There was also a widespread rumour that a leading monk in Kelantan had accused him of misappropriating funds he had collected on behalf of the Thai Buddhist Association.

However, the major setback to Ho's political career happened when he lost his temper at a victory celebration for a parliamentarian whose favour he was courting. He by-passed the MCA by organising this function at Jung Khaw's temple in Tumpat district, and thereby sought to monopolise all credit for "delivering" the Siamese votes during the previous election. That credit was also claimed by the MCA which Ho thought he could ignore because the parliamentarian was elected on UMNO's ticket. But the night before the celebration a delegation of MCA leaders and a few Siamese visited the parliamentarian and warned her of the trouble if she attended the victory celebration because many people disapproved of Ho's action in by-passing the MCA. The

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29Details of these events and their political and social implications for the Siamese have been described by Kershaw (1982).

30UMNO, which stands for United Malays National Organisation, is a component of the ruling party, the Alliance -- now Barisan Nasional -- to which MCA is also affiliated.
parliamentarian heeded the warning and neither attended the function nor even bothered to inform Ho's organising committee of the change in her plans. Apparently Ho had underestimated the influence of the MCA on the parliamentarian. Realising that he had been "snubbed" by her, he failed to contain his anger and a poster which featured the parliamentarian's photograph was burnt during his outburst of rage.

The reason for this outburst was easy enough to understand. Everything had gone according to plan right to the very morning the celebration was supposed to have taken place. The preparations were elaborate and included a gigantic cake with a salutation in icing for the visiting politician. Receptions sheds were constructed and decorated in the temple compound. It was going to be a grand occasion as far as most of the villagers were concerned. The guest of honour was due to arrive in the mid-morning. Everyone waited till well beyond that time. By twelve o'clock, the crowd was becoming restless and by mid-afternoon it looked as if the politician was not going to come at all. Word began to spread that they were all in for disappointment. By then many who had waited since early in the morning started to go home. Only the anxious committee remained plus others who were curious to see what would eventuate.

By mid-afternoon it became obvious that the politician was not coming at all, and the restlessness of the remaining few proved too much for Ho. He had worked very hard to make the occasion a success. But in the eyes of those present that day he had "lost face". It is not really clear whose anger erupted first. Nothing violent actually happened until someone with a knife stabbed the cake which others took delight in kicking around the temple compound, in a symbolic act of great disrespect to the parliamentarian. The rest joined the agitation by stripping the reception sheds and by burning the decorations along with posters bearing the absent politician's photograph.

Since Ho was the chief organiser of the reception he incurred the blame for what happened. The parliamentarian and the MCA used their influence to arrange his immediate transfer to a west coast post office thus severing his ties with the Siamese in
The incident I have described by no means typifies the nature of Siamese involvement in politics. To the best of my knowledge there has been no comparable event involving the Siamese of Kelantan. After Ho's transfer any further effort by Chinese to politicise the Siamese through the temple network has met with little, if any enthusiasm.

What does the whole incident reflect? I offer three observations with regard to the involvement of the Siamese in party politics. Firstly, while some Siamese are aware that there is a need for their interests to be politically represented there is a definite lack of political leadership among them. Their monks are leaders, but not outside of temple affairs. Instead, Chinese who identify with Siamese as fellow Buddhists assume that role.

Secondly, the Siamese accept the political leadership of the Chinese with pragmatism. When that leadership does not bring the Siamese into direct confrontation with the government and the bureaucracy such leadership is followed without question. As long as the Chinese political leadership is able to "deliver the goods" the Siamese are more than willing to "deliver" their votes. As soon as that leadership creates complications the Siamese are quite capable of rejecting it. There is, therefore, a selective use of Chinese leadership and brokerage by the Siamese. Otherwise how does one explain the initial success of Ho in gaining support from the Siamese? For all his doings before the incident involving the parliamentarian, Ho appeared to be most "heroic" to the Siamese but afterwards, even the clergy, which was not supposed to be politically

31But that did not really ostracize Ho for a long time. Eventually he got himself transferred to a post office in the federal capital. Being in Kuala Lumpur he was able to re-establish his contacts with the Siamese, especially the younger ones, who frequented the federal capital for employment. Ho helped many of them to look for jobs, even giving them temporary lodgings at his house. His continued involvement was evident enough when he played quite a leading role in the cremation ceremony of the late abbot of Aril in 1978. For the souvenir publication of the occasion he wrote the life history of the deceased abbot. But most interesting is the fact that he called himself "Honorary Representative for Kelantan of the Buddhist Missionary Society of Malaysia" (Wakil Kehormat Kelantan, Persatuan Penyibaran Ugama Buddha Malaysia di-Kelantan), thereby reasserting his position in the eyes of the Siamese. (See Kershaw (1982:88) for an extract of the commemorative publication). Whether Ho's return to the village this time was well received is beyond my speculation, but certainly Ho still had some of the old charm and influence he used to command to merit him a place in the organising committee of the cremation ceremony.
motivated, rejected him (Kershaw 1982:86). In fact, by denying him support at the most crucial moments the clergy prevented it from assuming greater proportions and promoted the view that the only Siamese involved were the few who were Ho's immediate followers.

Ho's involvement in the incident was a threat to the MCA's reputation as a political patron of the Siamese because the party attaches great importance to its image of being able to control and deliver Siamese votes. Ho had intervened in state affairs and party politics without realising the seriousness of his action. He was, in fact, upstaging the MCA by attempting to organise the Siamese politically thereby causing a split among the Siamese voters. It is easy enough to understand the MCA's concern because the party has always considered itself as the political patron of the Siamese. As such Ho had to be dealt with severely, for intruding into a preserve which had always been claimed by MCA. The harsh treatment he received from the parliamentarian who changed her mind at the eleventh hour and the disclaimer by the Siamese clergy of its association with Ho proved this.

The most pressing question regarding the incident above is: what quality did Ho possess which the MCA leadership lacked? Certainly he operated at the grass-roots level. Apart from the fact that association with Ho did bring some tangible benefit to the Siamese, his greatest asset was vested in his ability to establish a good rapport with ordinary Siamese villagers. His marriage to a Siamese women had facilitated this even more. In contrast, the MCA's top leadership is always urban-based and the state branch of the party is controlled mainly by Chinese businessmen whose contact with the Siamese is far less frequent than Ho's.32 Despite Ho's initial success in influencing the Siamese he was eventually abandoned by them. It seemed that given the choice between Ho and MCA leadership, the Siamese preferred the latter. Even though Siamese interests are almost peripheral in the eyes of MCA's national headquarters -- as evidenced by the rejection of the nominations of Siamese names for MCA membership by its central

32These are "big time" urban patrons of Siamese temples, whose weekend retreat to Siamese rural temples enhanced even more their urban status and the social distance it creates.
committee in Kuala Lumpur -- the Siamese still preferred the MCA's leadership and rejected Ho. This could be partly explained by the fact that MCA represents an organisation of Chinese businessmen who are able to offer the Siamese many advantages, particularly employment and trade contacts. The Siamese initial support of Ho definitely put this opportunity at great risk. Realising that they were actually endorsing the wrong faction (if Ho and his followers could be so-called) the Siamese backed down from supporting Ho.

Thirdly, despite the docility of the Siamese in politics and the apparent obliviousness of the Buddhist clergy to affairs of state there is ample evidence that monks play an inconspicuous but decisive role at the most crucial moments. While no monks ever vote, their advice is always sought by the villagers and to gain Siamese political support, one needs to gain the sympathy of the clergy first. Ho realised this all along, for he went to great lengths to do favours for as many monks and temples as possible: In addition to that, Ho made sure that he was present personally at every temple ceremony he could possibly attend. He even took the initiative of becoming a broker for urban Chinese who wanted to make merit at the temples.

On the whole it can be said that to some limited extent the Siamese are quite willing, given the proper leadership, to take an active part in politics. While the case of Ho is not typical, it shows how far the Siamese are prepared to be politically motivated. There is also the dilemma of the Siamese associating themselves politically with the more dominant ethnic groups. As mentioned above, there are many obstructions to their membership of Chinese or Malay parties. While the rural Chinese, who understand the Siamese sentiments, are interested in mobilising the Siamese as though they are Chinese, there are obvious limitations to their doing so. Likewise, the Malay parties do not see the support of the Siamese voters as anything critical, for their number is much too small to be of any importance.

33 While Ho could do the same, being a postmaster his capacity is obviously quite limited in contrast to that of Chinese businessman.
In the above discussion I have outlined the major dimensions in the relationship between the Chinese and the Siamese of Kelantan. I have stressed that politically the Siamese are relevant to the Chinese at the state rather than national level. Siamese support of Chinese political parties has in the main been generated by the existing close relationship between the two ethnic groups which dates back to the nineteenth century, perhaps earlier. We will next examine the relationship between the Chinese and the Siamese as seen at the village level.
CHAPTER 3
BAAN MAALAJ: THE VILLAGE OF STUDY

The village of study is known as Baan Maalaj; the name is Siamese but the Malays called it Kampung Balai. It is a coastal village located in the northern part of Bachok administrative district.\(^1\)

The most important aspect of Baan Maalaj's economy is that it is no longer a paddy growing community; all fields formerly used for paddy have now become tobacco farms. Households in the village have ceased to grow any of the rice they consume but import it from other areas. Tobacco production has also led to the abandonment of vegetable gardening and other traditional occupations. Employment in urban centres including Kuala Lumpur and Singapore contributes substantially to the income of households. Indeed most youths of the village have found jobs outside of Baan Maalaj and many of them reside temporarily at or near their work places. Nevertheless, I shall argue that the people of Baan Maalaj constitute a community whose existence depends on the institution of the Siamese Buddhist temple. Temple affairs\(^3\) demand special attention because it is through them that the Chinese and Siamese of the village proclaim a collective identity. One of my main tasks is to investigate not only why the solidarity

\(^1\) The people of Baan Maalaj claim that "Bachok" is a Malay corruption of baang caak, Siamese for "the rivermouth where nipah trees grow". *Nipah* (*nipa fruticans*) is a kind of vegetation of the order *Palmaceae* which grows in tidal swamps and along river banks (Ridley 1922b:71). Its matured pinnate leaves are used for roof thatching while leaflets of the unexpanded leaves are used for making "paper" for traditional cigarette (rokok daun).

\(^2\) For administrative purposes the state is divided into districts called *jañahan*, headed by a district officer (*pegawai jañahan*). The district is divided into subdistricts called *daerah*, each headed by a *penggawa*. Each subdistrict is made up of units called *mukim*, headed by a *penghulu*. A *mukim* is further divided into villages and each village is headed by a *ketua kampung*. Baan Maalaj is located in the *mukim* of Kemasin, in the *daerah* of Perupok and in the district (*jañahan*) of Bachok.

\(^3\) See Chapters 6, 7 and 8.
exists but also why it manifests itself in such emphatically Siamese cultural forms even though Chinese account for half of the population and include the most politically and economically influential individuals in the settlement, among them the headman.

During the fieldwork of 1982 and 1983 there were altogether 126 households in Baan Maalaj. The total population of the village in October 1983 was 528. This figure is but a mere estimate because of the "floating" nature of the population. Many people who belong to a particular household may not be staying in Baan Maalaj at the time of any census, yet they are still counted as members of the household. These people normally stay at their work places during week days but return to the village at regular intervals, particularly during weekends and temple festivals. They nevertheless constitute an integral part of the household because of their contribution towards the total income of the household. As there is no definite pattern of residence for this particular group of people I use the term "floating". Typical of these are younger people who move back and forth as they please between their work places and their parents' house in the village.  

In contrast with other Siamese village communities, the people of Baan Maalaj have no legend regarding the establishment of their settlement. The original settlers are believed to have come from another village in Kelantan, called Tok Mekong, an area further inland, now populated by Malays. It is not clear why they have moved from Tok Mekong to Baan Maalaj, but one theory is that the availability of large tracts of good, low lying land suitable for rice around the village must have prompted the move. People of Baan Maalaj do not remember exactly when their ancestors first came to settle on the present site, but some of the older people still recall their ancestors telling them that during those days there were few Malay villages in the area. There was, therefore, little or no competition for land when the Siamese first established themselves in Baan Maalaj.

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4 There are five vacant houses whose owners were then living outside the village and return only occasionally, mainly during temple functions or whenever family matters needed to be attended personally. Four new buildings were also being built in 1982-1983, including one shophouse.  
5 A "household" in the village, therefore, consists of absentee members as well.  
6 Apparently quite a number of people in Baan Maalaj are familiar with the legend on the establishment of Semerak, indicating, as Kershaw had suggested, a close link between Baan Maalaj and Semerak Siamese.
Baan Maalaj consists of several sectors, each a cluster of houses. The main sectors are named as follows: Baan Maw Haang, Baan Bau Id, Baan Plak, Kong Rajman, Cabang Empat, Baan Nauk, Baan Khon Than, Baan To Klaj, Baan To Khae, Baan Klaang, Baan Wat Paa, Baan Jaaw and Baan Ciin (see map in Figure 3-1). The people of Baan Maalaj cite these names when they refer to locations of houses of their fellow villagers. However, to outsiders all these sectors are collectively known as Baan Maalaj.

While most of the sectors of Baan Maalaj have a mixed population of Siamese and Chinese households, there is one sector which is almost exclusively Chinese. This sector, appropriately known as Baan Ciin, consists of 25 households, all of which are Chinese (i.e. heads of households and spouses, with the exception of one, whose wife is Siamese). Chinese are also found in other sectors but they are heavily outnumbered by Siamese. Because of its total Chinese population Baan Chin could be considered as a separate village by itself, but I would argue that this sector is essentially an integral part of Baan Maalaj social complex, because most of its households give similar support to the temple as the rest of the population. For example, every household in the Chinese sector observes its turn to send food to the monks in accordance with a roster system practised in the whole of Baan Maalaj. If we consider participation in temple rituals as indicative of membership of the community, then the Chinese households in this sector are certainly part of that collectivity. In fact, one argument of this thesis is that by supporting the temple and by being involved in its rituals the Chinese have established and sustained membership in the same community as the Siamese. Apart from that, with respect to subdistrict administration, Baan Chin shares with the rest of the sectors the same government-appointed village headman.

Baan Maalaj is one of the two coastal Siamese settlements in Kelantan, the other is

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7 In fact, some researchers who have briefly visited Baan Maalaj tend to get the impression that the Chinese population of this sector actually comprises of another separate village (cf. Tan, 1982:34; Kershaw, 1973:5).
8 See Chapter 3, page 110 below on the arrangements for daily sending of food to feed the temple residents.
9 The headman is Chinese and lives in the sector known as Cabang Empat (see Figure 3-1).
Figure 3-1: Map of Baan Maalaj

- Nipah vegetation
- Tobacco curing farms
- Tobacco cultivation areas
- Government clinic
- Houses
- Pavilions (saalas)
- Main temple
- Second temple
- Kilometres
- Metalled sealed roads
- Unsealed roads
- Tracks
- Outer limit of Baan Maalaj
Semerak. Most Siamese villages are located further inland with a heavy concentration in Tumpat and Pasir Mas districts, quite close to the Thai-Malaysian border.

Until recently, Baan Maalaj was one of the most isolated Siamese settlements in Kelantan. The usual connection to the state capital, Kota Bharu, was by a surfaced road of 45 kilometres long. There is an alternative route to Kota Bharu by a dirt road. Although the distance is much shorter one had to use a ferry to cross Kemasin river which flows west of Baan Maalaj. When a bridge was built and the dirt road surfaced in 1980 driving distance from Baan Maalaj to the state capital was reduced to a mere 15 kilometres.

The main road that runs through Baan Maalaj also connects the village with the township of Bachok, the district’s administrative centre, and with surrounding Malay villages to the north and west of Baan Maalaj. A feeder road cuts across the main road and the junction, known as Cabang Empat, is the most central location of the village where a number of retail and coffee shops are located. There are five retail shops in the village, all owned by Chinese except for the one which doubles as coffee shop whose owner is Siamese. There are also two other coffee shops, one owned by a Chinese and the other by a Malay who lives in a neighbouring village. Both of the coffee shops conduct booming business during tobacco growing seasons but at other times of the year the one that belongs to the Chinese is closed. The intersection is also the terminal for bus and taxi services to Kota Bharu and Bachok. Malays from surrounding villages use the same place to catch public transport to town. A small open air pavilion provides shelter for waiting passengers.

Not far from the road junction is a government rural health centre run by Malay staff. Although the centre is located in the heart of Baan Maalaj it also serves several Malay villages in the immediate neighbourhood. Since the facilities it provides is limited

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10 The district and its capital have the same name.
11 Both the main and the feeder roads are throughfares for residents of surrounding Malay villages.
serious medical cases are sent to the district clinic where a doctor serves around the clock. Emergency cases that need intensive care are sent on to the hospital in Kota Bharu.12

The Nature of the Village Economy

An important feature of Baan Maalaj’s economy is that it is no longer based on padi growing. Commercial tobacco is now grown to an almost complete exclusion of other crops. Another significant aspect of the economy is that a considerable number of people in Baan Maalaj are employed outside the village, typically in Kota Bharu and other smaller towns in Kelantan and interstate.

The Predominance of Tobacco over Rice

The economy of Baan Maalaj before the sixties was based on the cultivation of rice and market gardening. The area around Baan Maalaj is lowlying and the pioneer settlers who established the village were attracted to it because there was an abundance of land suitable for rice. There was an extensive stretch of flat lands beside a fresh water swamp and close to the river that flows west of the village. Water lilies (which the Siamese called maalaj) thrived in the area; hence the name of the village.13

Rice continued to be of importance to the village until the early sixties when tobacco was gradually introduced in the neighbouring Malay villages. Commercial growing of tobacco was first practised by the neighbouring Malays. Baan Maalaj villagers were quick enough to see the practicality and profitability of tobacco but did not plant the crop immediately. It was not until the middle of the sixties that Baan Maalaj joined in the new economic venture. At first tobacco was grown in rotation with rice, but

12 Perhaps I must draw here the reader’s attention to the kind of relationship which exists between the staff of the health centre and the residents Baan Maalaj. Social interactions between the centre’s staff, who are all Malays, and the rest of the village, are limited although the former patronise the few shops of the village. On top of that they live in quarters erected in the same vicinity as the clinic and all are enclosed within a fence which clearly marks the physical boundary of the health centre from the rest of the village. It is safe to conclude here that as far as the people of Baan Maalaj are concerned the centre’s staff is never a part of the village community but merely a Malay enclave.

13 As to why water-lilies is called maalaj by the local Siamese is not very clear. In central Thai dialect the word maalaj means “garland”.

by the early seventies the pattern of agriculture had shifted entirely to the cash crop. Although the tobacco growing season does not last for more than six months and, therefore, does not occupy the land for the whole year, no rice is grown by anyone in the village, leaving the agricultural land fallow for the rest of the year.

Commercial tobacco growing in Baan Maalaj is part of the larger industry which supplies flue-cured Virginia leaves to cigarette manufacturers in the country. Kelantan is one of the biggest producers of this type of tobacco; it accounts for about 70% of the country's total production of the crop in 1978 (Teo 1979:1). Growing districts are mainly located in coastal areas of the state where large tracts of sandy, well-drained lands are abundant.14 Baan Maalaj is located in one of these districts. Although the land in the village is also suitable for rice growing it is most ideal for tobacco. On top of that the lucrative return from tobacco cultivation is reason enough for rice to be discontinued altogether.

The growing of Virginia tobacco as a cash crop was first introduced in Kelantan in 1959 by a private company, the Malayan Tobacco Company (now Malaysian).15 The approach taken by MTC was quite unique in the sense that for the first time a commercial company took active interest in the growing of the crop and in conducting private research to improve yield by experimenting on various methods of plant culture. The company provided technical assistance and supervisory services to growers whose main responsibility was to provide land and labour. Apart from that the company gave credit to cover the purchase of seeds, fertilizers and other materials needed in the growing of the crop. Decisions regarding all aspects of tobacco culture were made by the company and growers were expected to follow to the letter instructions and directives issued by the management.

14 In local terminology such lands are known as tanah beris and consist of sandy soil which support very little vegetation except for some hardy species. The soil, which drains easily, is ideal for tobacco growing. Previously this type of land was in least demand but with the introduction of tobacco it has now become a valuable asset.

15 The discussion on the MTC is derived mainly from Teo (1979) and from the information furnished by Encik Hasan Ismail (a senior government officer attached to the National Tobacco Board) to whom I am very grateful.
As commercial tobacco growing provided lucrative returns from minimal capital outlay, many farmers followed the lead of the MTC and established a multitude of small and privately owned companies. By the middle of the sixties the proliferation of such companies caused a serious deterioration in the quality of tobacco leaves produced. As these newly established companies were mainly interested in making as much profit as possible, little effort was spent on advisory services, let alone research. In fact, malpractices in terms of culture requirements and methods of cultivation were widespread. The situation became critical as more farmers grew the crop under poorly supervised conditions and sub-standard yields resulted. The MTC lacked the capacity to extend its advisory and supervisory services to all growers since there were too many of them. This induced the company to change its strategy by concentrating instead on cigarette manufacturing and suspending all its extension services associated with tobacco growing, curing, research and experimentation.

The withdrawal of the MTC from direct involvement in tobacco growing and curing also meant that curing stations and processing facilities previously owned by the company had to be sold to and managed by private owners. As private owners lacked facilities to carry out research, or to perform effective supervisory and advisory functions similar to those previously undertaken by the MTC, more problems started to plague the industry. The general quality of harvests and in the yields underwent a further decline. By this time many farmers had already switched to tobacco growing on a full scale and had converted more land areas for this purpose anticipating a further boom in the industry.

Rapid but uncontrolled expansion of tobacco cultivation and the lack of proper supervision nearly caused the industry to collapse. However, the government stepped in by establishing a statutory body, the National Tobacco Board (NTB) in August 1973 to take over the vacuum created by MTC in regard to supervision, research and overall control of the industry (Teo 1979:2). Under the present set up the NTB issues licences to various companies and cooperatives which are involved in tobacco curing business. Growers are required to register themselves with curers whom they themselves may
choose and to whom they sell their harvest. The curers in return also act as agents for
the NTB and are responsible not only for giving technical advice and supervision to
registered growers but also for extending any credit facilities and fertilizer subsidies
provided by the NTB.

In Baan Maalaj there are two companies which are licensed as registered curers.
Both are jointly owned by two groups of Baan Maalaj’s residents. All the shareholders of
these companies are Chinese with the exception of one Siamese. These are Chinese who
consider themselves Gina kampung. Most are born in the village, while a number
originated from outside the village but nevertheless from Kelantanese birthplaces.

The visible effect of tobacco growing as a cash crop is that the agricultural cycle in
the village is now determined by curers who make most of the major decisions regarding
the cultivation of the crop. All agricultural work is, therefore, geared towards the
enterprise which the curers control. Very significantly tobacco growing has been to the
exclusion of all other crops. The reason for this is not exactly clear for tobacco only
occupies the land for less than six months of the year, leaving it free for other crops. Yet
no other crop is grown, not even water-melon which is suitable for the type of soil around
the village. The next alternative crop that could be grown outside tobacco season is rice
which has been the traditional one before the shift to tobacco took place. However, rice
does not normally give good economic return for the same amount of labour and capital
one invests in tobacco. On top of that in Kelantan it is cheaper to buy rice, which is
mainly smuggled from Thailand, than to grow one’s own. Another likely reason for this
is that the workers of many households in Baan Maalaj find that income from
employment outside of the village is more lucrative than from growing rice in the village.

The ownership of the two tobacco companies, which comprises residents of Baan
Maalaj, gives some advantages to the growers. A case in point is the level of supervision
imposed. It is less strict compared to that previously exercised by the MTC. The
stringent quality control practised by MTC field officers is well-remembered by the
villagers. Frustrating experiences abounded when many growers failed to meet the company's exacting standard of seedling and plant culture. The company's field officers used to go round and pull out tobacco plants that were grown too closely apart, much to the dismay of the villagers who at first understood little about plant interspacing. There had also been instances when the entire harvest of sub-standard quality was rejected outright by the company. The same poor quality leaves, however, are occasionally still being produced today due to adverse weather conditions but the companies accept them at a negotiable price which at least covers the capital outlay of the growers. Because of the leniency of the company, even the worst of the harvest is not wasted. Stringent quality control is the last thing that the growers expect from the curers who are their fellow villagers and in many cases kinsmen; hence, many growers admit that they can now get away with many malpractices which were previously unacceptable. For instance, shaded areas between trees are also planted with tobacco when they are supposed to be grown in open fields only. The two tobacco companies, therefore, provide some limited surety to the growers in the face of uncertainty. In addition, both companies provide credit to growers both in cash and in the form of agricultural input such as fertilizers, seeds, nursery and bedding materials. Repayment is normally made after the sale of leaf harvest has been made.

**The Growing Season**

The growing season starts from early December when seed beds are prepared and continues until about April when the last of the leaf harvest takes place. This covers a period of nearly five months. There are various stages of tobacco growing, starting with the preparation of beds for germinating tobacco seeds. Transplanting from the beds to temporary containers of open ended plastic bags takes place 30 to 40 days later. The seedlings remain in the containers for another 14 to 20 days. Meanwhile the field is ploughed and ridges made. Transplanting usually takes place in early February and after that the seedlings require a rigorous maintenance schedule of weeding, aeration of the soil and spraying of insecticides and pesticides. By about March the first harvest of the leaves begins. As the leaves of a tobacco plant ripen from bottom upwards, the first harvest usually yields leaves of inferior quality and these are known as "bottom leaves" (Malay:...
Harvest of prime quality leaves usually takes place in early April and continues until the end of the month. The growing season is concluded by uprooting and burning of the remaining stumps. The field is left fallow for the rest of the year.

In Baan Maalaj there is only one growing season for the year although other places are known to practise double-cropping. Since the growing season is short there is thus a lull period of about six months in agricultural activity of the village. During this time many villagers take outside jobs.

As tobacco cultivation is labour-intensive, it is during the growing season that additional labour is needed to help with the planting, watering, weeding, pest control and harvest. This extra labour comes from two main sources: firstly, people who are originally from Baan Maalaj but who are now temporarily employed outside the village return to help in the tobacco field during the season. They resume their former jobs at the conclusion of the season. Secondly, some households which do no planting of their own assist others with labour in the field. Elderly women and men who are unoccupied during other times of the year often work on tobacco patches belonging to friends and relatives.16

Harvested leaves are sold to the two tobacco processing companies of Baan Maalaj which own a curing station each (Malay: ban tembakau).17 The curing stations also provide employment, mainly from March to August to many women of Baan Maalaj and neighbouring Malay villages. Each plant employs between 50 to 80 people to sort and grade harvested leaves. After August between 5 to 8 Malay men are employed to work the kilns and prepare the wood fuel used in the curing process.

16 In Baan Maalaj some households consist of elderly women (sometimes, well past their fifties) who live alone or in groups of two or three even though they have children of their own living in the same village. They normally depend on handouts from their children, if they have any, otherwise, from close relatives. During the tobacco growing season they become quite handy, either in the field, where they help with the lighter chores, or at home, where they help to look after the younger children and take over some of the domestic duties. After the harvest and sale of tobacco leaves, their help is rewarded in monetary or other forms.

17 Most probably from the English "barn".
Nearly all households derive some income from growing or processing tobacco. I have no figures for the cash return households in the village get from the sale of tobacco harvest. Moreover, most households do not keep accurate accounts in terms of capital outlay, expenses and income associated with tobacco growing. Because of the credit advance given by the NTB through the curers, growers appear to receive less money than they should get especially after deductions are made at the point of sale for outstanding debts. An official estimate given by the NTB indicates that in Tawang, not far away from Baan Maalaj in the same sub-district, the average income of families in 1976 and 1978 was around $2,402 per year, and the return from the sale of tobacco harvest contributed some $1,294 to the total household income (or more than 50%) (Teo 1979:10, 11).18 In Baan Maalaj a typical household cultivates plots of land growing between 1,000 to 4,000 tobacco plants depending on the strength of labour force it has. It should get between $1000 to $1500 per season. Some households in Baan Maalaj cultivate very extensively. One household in particular netted approximately $14,000 in 1982. This was possible because the head of the household had many grown-up children. Although many have married and were then living outside the village they returned to Baan Maalaj to give assistance in the field throughout the growing season.

The Importance of Non-Agricultural Occupations

As mentioned above, the traditional economy of Baan Maalaj was rice growing and some market gardening. There had also been other occupations as well; Firth notes that the Siamese used to make tiles in the 1940s and some also worked as plasterers and builders (1969:69).19 Nowadays no tile manufacture takes place in the village although plastering and construction work continue to be associated with the Siamese who have

18 One Malaysian dollar is equivalent to about A$0.50 during the fieldwork period of 1982 and 1983.
19 When Firth (1966:69) mentions briefly the presence of a Siamese community to the north of his village of study, he probably has Ba'an Maalaj in mind.

"... Elsewhere in Kelantan, too, there are some Siamese communities. One, a few miles to the north of Perupok, had a temple and seminary staffed by Buddhist monks, with a settlement of Siamese rice-cultivators, who also made tiles and did some plastering and other construction work."
always been noted for their fine workmanship. Many Siamese men with this skill find temporary and permanent employment in various construction industries in various places in Kelantan.

A significant point about Baan Maalaj is that economically it is not entirely dependent on the cultivation of a single crop. Like other rural households in West Malaysia, additional income is usually sought by some of its members working on a variety of occupations around or outside the village. Thus, while most households in Baan Maalaj consider tobacco growing as their main occupation, some members may have jobs totally unrelated to agriculture. Additional household income is earned from work outside the village, particularly during off-season periods.

Although there is no definite pattern of employment a typical household in Baan Maalaj usually has some of its members, especially the younger ones employed in various occupations in nearest town while other members of the same household, particularly the parents, concentrate on tobacco growing. Many people find employment with the Chinese, especially as assistants in motor workshops, retail shops, supermarkets, hair dressing salons, tailor shops and factories. Young Siamese girls often find employment as domestic servants of the Chinese. Many of these Chinese have long-established relationships with the residents of Baan Maalaj either through kin connection or through friendship. Some of them regularly attend functions at the village temple.

If work places are not too far away people reside in the village and commute. However, many of those employed outside Baan Maalaj find it more convenient to migrate temporarily and stay at their work places and return to the village at regular intervals and during important dates on the temple’s ritual calendar.

In Baan Maalaj, 95 households listed tobacco growing as their chief occupation (see Table 3-1). Because of the dominance of tobacco industry, there is a tendency for most households to overemphasise their dependence on tobacco even when other members of

20For instance, the village headman (a government appointed officer) lists his main occupation as tobacco growing and his office of headmanship as of secondary concern.
the same household or the head bring in additional income by working at secondary jobs. As there is quite a long break between tobacco growing seasons many heads of households are involved in other occupations to supplement their income: six heads of household work full-time as carpenters and housebuilders outside the tobacco growing season; three other people run retail shops but let their wives and children look after the business during peak growing period. There are also two heads of household who work part-time as petty traders and one as an unlicensed taxi operator. There are five people in the village who practice traditional healing and curing, also on part-time basis. Six heads of households claim that they do odd jobs around the village. Altogether 24 heads of households have secondary occupations of some sorts to supplement their income from growing of tobacco.

There are six household heads whose main occupation is not agricultural. These are two taxi and van drivers, two housebuilders/carpenters, one school teacher, one store keeper and one traditional medical specialist (mau; Malay: bomoh). Despite this others in the same household are involved in tobacco growing. Thus the two taxi/van drivers may be working outside the village, but their wives and older children cultivate plots of tobacco. The same applies to the two carpenters and the school teacher. The exception to this is the store-keeper's wife; she comes from a small town not far away from Baan Maalaj and lives in one of the shop houses at the road junction of the village. Having been raised in a town she does not consider herself competent enough to involve herself in tobacco growing; moreover, her husband does not own any land in the vicinity of the village. The full time specialist in traditional healing and divining techniques (mau) lives by himself and he rents out his land to some Malays from a nearby village for tobacco growing.

Table 3-1 also shows that there are 16 households who do not specify any particular occupation but whose livelihood depends on the income of absentee members, typically from children and relatives working outside the village. These households mainly consist of elderly men and women who are past their working age but who occasionally keep
Table 3-1: Primary Occupation of Heads of Households in Baan Maalaj

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>No. of Heads of Household</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco growing</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housebuilder/carpenter</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail shop owner</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee shop operator</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxi / van driver</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tailor</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School teacher</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Store keeper</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furniture factory owner</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tobacco Processing plant owner</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependent on absentee members</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bomoh (traditional medical specialist)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>126</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

themselves busy by helping in the tobacco fields of friends and relatives. They may own land in the village but usually let their married children of different households work on it. Some rent the land to others. During off-growing season these semi-retired residents can be found spending most of their time at the temple.

As I have mentioned above members of some households may work outside the village and stay there but send money back regularly to supplement the household’s income. Table 3-2 lists the number of individuals in this category (mainly older sons and daughters) and their occupations.
Table 3-2: Employment of Other Household Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>No. of Individuals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Motor workshop</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shop assistant</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taxi/van driver</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sawmill workers</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furniture factory</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>worker in Baan Maalaj</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housebuilder/carpenter</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poultry keeping</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager/owner of tobacco curing plant</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 29

From table 3-2, the number of others in a household who live in Baan Maalaj but who work outside the village seems to be very small indeed: 29 people. It appears as if only a small fraction of the village's population really work elsewhere. The reason for this is that my census figure do not include those who have migrated temporarily to their work places and remain there for most part of the year. The number is quite large but estimate of this proved to be difficult. These people, however, still consider Baan Maalaj their "home" village with which they identify themselves. They return to Baan Maalaj regularly, especially during life-crisis of family members and kinsmen still living in the village and during temple functions. Many still support ageing parents in Baan Maalaj and intend to settle there permanently in the future. During major temple celebrations the population of the village may more than double its usual number when these people, who are "absentee" members of Baan Maalaj's community, return from various places to take part in the functions. Census figures that I have regarding the employment pattern of Baan Maalaj residents at normal time of the year certainly underestimate the number of people who constitute the actual strength of Baan Maalaj's community. Outside members of the community who return to this ancestral village also include those who have migrated and settled in various parts of southern Thailand, particularly in the land settlement schemes (nikhom) in Narathiwat Province (see page 72).
Other Aspects of the Village Economy

Apart from the two tobacco curing plants, there is a furniture making factory, also owned by a Chinese family of the village. It employs between 14 to 32 workers, mainly male relatives and friends of the owner. Some of the workers are temporarily employed, hence the range in the number of people actually working there. This family business produces cheap and middle range household furniture for sale through various outlets in the district as well as by some shops in Kota Bharu.

Although Baan Maalaj is located near the sea (the beach is less than one kilometer away, see map in Figure 3-1) fishing never becomes anyone’s chief occupation. However, some people do occasional net casting along the sea shore if only for their own household’s consumption. In contrast, men in neighbouring Malay villages are deep-sea fishermen.21

Apart from rice, pig farming used to be carried out on large scale in Baan Maalaj. The demise of pig raising industry was one of the major factors contributing to the impoverished condition in Baan Maalaj before commercial tobacco was introduced in the sixties. Older residents of the village could still recall the time when pig raising was a major occupation of Baan Maalaj. The tragic swine-fever of 1928, however, wiped out the entire pig population.22 Since then the villagers have never really made any effort to revive the industry. Furthermore, it is not even economical to do so nowadays because of various factors including the high cost of feed (see Golomb 1978:137). Only two households still have pigs -- each owns a sow and a number of piglets -- merely for the sake of keeping them rather than for economic reasons.

Although pigs have no economic importance in the village it could still have some symbolic significance in certain context. Golomb, for instance (1978:145) notes that,

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21 On this, see R. Firth (1966). The site of Firth’s village of study is less than five kilometers south of Baan Maalaj.
22 The plague that affected Baan Maalaj was apparently the same one that hit the Chinese village of Mentuan, not far away. A report on this mentioned that some 210 pigs of Mentuan was killed by the disease (Arkib Negara, District Office of Pasir Puteh File No. 405/28).
It is apparent that the pig (or boar) has become a symbol laden with cultural meaning wherever we encounter it -- in the occupational, communicational, or dietary customs of the villagers. I would contend, however, that the domestic pig's major importance derives not so much from its commercial or gastronomic merits, but rather from its role as a "symbol of group allegiance" for the local Thai villagers. It serves as one of several vehicles of great cultural concern which express the Siamese villagers' individuality and structure interethnic social relations in many different contexts.

Other domestic animals are not economically important either. Some households do keep one or two head of cattle, but seldom more than that, because during the tobacco season virtually every available hand is needed in the fields. Despite this domestic animals do provide additional cash income to the household, because animals that grow up to a high selling price are quickly sold to Malay traders for slaughter in the local market or for export to bigger towns in the country.

No water buffaloes are known to have been raised in the village. No goats are raised either. Regarding goats, this appears rather odd since the kind of vegetation around this part of the district is quite suitable for the foraging nature of the animal. After all, Malays in villages around Baan Maalaj do keep a number of goats. But on further investigation it was learnt that goat raising is quite difficult in any Siamese village which has a considerable number of dogs, in particular the stray kind. Goats are susceptible to attack by dogs and if bitten may not survive because, according to the local understanding of animal pathology, the punctured skin tends to accumulate air (khaw iom; Malay: masuk angin). Whereas Malays do not normally keep dogs, Siamese villages are noted for their dog population which finds ready accommodation especially in temple

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23 Winzeler (1981:13) states that animals raised by the non-Islamic Chinese are not likely to be purchased by Malays for purposes of ritual slaughter, particularly to mark the end of fasting etc. While this may be so in his area of study, this preference does not seem to apply in Baan Maalaj. While in the field I often encountered Malay traders who scout around Baan Maalaj regularly for animals of right selling price to purchase. In Kelantan trading of cattle and buffaloes and the sale of fresh beef are exclusively associated with the Malays. The main point is that while most of these animals are supplied by Malay peasants quite a few have to come from the non-Muslim Siamese and Chinese.
compounds.\textsuperscript{24}

The intolerance of Malays towards dogs and pigs is proverbial; any dog which accidentally strays into a Malay village is most likely to receive very little sympathy. Malays, children especially, take delight in beating dogs to death or at least until seriously injured, a treatment which they would also give to any stray pigs.\textsuperscript{25}

There is another important aspect related to Baan Maalaj's economy which deserves special mention here. An account of economic history of any Siamese village in Kelantan is not really complete without some discussion on the involvement of the Siamese as well as some rural Chinese in the land re-settlement scheme known as \textit{nikhom} project.\textsuperscript{26} During the sixties some families from Baan Maalaj moved to southern Thai province of Narathiwat, to participate in the re-settlement scheme sponsored by the Thai government. Many but not all of those who joined the scheme were landless. For the people of Baan Maalaj the land scheme was very tempting since the village economy which solely depended on rice cultivation could barely support its expanding population. Land shortage in Baan Maalaj also contributes to the attractiveness of the scheme. Although most households in the village owned land the income they derived from rice-growing was inadequate to support their livelihood -- hence the acute poverty problems. Apart from that the village, during the sixties and earlier, was one of the most isolated of Siamese settlements. The Kemasin river which flows to the west of the village literally cut off Baan Maalaj from the state capital and other major towns, until a bridge was constructed in early seventies across it (see above, page 58).

\textsuperscript{24}This is characteristic of Siamese village but not of Malay. Dogs are not normally tolerated by Malays because they are religiously classified as forbidden (Arabic: \textit{haram}) animals. Pigs are also included in this category (see Appendix C). There are of course some exceptions to this; some Malays are known to keep dogs as house guards although this behaviour is regarded deplorable by fellow Muslim villagers and not socially acceptable (see also Winzeler 1981:12). There was a controversy regarding the ritual cleanliness of dogs culminating in a debate in Kota Bharu in 1937 between various religious leaders (Arabic: \textit{ulama}) but no conclusive agreement was reached. Nevertheless most Malays have unchanged view that dogs are ritually impure (\textit{haram}). On this, see Muhammad Salleh b. Wan Musa and S. Othman Kelantan (1974:160).

\textsuperscript{25}This is one of the reasons cited by Golomb with regard to the difficulties of raising pigs in Siamese villages located adjacent to a Malay neighbourhood (Golomb, 1978). Similar problems are also encountered by Chinese who live next to Malay villages (see Kershaw 1981).

\textsuperscript{26}Kershaw (1969) gives a good account of the scheme and the motives behind the recruitment of Siamese peasants from Kelantan to participate in the project.
Such was the economic condition of Baan Maalaj during the sixties and earlier that anything that could alleviate their poverty and ease the pressure on land appeared very attractive. Quite a large number of families from other Siamese villages in Kelantan also took part in the nikhom land scheme. Most of them ended up in what is now known as Nikhom Pattana, Nikhom Mae Luang, Nikhom Waeng and Nikhom Kilo Saam, in Narathiwat Province. However, the great flood of 1967 forced many of them back to their original villages in Kelantan. Even so, a few families stayed put despite the serious damage their property incurred; they are the ones who were really landless while back in Kelantan.27

From Baan Maalaj 15 families28 were reported to have joined the scheme. Each family received 25 raj29 of land to be cleared for rubber trees and another two raj on which to build the house. Also given was a grant of 12,000 baht, issued in small batches over an extended period to cover the purchase of equipment and building materials for the house, plus a daily food allowance of 5 baht per family.

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27 I must stress here that many who took part in the nikhom scheme were not actually landless -- even though they claimed to be so when confronted by the Thai recruiting authorities -- but rather owned inadequate amounts of land. As rice growing gives low return the rampant poverty among the villagers became much aggravated. In a few cases the settlers were landless in relative rather than absolute terms; most settlers were young married couples with parents still living. On the deaths of either parents of the couple, some found that they were inheriting some landed property. As their lots have not improved much even after moving to the nikhom the windfall provided valid excuse for a return to Kelantan. The nikhom project provided a change from one type of economy to another; the settlers were not going to the nikhom for rice growing but rather for rubber cultivation considered as one of the most lucrative pursuits during the sixties. Typical of those settlers who already own some land is one family from Baan Maalaj. This family inherited some ancestral land but chose to sell it instead when they moved to the nikhom. Incidentally this family is now one of the better-off in the settlement, and this is not surprising at all, because proceeds from the land sale were re-invested in the family's rubber holdings in the nikhom.

28 Of these 15 families, only six stayed behind after the great flood of 1967. Kershaw (1969:206), however, says that forty families from Baan Maalaj alone joined the land scheme. Even if Baan Maalaj is "the village with the worst land problem", as claimed by him, I found that this figure is rather too large considering the total number of households in Baan Maalaj. If Kershaw's figure is right, then that would have represented quite a big population move from Baan Maalaj. The present number of households is 126. I suggest forty people would be more likely given the fact that most of those who moved to the nikhom were young couples in their early and middle twenties, perhaps, with one or two children. It was quite common too for the settlers to leave behind their younger children, especially those still attending school, in their ancestral villages especially if there were kinsmen to look after them.

29 Raj is the unit used to measure land in Thailand. One raj is equivalent to 0.16 hectares or 0.4 acres.
The significance of the *nikhom* scheme is that it provided some timely release from the pressure of population on the village land and the raging poverty. However, many of those who took part in the project eventually returned to their original villages in Kelantan because of the tremendous hardship they experienced at the land scheme. Upon arriving at the settlement participants were left entirely on their own to clear the jungle and build their houses. In addition, despite the living allowances given, many settlers found that they had to take a break or two in order to return to Kelantan every now and then whenever food supplies ran low, thereby arresting the work of clearing the forest. One consequence of this was that by the time they returned the clearing was overrun by secondary growth.\(^\text{30}\) The settlement scheme called for hard work and required strong physical and emotional endurance. Only those who were really in desperate need of land remained permanently in Thailand.

After the great flood of 1967 many of the original settlers gave up their pioneering spirit and returned permanently to their Kelantanese villages. By that time too, commercial growing of tobacco had become an important source of livelihood. Therefore, those who abandoned the *nikhom* scheme had few regrets about having done so, because the introduction of tobacco in the sixties was timely enough to bail them out of their poverty.\(^\text{31}\)

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\(^{30}\) Occasional trips back to ancestral villages in Kelantan, which were initially intended to last for a few days' stay were often extended to a few months because some of the settlers needed to find work in order to have enough money to buy the next stock of supplies for use in the *nikhom*; the allowance given by the Thai authority was barely adequate. One informant in Baan Maalaj confirmed that during one the breaks he continued to stay in the village for nearly a year and by the time he went back to the settlement his clearing had already reverted to secondary jungle, so much so that he decided to quit the scheme altogether and return for good to Baan Maalaj where he owns some land.

\(^{31}\) As I have mentioned above (see Footnote, page 73) many of those who took part in the *nikhom* scheme were not really landless. Some people own land, but whatever they used to get out of rice growing was barely adequate to support a decent living; hence the *nikhom* scheme seemed to be a viable alternative under the circumstances. The introduction of commercial farming of tobacco, however, brought about a radical change in the economy of the village; tobacco gives lucrative returns and more profit could be procured from the same piece of land if cultivated with the crop than with rice. Thus many settlers who quit the *nikhom* returned to the village and benefitted by growing tobacco on whatever land they owned. The high returns from tobacco growing partly explains why many villagers of Baan Maalaj seem to be idling for the rest of the year once the tobacco growing season is over.
I have mentioned the *nikhom* scheme here for another important reason. Some of those who participated in the scheme were also Chinese. I could identify at least two Chinese families originally of Baan Maalaj which have settled permanently in the *nikhom* scheme. Despite being Chinese, they managed to convince the Thai team, which recruited participants in the land scheme, that they were just as Siamese as any other residents of Baan Maalaj. The relevance of this concerns their fluency in the Siamese language and the fact that no one in Baan Maalaj challenged their claim to be Siamese. Obviously they have undergone an extensive assimilation into a Siamese community and its culture.

**Concluding Remarks**

As can be seen above Baan Maalaj has undergone a complete transformation from a community of rice growers to a village of tobacco farmers. An important feature of the village is that it is no longer a collectivity of people tied to an agricultural occupation in the traditional sense. The growing of commercial tobacco takes place only for five months of the year. For the rest of the year, the fields lie idle while many of the villagers find employment outside the village, joining others who have already migrated temporarily to these workplaces.

The commercialization of agriculture and the involvement of its residents in occupations associated with the larger economy external to the village may appear to have undermined the community. The "floating" nature of its population adds even more to the transient nature of village life of Baan Maalaj. However, I will show in the next few chapters that the concept of community among the residents in Baan Maalaj still persists. Although the decline in traditional economy has brought about a radical change in the pattern of economic relationship between residents of the village, the concept of a community and the spirit it generates still exist. The introduction of commercial tobacco has even consolidated this community even more because the tobacco companies of the village also support generously the temple and its monks. In the wake of these changes, however, the temple has emerged all the more important as a social and religious institution which continues to bind the whole village together as a closely-knit
community. Thus, it is through their participation in temple rituals and temple-based activities that the residents of Baan Maalaj are able to identify themselves as members of the same community regardless of ethnicity.
CHAPTER 4
THE KELANTANESE ORDER OF MONKS

This chapter will demonstrate that despite ardent sponsorship and generous support of the Chinese, the Siamese play the crucial role in the affairs of Theravada Buddhist religion in Kelantan. The Siamese commitment to the religion is most profound in the staffing of temples, where most monks (phra)\(^1\) and abbots are Siamese. While some rural Chinese are also ordained, they constitute mainly temporary monks; the more permanent monks who run the day-to-day affairs of temples are mostly Siamese. The exceptions to this are two Kelantanese abbots who are Chinese. Moreover, the lay committee which looks after the more secular affairs of the temple also tend to be Siamese. For instance, in Baan Maalaj, all but one of those who sit in this committee are Siamese even though more than half of the village’s population is Chinese.

As will become clear in this chapter, there is a close relationship between temples in Kelantan and Thailand; the Thai Sangha exemplifies the ideal the Kelantanese Sangha emulates. The Kelantanese Order judges its own purity of practice and tradition by reference to its Thai counterpart. One of the ways of ensuring this is through religious examinations conducted by Thai religious authorities. For this purpose, representatives of the Thai ecclesiastical authority make special yearly trips to a temple in Tumpat district to conduct and supervise these examinations. Those who wish to pursue higher

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\(^1\)The term *phra* will be used interchangeably with "monks". In some literature *bhikku* is used (see Tambiah 1970, Bunnag 1973 and Sweearer 1976a). Baan Maalaj villagers use the term *phra* almost exclusively, as is the case of other Siamese villages in Kelantan. The Malays refer to Buddhist monks by various terms, the most common is *tok ca* and in the standard Malay, *sami Buddha*. The Malay term, *tok raja* is specially used to refer to an abbot (*caw aawaat*) of a temple. There are also various terms in Malay which describe Buddhist ritual events: ordination is called by the Malays *masuk jadi tok ca*, *masuk pakai kain kuning*, merit-making (*thambun*) is known as *membuat pahala*, and temple functions are generally known as *kerja ketik*.
studies in Buddhist learning must do so in Thailand. Monks who aspire to serve in the Order for an extended period of time have not only to sit for these examinations, but are also required to spend some time in Thailand in order to acquire the necessary store of religious knowledge and to practise monastic discipline, including meditation. There is no urgency to fulfil these expectations immediately after ordination, but it is important that at some stage of one's ordained life a sojourn or two in Thailand should be part of one's accumulated store of experience if one aspires to be monk on a "full-time" basis.

Exchanges of visits between Kelantanese and Thai monks also take place regularly. During major ceremonies the tradition is to invite monks from Thailand to participate as honoured guests. They are often asked to deliver special sermons for the occasion. Visiting monks also demonstrate the finer techniques of performing rituals and the proper way of conducting ceremonies; all are expected to be emulated by Kelantanese monks and laymen.

The close link between the Sangha of Kelantan and Thailand testifies to one important aspect of this study: Kelantanese candidates for the religious examinations and monks who travel to Thailand for study or visits are mostly Siamese. Hence, Siamese monks are the ones responsible for maintaining the vital link between the Sangha of the two countries, and in guarding the purity of the Buddhist tradition and ritual practices.

**Buddhist Temples in Kelantan**

There are twenty Buddhist temples in Kelantan. Most are located in Tumpat district, on the Thai-Malaysian border. By Thai standards, the number of monks per

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2Invitation to attend temple ceremonies in Kelantan is not limited to monks alone. Nuns (maechit) from Thailand often attend temple functions where they are given gifts, especially during major merit-making ceremonies (see below, Chapter 6).

3See Table 4-1. Temples no. 5 and no. 12 were "inactive" in 1983, in the sense that there were no monks residing in them for a sustained period of time. For the cause of the closure, see page 83 below. Temple no. 12 is in Baan Maalaj and had to close because the number of monks available do not justify its continued maintenance. However, it was active in 1978 with 5 resident monks and two novices. In the same year temple no. 19 was "inactive".
temple in Kelantan is very small (see Table 4-1 on page 85). The Deputy Chief Abbot of Kelantan conducts a count for an annual register of monks and novices during lent (phansao) but does not record any monks who are ordained or who leave after that period. Although the number of novices (neen) is also included in the census no figures are kept of the number of nuns (maechii).5

Each temple in Kelantan is part of the organisational network of Siamese Buddhism which includes the southern part of Thailand and the northern part of Terengganu state. However, if we take into consideration the "export" of monks to staff various temples in Kuala Lumpur and Singapore, then the network covers a much larger area. There are also two Siamese settlements in Batu Bala and Pok Kiang, in Terengganu state. Although there are no Buddhist temples at these villages, resting places for monks (saala phak song) have been built to accommodate visiting monks who travel to these places regularly upon invitation by the villagers. Residents of the three Siamese settlements in Kelantan without temples, Seligi, Bukit Tok Chik and Bukit Yong, patronise the closest temples, either the one in Semerak or Aril (see map of Siamese settlements in Figure 4-1, on page 80). In Bukit Yong, however, there is a monastic residence (saala phak song) in which lesser Buddhist ceremonies take place regularly. Monks from Aril and Semerak are often invited to perform rituals there. In fact, ordination of novices was conducted at this village in 1983, together with a merit-making ceremony, to commemorate the completion of the saalaa.

Kelantanese temples are grouped together under various religious districts. There are four of these and each one is headed by an abbot with the title of "District Religious Head" (caw khana amphoe). These religious districts do not necessarily coincide with the

4 Based on figures provided by Terwiel (1979:98) the average number of monks for a temple in Thailand was 7.5 in 1975.

5 Figures for other years were not available during the field trip of 1982-1983 because all of them were sent to the Buddhist Missionary Headquarters in Penang and the deputy abbot indicated that he kept no copies of the record. He, however, assured me that there is very little variation in the figures for other years. The figures for 1976 were obtained during the field trip of the same year and they are included here for comparative purposes.
Figure 4-1: Map of Siamese Settlements and Temples in Kelantan

Siamese Settlements With Temples

1 Mentua (Baan Tawaa)*
2-4 Jong Bakar (Jung Kaw)
5 Kubang Panjang (Baan Jaaw)
6-7 Terbok (Bor Samed)
8 Kok Seraya (Khok Sijaa)
9 Bukit Tanah (Khaw Din)
10 Kampung Dalam (Baan Naj)
11 Jamu
12-13 Baan Maalaj
14 Lubok Batin (Kok Kho)
16 Teresek (Bangsae)
16 Aril
17 Bukit Panau (Thaa Song)
18 Semerak
19 Tendong
20 Wakaf Baru

Siamese Settlements Without Temples

21 Bukit Tok Chik
22 Bukit Yong (Baan Khaw Joon)
23 Seligi (Baan Likii)
24 Batu Bala
25 Bukit Keluang (Pok Kiang)

(*In parentheses, Siamese names of settlements)
government administrative districts (Malay: jajahan). In Tumpat administrative district, because of the large number of temples, there are two caw khana amphoe. Temples in the administrative districts of Pasir Mas and Tanah Merah are placed under the responsibility of one caw khana amphoe. Similarly, temples in the administrative districts of Bachok, Pasir Puteh and Kota Bharu come under another district religious head.

**Some General Comments on the Kelantanese Sangha**

In chapter 1 I mentioned that Siamese Buddhism thrives in Kelantan despite the dominance of Islam among the population of this largely Malay state. Indeed, the sultan of Kelantan, who is the titular head of Islam, also plays an additional role similar to that of the Thai monarch as a protector of the Buddhist religion. The Sultan officially exercises an authority which confirms the appointments to important positions within the hierarchy of the Kelantanese Sangha. The chief monk, his deputy and senior monks heading various districts have their appointments endorsed by the Sultan, although this procedure is symbolic.

Beyond this symbolic role of the Sultan, the state takes little interest in the running of Buddhist temples let alone the choice of leadership of the Sangha. Nor do senior members of the Kelantanese Sangha receive regular stipends from the state. By contrast, monks who hold high offices in the ecclesiastical hierarchy of Thailand receive a state allowance, known as nittayapat.\(^6\) However, there are occasional grants for some temples, given either by political parties or the government, but these are usually acquired through the mediation of the Chinese. Another benefit that the Sangha enjoys from the state is exemption from taxes on temple land.\(^7\) As a general rule most temples do not expect to receive government handouts and never depend solely on them. To raise additional

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\(^6\) Bunnag (1973:61) mentions that the nittayapat allowance is an essential part of the state support of the Sangha in the sense that it provides a regular financial allowance to monks who are too tied to official duties to go on the morning round of collecting alms food (paehinhabaat).

\(^7\) Temple land is classified with burial and mosque land, generally known as tanah wakaf, and is exempt from tax.
income temples organise special functions (ngaan haa bia).  

All temples in the state come under the jurisdiction of the Chief Monk of Kelantan. Though Kelantan is in Malaysia, Siamese temples there are organised as if they are an extension of the ecclesiastical system of Thailand. Indeed, the Chief Monk of Kelantan is also known by the Thai title of caw khana cangwat (Provincial Religious Head) -- implying that Kelantan is also a "religious province" of Thailand insofar as it concerns Buddhist temples and the State Sangha.  

As members of a religious province of Thailand, Kelantanese monks receive some of the privileges customarily accorded to monks in that kingdom. Hospital treatment is an example. Kelantanese monks enjoy better benefits in Thailand than they receive in their own home state. These benefits include exemption from fees in hospitals in Thailand and admission to first-class wards, the same kind of privilege normally given to Thai monks. Other advantages include special facilities extended to travelling monks at the customs and immigration check points. Travel concessions which Thai monks receive on public transport are also enjoyed by Kelantanese monks whenever they visit Thailand.  

The facilities extended to Kelantanese monks are one benefit of the close relationship between the Thai and the Kelantanese Sangha. The same relationship is also expressed in ceremonial form. The chief monk and occasionally district heads of temples receive ceremonial fans (phat jot) from Thailand as a mark of their religious incorporation into the Thai Sangha. However, the ecclesiastical influence of Thailand on the

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8See Chapter 8 for an example of one such function.

9Officially the Chief Monk is referred to as the State Religious Head of Kelantan (in Malay: Ketua Besar Sami Buddha Negeri Kelantan) (caw khana rat) rather than as Provincial Religious Head (caw khana cangwat).

10In 1983 the abbot of Baan Maalaj was admitted in Narathiwat hospital where he received free treatment in a first-class ward. Had he been admitted to the hospital in Kota Bahru he would probably have been placed in the third class ward. If he went to the second or first class ward he would have to pay fees like everyone else. Moreover, Thai hospitals are preferred to Kelantanese hospitals because staff members in the former understand the discipline to which monks must adhere. For example, the prohibition on bodily contact between monks and female nurses would create difficulties in Kelantanese hospitals whereas in Thailand monks are admitted to special sections and members of the nursing staff usually understand the monastic rules.
Kelantanese Sangha appears devoid of any obvious political overtones and offers no challenge to Malaysian sovereignty (Kershaw 1969:186). In fact, if Thais are emotionally linked to the Thai throne, this is mainly so due to the bond of Theravada Buddhist tradition (Kershaw 1973:4). At this level one can see that the Kelantanese Sangha maintains a dualistic kind of existence. While the ceremonial fans given by the Thai Sangha symbolise the close relationship between the Kelantanese and the Thai Sangha, the letters of appointments from the sultan symbolise the patronage of a Malay ruler.

Despite its close relationship with the Sangha of Thailand, the Kelantanese Sangha is beset with a crucial problem: the declining number of males who are prepared to become full-time monks. This misfortune befalls nearly all Kelantanese temples; in most cases the number of monks is just enough to maintain the quorum (song) of four necessary for the proper conduct of rituals.

There are now fewer people who are really interested in becoming monks, especially for a long period of time. The Buddhist clergy in Kelantan has to make do with a decreasing number of monks every year. Some temples have even had to be closed down, albeit temporarily, because the number of monks is inadequate to run them. For instance, the second temple in Baan Maalaj has been left unoccupied for a number of years (except for the occasional return of a monk during the day). Another temple in Kok Kho, in Pasir Mas district, was closed down in 1982 because its former abbot decided to return to lay life and to the more worldly pursuit of being a traditional medical practitioner. However, in 1983, the same temple was re-opened when monks from Kubang Panjang moved in, but at the expense of the temple in Kubang Panjang being closed down. Kershaw mentions that there used to be two temples at the Siamese village

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11 Monks who pass various grades in the Pali studies are also given these fans according to the levels they have achieved.
12 Annandale, for instance, mentions that about the beginning of the twentieth century it was quite common for temples in Lower Siam to be abandoned into disuse and neglect "when any untoward accident befalls the monks connected with it." The construction of one may also be stopped for the same reason "though a new one was being built a few yards distant" (Annandale in Steffen 1902:177). Today, however, temples in Kelantan seem to be closed only temporarily.
in Semerak, but one of them had to be closed down because the available number of monks did not justify its continued maintenance.

To ensure that the staffing of a temple does not fall below a quorum of four, a re-distribution of monk population is usually organised. Hence, monks often change their residence, moving from a temple with a 'surplus' to another which has less than the required minimum. Often this is done at the request of the laity of a village whose temple has insufficient monks.

The dwindling number of monks, however, does not affect the frequency of ordination ceremonies in Kelantanese temples. While ordinations are numerous, few of the ordained remain monks for a prolonged period. In fact, there are two types of ordination ceremony: one for a short term, and the other for a long term. Short-term initiates remain monks for few days, usually seven. Their ordination is for the purpose of fulfilling vows or making merit for deceased members of the family. Golomb (1978:132) refers to this type as "token ordination", and applies the term to any stay (as monks) of three months or less. This type of ordination is more prevalent among the rural Chinese of Kelantan; Siamese families also hold them but rarely. Because of the different motives involved in the two types of ordination, the short-term kind is also known as buat bon, meaning "ordination for the purpose of fulfilling a vow" (cf. Kershaw 1981:82).

The second type of ordination is for a longer period and usually requires the initiates to study the procedure of ordination and the monastic rules beforehand. They

13By definition, a "quorum" of monks (which makes up the Sangha) is a grouping of four monks or more (Wells 1975:142; O'Connor 1978:76). Four monks are usually needed before most rituals can be conducted, but for ordination into monkhood (upasampada) the minimum is five (Keyes 1977:80; Rahula 1966:154; Tambiah 1970:106; and Terwiel 1979:210).

14For instance, during a dedicatory celebration of the temple's archway (see Chapter 8) a Siamese man of Baan Maalaj was ordained for three days together with another two Chinese men from outside the village. It was rather exceptional for the Siamese to be ordained only for three days. However, this person himself is of a slightly different character than most other Siamese, for he was given to heavy drinking most of the time. It was on the persistent request of his mother that he decided to "take a break" and be ordained. Since he was not really interested in doing so, he was ill-prepared for the ceremony, and had to repeat word-by-word his lines from the ordaining monks, as did the other two Chinese candidates. This case of three-day ordination for this particular man is not typical of the Siamese although common among the Chinese.
Table 4-1: Population of Temples in Kelantan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Temple Name</th>
<th>Number of Monks in 1976</th>
<th>1978</th>
<th>1982</th>
<th>1983</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Tawaa</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6(1)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Matchimaaraam</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Phikhunjaj</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Prachumtaatchonaaraam</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6(1)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Sukhauntaaraam</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Phikhunthaung</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>8(1)</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Caengputthaawaat</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7(3)</td>
<td>9(3)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Khoogsiyaa</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Chonphracumthaat</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Majsuwankhiiri</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Poothiwihaan</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Majprachaasaamagkhii</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5(2)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Pathomwihaan</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Khoosakaaraam</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Uttamaaraam</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Ariyakiiri</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>17. Champaakaew</td>
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<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Phutthaksinmingmongkhon</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Ciinpraditthaaraam</td>
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<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Prachaaciinaraam</td>
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<td>6</td>
</tr>
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<td>Total</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>142(8)</td>
<td>106(6)</td>
<td>107(1)</td>
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Average number of monks per temple

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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Deputy Chief Abbot of Kelantan, Wat Prachaaciinaraam, Wakaf Baru.
In parentheses, number of novices.

Note: For location of temples above see Figure 4-1; temple numbers correspond with location numbers in the map.
are expected to be monks for longer than the token period of three to seven days. It is, therefore, viewed as a more serious undertaking and commitment, not only on the part of the candidate, but also on the part of his family and relatives who sponsor the ordination ceremony, for it involves significant amounts of capital outlay, time and labour. A stay of at least one lent in the Order is usual for the second type of ordination, but there is no guarantee that the newly ordained monk will remain permanently in the Sangha. There is always the possibility that the young monk will be drawn away by job opportunities, particularly in the construction industries, either locally or interstate, or for some other reasons. A similar pattern of behaviour is also evident in Thailand. De Young (1966:116) observes that there are varying lengths of stay as monks, since not everyone aspires to be a monk for life.

A representative village monastery contains young men who have entered the priesthood for only a few years, others who will stay in the monastery for many years, and a few who will remain priests for all their lives. In time, the more intelligent of this last group will become abbots or teachers in the temple school for novices.

To ensure that the ordained remain monks for a reasonable number of years the Kelantanese Sangha, in its 1981 meeting, decided on a ruling which requires that a new monk should at least serve a minimum of three years. The rationale for this is that if a person were to leave the Sangha within the first one or two years after ordination then the experience that he had acquired would not justify the cost of the ordination which is quite expensive. Apparently, the Sangha is of the opinion that three years is the minimal period necessary for a person to become competent enough to conduct Buddhist rituals after he has returned to laylife. Whether this ruling will work is yet to be seen, for there has never been any precedent even in Thailand. However, the general feeling among the Siamese population in Kelantan is that the ruling is justified and acceptable, at least in

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15 Even the abbot of a temple may leave the Sangha for a more rewarding career as traditional medical specialist. (See above, page 83). An abbot of another temple was rumoured to have left his vocation for a woman whom he later married. He was one of the most promising monks in the state; the residents of his village were hoping that he would continue with the work of his predecessor, a famous monk, who was also his mother's elder brother. Alas, his love for the woman was too strong for that. It was even rumoured that the woman had used some magical charms to lure him away from the monkhood.
principle, as a good measure for preserving the community of monks in the state.\textsuperscript{16}

However, the same rule does not apply to the short-term ordination since the majority of those who are ordained in this manner are people who want to make merit and who never consider monkhood as a career. For this reason, "token ordinations" are conducted frequently, irrespective of the three years' ruling, since the temples which are involved in such activities receive the benefit of donations and gifts contributed by relatives and friends of the candidates. As this has always been one of the traditional avenues for raising temple funds, any attempt to discourage this kind of ordination would disadvantage the temple concerned.

The Significance of Ordinations

Swearer (1976a) argues that in Thailand monastic training is the key to the profound attitude of respect that the Sangha gains from the community at large. At the same time, ordination into the Sangha raises the status of an ordinary man, for "having been a member of the Sangha is perceived to be as a good \textit{sic} in and of itself" (Swearer 1976a:27). Tambiah (1970:101) points out that ordination \textit{per se} is socially and religiously significant,

If ordination to monkhood is in religious terms a rite of initiation, in social terms it is distinctively a rite of passage for young men before they marry and set up their own households.

Bunnag (1973:43) emphasises that monkhood accords great advantages in terms of increased prestige,

But one implication of the thoroughgoing institutionalization of the role of the monk in the Thai context is that it presents other and more tangible benefits, making it particularly attractive to men on the lower rung of the social ladder, namely to farmers and to members of the urban service class.

The arguments above, regarding the social and religious significance of ordination, could also be applied to the Kelantan case. For instance, the change of status is almost

\textsuperscript{16}Some Siamese that I know of even remarked that if this ruling does not work, then nothing will!
immediately recognised by the community. At the very least an ordained person who returns to lay life after a spell in the Sangha can expect to have the prefix to his name changed from "Eh" to "Chaw", a kind of social indicator that distinguishes the "initiated" from those who are not. The new name that an ordained person is given means that he is elevated to a new status where he remains for the rest of his life. As a contrast, an unordained man is referred to as an "immature" or "uncooked" person (khon dib), (cf. De Young 1966:117; Kaufman 1960:148; Klausner 1964:73; Terwiel 1979:102). The titles of respect are also extended to the parents of a serving monk. They should be rightfully addressed by honorific titles of jaum phuuchaan for the father, jaum phujujing for the mother.

Another consideration with regard to the significance of ordination relates to the fact that entrance into monkhood is in quest not so much of nirvana but more of making merit for oneself and one's parents. By taking the yellow robe, merit is accumulated and a good portion of it goes to the parents of the ordained candidate (Klausner 1964:72). This belief is further strengthened by the parents themselves who feel that their life is incomplete unless they have received merit by having their sons ordained as monks (ibid.). Social pressure is often the reason for taking the yellow robe, especially in the case of temporary ordinations (cf. Kaufman 1960:120).

Apart from the question of merit accumulation, monastic life has practical benefit, for being ordained expands one's sphere of orientation. One is exposed to the network of temples and religious organisation that extends beyond the village threshold -- usually into Thailand and also into other parts of the country (Golomb 1980:87). The chances to travel are enhanced during one's ordained life, because it is common for monks to be invited by patrons from distant places, with travel expenses met by the hosts. Apart from that the chances of establishing more contacts with people who come to the temple

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17Klausner (1964: 72-73) mentions that entrance into monkhood is the minimum training necessary for maturity and thus for being considered of social value to the community. Kaufman (1960:148) states that ordination "marks the passage from boyhood to manhood and is the sine qua non of adult status. Men who have not been ordained are called "raw" persons. Those who have are referred to as "ripe"."
to make merit tend to improve as one spends more time in the Sangha. These contacts often prove to be advantageous should the monk return to lay life.\textsuperscript{18}

Apart from that, persons who have been ordained for quite some time, especially the younger ones, tend to acquire trade skills and training more easily than outside the normal temple environment. In particular monks acquire building skills, especially knowledge of carpentry and masonry. Klausner (1964:74) notes a similar pattern in Northeast Thailand but the range of skills there is much larger because the abbot and some of the elder monks are expert in one or more of the following: architecture, carpentry, sculpture, painting and decorative art, bronze casting, tile, brick and cement making, and medicine (1964:74). In Kelantanese temples monks who stay for an extended period often pick up valuable knowledge in some of these many skills, although the range may not be as extensive as in Thailand. However, the opportunity to acquire building and construction skill is always there if one really has the interest. Most temples have at some time a variety of projects going on, mainly to construct additional buildings and to repair or renovate existing ones. If the temple fund is adequate, hired labour is employed, but more often the monks do the work themselves with voluntary help from the villagers. If there are novices at the temple they are also involved. It is not uncommon to see monks and novices doing the bricklaying, carpentry and masonry jobs. For those who have been construction workers prior to ordination, such skills are especially useful. At least part of the labour cost is defrayed by the monks themselves working on the projects. Those who arrived unskilled learn from their fellow monks and other lay craftsmen. The significant point is that the temple has the capacity to provide the much needed opportunity to learn as well as to practise the trade.\textsuperscript{19} After spending a considerable

\textsuperscript{18}For instance, when a former monk needs to find employment, he can always take advantage of the contact he had previously established while he was a monk. If he opens a business, his previous relationship with the Chinese urban community should help him tremendously. Even if he does none of these, he can at least expect to be warmly received, whenever he goes to town, by the Chinese who are patrons of the temple where he once spent his ordained period.

\textsuperscript{19}Likewise, a monk who has been, for instance, a mechanic, becomes quite useful to the villagers. In Baan Maalaj there is one such monk who freely helps the villagers by repairing broken water pumps which are used in tobacco fields, a service for which the villagers are very grateful. There is no payment to the monastic mechanic who considers this as part of his service to the community.
time in the temple, a person can expect to learn some kind of trade skill or acquire some other knowledge, such as expertise in traditional medicine if there are monks in the temple who able to teach him this.

**General Pattern of Ordination: Predominance of the Siamese**

In Thailand, a most important feature of one's involvement in monkhood is that it starts during youth. De Young (1966:117) observes that there is usually a gradual progression of stages in one's association with the temple and monkhood,

For the village man to become a monk, it is essential that he serve first as a novice, for this is the only way a young man can acquire the knowledge of Pali and of the Buddhist scriptures he must know to qualify. To become a novice, it is essential that the village boy serve an apprenticeship as a temple boy. This apprenticeship starts early in life.

One works upwards as temple a boy (*dek wat*), then a novice (*neen*) before finally being ordained as a monk (*phra*). Such a career is by no means typical of Kelantanese monks. In fact, the institution of temple boys has long gone because nearly all children attend schools, an institution which is separate from temple education. Very few men become novices for a brief period immediately before ordination. In many cases of ordination, especially of the short-term type, two separate ordination ceremonies are held within the same day. In the morning one is ordained as novice, then in the afternoon the same novice is ordained as monk. Within a span of a single day one changes status from layman to a novice and then to a monk, whereas in the ideal situation one should be a novice first for a considerable period of time in order to acquire the necessary knowledge of the Buddhist scriptures and skill to read Pali. Prospective monks should learn about the monastic rules (*phra winaj*) beforehand, by having close association with the clergy in order to pick up as much religious knowledge as possible. Once ordained, they intensify their understanding of the monastic rules and the teaching by learning from texts and by receiving instructions from the more senior monks. However, this ideal case of

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20 Children of the village attend primary school in the next Malay village, Kubang Kawah. Secondary education is available in Bachok town itself but some of the better off children, especially Chinese, attend schools in Kota Bharu.
pre-ordination association with the temple is more and more difficult to come by since many youths are now working in towns and return to the village only during the week-ends. As a result their contact with the clergy has been much reduced.

Most ordinations in Kelantan today take an abbreviated form, and it is common for the newly ordained to lack competence even in the procedures of simple Buddhist rites. Gone are the days when candidates resided at the temples for months on end to learn the monastic rules prior to their ordination. The case is especially obvious during "token" ordinations. A candidate does not normally go to any great length to study the monastic rules beforehand, nor to learn Pali, because his stay in the Sangha should not last for more than three or seven days at the most. An intriguing thing about this can be observed in the ordination ceremony that he goes through. In the more serious type of ordination, a candidate is supposed to learn his lines for the ceremony by heart. In the "token" case, he merely repeats what the officiating monks (khuu suat) tell him to utter. At first it appears that the candidate is ill-prepared for such a serious ceremony which is the hallmark of a male adherence to the religion, but this is considered quite normal by most people. Even after such a person has been ordained he does not normally devote his short stay to acquiring the necessary knowledge associated with Buddhism. Any chanting that he has to do or any utterance of even the basic formula has to be prompted and said on his behalf by other senior monks, to whose care the newly ordained man is entrusted.

In Baan Maalaj ordination is considered to be socially important, at least for the Siamese half of the population. Most of the Siamese household heads have been ordained at some stage of their lives, the majority before marriage. As a contrast, a larger proportion of the Chinese heads of households remains unordained. This discrepancy in the ordination status between Siamese and Chinese males is quite common too in other parts of Kelantan. Ordination into monkhood per se has never been the ethnic

21One cannot help but to notice this in particular when a chapter of monks are chanting. The junior monks, even after having been ordained for one year or so, seem to "slack behind" in the uttering of the chant, resorting to the old trick of coughing and clearing the throat at the instant when the lines elude their memory.
characteristic of the Chinese, even though they appear to be the most ardent supporters of Siamese temples, particularly with regard to meeting the material needs of the institution. Simply stated, a Siamese adult male is most likely to have been ordained, perhaps for one lent or more, whereas a Chinese male of the same age group may not have been at all. Even if a Chinese male has been ordained, the probability is high that the ordination has been of the "token type".

The tradition of ordination is upheld by the Siamese even if it means having to cut short the length of one's stay in the Sangha. Kershaw (1981:92; fn. 43) observes that there had been a decline of ordination in the last twenty years in Kelantan,

... although urban employment possibilities have cut down most Thai short-term ordinations to one year, they have not broken the almost universal Thai custom, in Kelantan, of male ordination at the age of 21 as such. I believe that the contrast between Thais and Chinese in this sphere arises not just because the Chinese are experiencing modernization earlier or faster than the Thais but because buad [sic] never was considered by peranakan Chinese as an ethnic trait of their community. (Emphasis, original).

The most important point to be considered here is that there has always been a concerted effort on the part of the Siamese to uphold the tradition of ordination even if it means reducing the ordination length to one year, whereas for the Chinese ordination is not a matter of grave importance, except for the purpose of fulfilling a vow.

Thus, the general pattern of ordination is that Siamese candidates tend to spend more time as monks than their Chinese counterparts. While short-term Chinese monks are numerous, full-time ones less common. For example, Kershaw points out that during 1974, there were only three Chinese who were in the Order for reasons other than "token ordination"; two of these were abbots (ibid.). Presumably these were the only Chinese who have committed themselves to being monks for a long-term period, which in Kelantan appears to be the exception rather than the rule.

The case of Baan Maalaj illustrates that there is a higher incidence of ordination among the Siamese than Chinese (see Table 4-2 below). In the village there are 95 male heads of household; out of these 45 households are headed by Siamese men and all but one
have been ordained. As a contrast, of the remaining 50 households headed by Chinese males, only 16 have been ordained. Thus 97.7 percent of Siamese male heads of households have been ordained in contrast to 32 percent of Chinese household heads. 22

Table 4-2: Ordination Status of Heads of Household in Baan Maalaj

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Siamese</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unordained</td>
<td>1 (2.2%)</td>
<td>34 (68.0%)</td>
<td>35 (36.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ordained</td>
<td>44 (97.8%)</td>
<td>16 (32.0%)</td>
<td>60 (63.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4-3 records the length of time the ordained men have spent as monks. The "token ordination" (of 3 to 7 days) is more prevalent among the Chinese. They account for 6 out of 7 cases and the Siamese for only one. There are 53 cases of long-term ordinations. The Chinese account for only 10 (18.9%) of the cases and the Siamese for 43 (81.1%).

The longest period of ordination is 9 lents, 23 i.e. that of a Chinese head of household. As a comparison, the longest period of ordination for a Siamese head of

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22 The percentage of ordination for all heads of household in Baan Maalaj is 63.2 percent. As a basis of comparison Kaufman (1960:148) notes that in a community he studied, where the majority of the population was Thai, he estimated that 80 percent of men between the ages of 21 to 30 have joined the monkhood for at least one Lent period. Although I have no comparable data for individuals of this age group, I strongly believe that Siamese youths are more likely to be ordained at some stage of their life than the Chinese youths of the same village. The statement by Kershaw (see above, page 92) lends support to this observation.

23 The counting of an ordained period needs some explanation here. While the duration of a "token ordination" is counted on the number of days actually spent as a monk, the longer type is calculated according to the total number of lent (phansaa) periods that the monk has passed through. For example, if one's stay includes the entire lent, then one can rightfully claim to have been ordained for one lent (i.e. one phanasaa), even if the stay is short of a year. Another person may spend a period of more than one year but if he quits just before the beginning of a second lent, then technically the ordained period is still counted as one lent. Hence, a monk with one phanasaa to his credit may have stayed in the temple either for much less than a whole year or, on the other hand, for almost two years.
Table 4-3: Time Spent as Ordained Monks by Heads of Households

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Siamese</th>
<th>Chinese</th>
<th>All</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-Term</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 days</td>
<td>1 (2.3)</td>
<td>2 (12.5)</td>
<td>3 (5.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 days</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4 (25.0)</td>
<td>4 (6.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long-Term</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 lents</td>
<td>15 (34.1)</td>
<td>4 (25.0)</td>
<td>19 (31.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 lents</td>
<td>10 (22.7)</td>
<td>1 (6.3)</td>
<td>11 (18.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 lents</td>
<td>9 (20.5)</td>
<td>2 (12.5)</td>
<td>11 (18.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 lents</td>
<td>1 (2.3)</td>
<td>1 (6.3)</td>
<td>2 (3.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 lents</td>
<td>4 (9.1)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4 (6.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 lents</td>
<td>3 (6.8)</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>3 (5.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 lents</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 lents</td>
<td>1 (2.3)</td>
<td>1 (6.3)</td>
<td>2 (3.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 lents</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1 (6.3)</td>
<td>1 (1.7)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total ordained 44 16 60

Number of heads of household ordained for short-term duration 1 6 7
Number of heads of household ordained for long-term duration 43 10 53

household is 8 lents. However, the length of one's ordination period may not necessarily be indicative of one's commitment to the Buddhist religion. As I will show shortly, the length of one's ordination may not have direct bearing on one's active involvement in temple affairs.

A Siamese normally views monkhood as a duty demanded of a good Buddhist. To be ordained is an important part of a man's life, in keeping with the universal Thai tradition. However, ordination alone is not enough since one should spend adequate time

24 However, if we take into account all ordained persons in the village, then the longest period of ordination is 10 lents. A Siames who is not a head of household -- hence not listed in Table 4-3 above -- has been ordained for that duration.
in the Sangha in order to acquire proper experience and learning in the Buddhist religion. Hence, the Siamese consider token ordination (buat bon) far less than ideal.

Apart from the contrasting emphasis placed on ordination by the Siamese and the Chinese, there is another important aspect that needs to be mentioned here. This concerns the relationship between ex-monks and the temple where they have spent most of their ordained life. By tradition, an ex-monk should always maintain a good relationship with his host temple by returning to it regularly during its major functions and by participating in the rituals as a good, pious Buddhist should. This is not difficult to do particularly if the temple is located in the village where he lives.

Most Siamese ex-monks make the effort to maintain this relationship. In contrast, many Chinese ex-monks do not regularly return to participate in the rituals held at their former temples. This could be partly explained by the fact that some live in other villages or even in towns. However, in Baan Maalaj, there are Chinese ex-monks, residents of the village, who shy away from temple rituals. They include the ex-monk who had been ordained longer than any other heads of household in Baan Maalaj. Although he had been ordained for 9 Ients he appears to take little interest in temple affairs. In consideration of his long stay as monk, he should be a member of the steering committee (sangkhaarii) of the temple. Far from that, however, he does not seem to attend temple rituals regularly, not even the fortnightly Buddhist sabbath rite (wanphra).

The following case illustrates the same kind of phenomenon regarding the relationship between Chinese ex-monks and their former temples of ordination. During the fieldwork of 1982 and 1983 two Chinese were ordained, one person for 7 days, the other for 3. It is interesting to note that after disrobing neither was to be seen at the temple again except at major functions. Even then they attended as observers rather than as involved participants. Considering that they had been ex-monks, one would

\[25\] Apparently they did not even go through the ritual procedure of receiving the vow of five precepts, an important prelude at any Buddhist rituals. Instead they resigned themselves to staying outside the sermon hall while the ritual was going on inside it.
have thought that they would be more involved in temple affairs. However, there is nothing abnormal given the circumstances; Chinese ex-monks are always noted for their minimal participation in temple rituals. It is also not expected of them to even assume the role of lay ritual leaders mainly because they have limited knowledge in the technicalities of Buddhist rituals. Given their brief ordination period the Chinese ex-monks have had very little opportunity to learn about ritual procedures and knowledge associated with Theravada Buddhist religion.

These two Chinese ex-monks appeared to be of the opinion that they had performed their obligations as good Buddhists simply by becoming monks, however briefly. They even talked with fondness and nostalgia about their sojourn as monks, but did not seem to be bothered by the fact that they rarely returned to participate in temple rituals. This behaviour, however, contrasts with that of their wives and mothers who go to the temple more often than the ex-monks themselves do.

It appears that women of both Siamese and Chinese households constitute the major portion of temple attendance. If not for them the number of participants present would be quite small, save for a few Siamese men who sit on the temple's committee (sangkhārī) and a handful of other Siamese laymen. It also appears that while most Chinese households in the village are represented only by their women in temple celebrations, it is most common for many Siamese households to be represented by both male and female during similar occasions. In general, Chinese households are involved in temple affairs in two ways. While the males contribute financially to temple funds but normally choose not to participate in temple rites, the females provide both labour and participation during temple celebrations. In contrast, male members of Siamese households contribute labour, finance and participate in temple rites to a degree far greater than male Chinese household members.

I would like now to draw the reader's attention to the fundamental differences between a Siamese ex-monk and a Chinese ex-monk. A Siamese who has disrobed usually
maintains his association with the temple in various ways which manifest his staunch loyalty and devotion to the institution. If he happens to live outside the village in which the temple is located he will most likely return at least for major ceremonies. However, in most cases even ordinary ceremonies will see him and his family returning to the village. There is, therefore, a continuity in the sense that his association with the temple does not stop as soon as he returns to lay life. Certainly a change of status is involved here; first, from an unordained person to a novice, then to a monk and finally to an ordained layman, but there is no abrupt discontinuity in his familiar relationship with the temple. In fact, his acquaintance and familiarity with the temple starts well before he is ordained. Part of his socialization begins at a tender age as he accompanies his parents to the temple. As he matures he learns to pay appropriate respect to the monks. When asked to do chores for the monks he duly obeys without question. He passes through a whole series of transformations as part of the upbringing -- from a young child who frequents the temple at every possible occasion, to a youth who helps with work around the temple, to a monk and finally to an ex-monk. His association with the temple should continue until the later years of his life. On his death he is likely to be cremated at the temple. His whole life from the beginning to the end, therefore, revolves around the temple.

In contrast, Chinese rarely associate themselves in a manner and degree similar to that of the Siamese ex-monk described above. Even in Baan Maalaj, where the Chinese constitute more than half of the village's population, there is a certain distance in the relationship between ex-Chinese monks and the temple. For instance, leading roles in rituals seem always to be the preserve of Siamese ex-monks, particularly members of the temple's steering committee. Important decisions regarding temple affairs that involve the interest of the public are deliberated by members of the steering committee, all but one of whom are Siamese. While some Chinese men do attend temple gatherings they do so only as uninvolved participants or casual observers. However, it would be wrong to conclude that this is because the majority of the Chinese heads of household have not been ordained, or have been through token ordinations only. In Baan Maalaj there are a
number of Chinese who have been ordained for a relatively long period. However, as a general rule Chinese ex-monso display little interest in attending temple rites except for the major ones.

The point that I am raising is this: what really matters is not only how long one has been ordained, but also what happens after one has returned to lay life -- whether one continues to associate oneself with the temple or whether one keeps away from it is the crucial thing that distinguishes Chinese from Siamese supporters of the temple. Both dimensions of contrast are crucial for understanding how the Siamese of Baan Maalaj can define their ethnic identity by reference to Buddhism and the commitment they have towards the religion and its temple tradition even though most Chinese in the village consider themselves Buddhists and members of its temple's congregation.

With regard to women's participation in temple affairs, one notices that despite the fact that they outnumber male participants in temple rites, they never become members of the Sangha. Two women, however, have become "nuns" (māē chīī) (see Chapter 5 below). But māē chīī are definitely not members of the Sangha because they are not monks (see below, Chapter 5, footnote 14). No women sit on the temple's lay committee (sāngkhārīi). To this extent women are powerless in regard to religious power and prestige, since sacerdotal and ritual knowledge is the prerogative of the all-male sāngkhārīi members and monks. Yet, women seem to be very important, and at times indispensable, as ritual participants and as a source of labour -- they prepare food to be sent daily to the temple to feed the monks (see Chapter 5), while during temple celebrations they help with the preparation of festive food and other work associated with the function. Women's role regarding temple affairs is supportive but they could be a force to be reckoned with in terms of behind-the-scene temple politics.

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26See Table 4-3. One Chinese man was ordained for 9 years (see above, page 95).
Concluding Remarks

In this chapter I have outlined the general characteristics of the organisation of Buddhist religion and the Order of Monks in Kelantan. I have also discussed the nature of the relationship between monastic organisations of Kelantan and Thailand; in practical terms the former could be seen as an extension of the latter.

Two main points are relevant to the argument of this thesis. Firstly, Siamese perception and commitment to Theravada Buddhism differs in many ways from those of the Chinese. For the former, Theravada Buddhism is the *sine qua non* of being Siamese; it underlies the fact of being Siamese. As such, different emphasis is placed by the Siamese on the importance of Buddhist rituals and ceremonies. For instance, while ordination into monkhood is considered crucial by the Siamese, for the Chinese this is not necessarily so. Attendance at temple rituals also indicates that the Siamese are more committed to the religion; the more devout Siamese make the effort of attending even the minor ceremonies while the Chinese are more inclined to be present at the bigger ones.

Secondly, it is the Siamese who play the crucial role in most affairs of Buddhist religion. Hence, Siamese constitute almost the entire membership of the Kelantanese Order of Monks. At the village level it is also the Siamese who play the crucial role in temple affairs. As will be seen in the next chapter, even in a village where there is a large Chinese population, most of the laymen who are actively involved in temple affairs are Siamese. While the Chinese are noted for their generosity in sponsoring various temple ceremonies and in providing material support to the temple they do not normally provide the personnel to staff the monastic institution on a long-term basis.
CHAPTER 5

WAT PATHUMWIHAAN: THE VILLAGE TEMPLE

There are two temples in Baan Maalaj, each is in a different sector of the village. One is the venue for nearly all rituals and ceremonies; the other has been rarely used for many years except for minor rites. Furthermore, the second temple does not have an ordination hall (boot). In strictly technical terms, therefore, the second temple is not a *wat* but a "monastic residence" (*samnaksong*) or (*samnaksangha*) (Wells 1975:27). All but one of the monks (*phra*) live in the first temple for it is there that they receive and eat their food. The distance between the first and the second temple is about one kilometre by road, but there is a shorter route by footpath.

Although most religious functions, particularly the major ones, take place at the first temple the second temple is not totally neglected. Its buildings are still in good shape and repair and still provide some practical use; on the Buddhist sabbath day (*uboosatha; wan phra*) the ritual of asking for the eight precepts is conducted here. This usually involves four to five elderly persons who prefer to meet the monk at the second

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1I was told by my informants that in Thailand, if a *samnaksong* is not lived in for a certain number of years, the land on which it stands will be taken back by the government. However, once a place has become a *wat*, that is, with a *boot* constructed, the land on which it stands will be perpetually granted to the *Sangha*, even if it were to be abandoned at some stage later. In Kelantan, an abandoned *samnaksong* never faces this problem since there is no such law. Legally temple land in Kelantan is similar in status to burial or mosque land, hence, it is exempted from land tax (Ismail 1977:77). Wells (1975:27) states that most of the new temples in Thailand start in this way, with the sermon hall (*vihaara*) built in the simplest way possible, sometimes out of bamboo. Later on this temporary building will be replaced with a better one.

2For an explanation of my usage of the terminology, see footnote on page 77.

3One of the monks, however, maintains a living quarters (*kuti*) in the second temple, but like others he spends most of the time at the first temple. He eats there for no food is sent to the second temple by the villagers. In fact on most occasions he sleeps in the first temple. Occasionally he returns to the second temple to keep a check on it. Sometimes he leaves the light in his *kuti* on for the earlier part of the night -- "just to indicate that people still live in the temple."
temple rather than walk to the other one.⁴

During festive seasons, when sleeping and resting places for visitors who stay overnight are urgently needed, the buildings in the second temple fulfil the need. Many unoccupied buildings in the compounds of most Siamese temples in Kelantan are used for this purpose. Unoccupied monks' living quarters (kuti) and even the main preaching halls of temples often become temporary places of lodging, especially for male visitors. (Female visitors normally stay the night outside the temple with friends and relatives in the village). Accommodation at temples is much preferred because many of them, even in the most remote part of the state, are likely to be well-equipped with modern facilities of running water and sanitation which may not always be available elsewhere in the same villages where the temples are located.

The Plan of the Wat

The main temple of the village, Wat Pathumwihaan, is located within a well-defined area of about 1.65 hectares. The whole complex, called wat in Siamese -- a name derived from avaasa (Tambiah 1970:71)⁵ -- is not actually situated right in the middle of the village, but rather in its eastern quarter,⁶ quite a distance from the most densely populated part of the settlement.⁷ It is only during major religious celebrations that the serenity of the temple's atmosphere is broken by the crowd of people. During special celebrations even larger number of people turn up especially when entertainments of all sorts are being staged in its compound. Otherwise the sacred ground of the temple complex is the most peaceful place in the village.

In its traditional layout the space within a temple compound is usually clearly defined into two separate areas, namely, the buddhavaasa, the place of worship of the

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⁴For more of this see Chapter 6, page 146.
⁵Called ketik in Malay.
⁶See map in Figure 3-1 on page 57.
⁷This feature is important because it symbolises the separation of the laity from the monks, and the village settlement (baan) from the temple (wat) (Tambiah 1970:71).
Figure 5-1: The Plan of the Main Temple in Baan Maalaj

1. Ordination Hall
2. Sermon Hall
3. Archway and main entrance
4. Temple fence
5. Kitchen and dining house
6. Monks' living quarters
7. Bell tower
8. Pavilion
9. Shelter for ceremonial bathing of the abbot on his birthday
10. Structure housing the "Footprint of the Buddha" relic
11. Depositories of cremation remains
12. Miniature chedi for cremation remains
13. Bo tree
14. Bridge leading to the cremation facilities
15. Cremation facilities
16. Storage sheds
17. Water tank
18. Wells
19. Bathrooms and toilets
20. Coconut grove
Buddha by both monks and laymen; and the Sanghavaasa, places specifically designed for the exclusive use of monks, e.g. living quarters and the ordination hall (Swearer 1976a:26). However, the layout of buildings within the temple complex of Baan Maalaj does not clearly indicate this type of spatial designation. Most of the buildings in the temple complex are located around the central feature of the sanghavaasa, the ordination hall (boot -- also known as ubosatha hall), which is "... the most sacred component of the temple complex ... in which ordination, recitation of the Patimokkha (disciplinary rules), and other prescribed acts take place" (Tambiah 1970:71).8 The living quarters of the monks, called kuti,9 are located within the temple compound; there are four of these, each of which can accommodate two monks.

The ordination hall (structure No. 1 in Figure 5-1 above) orients east-west, with its door facing west. In front there is a sandy yard where outdoor ceremonies take place. Whenever there is to be any procession, including the one around the hall, it becomes the marshalling place for the congregation. Evening sermons to commemorate Buddhist holy days (such as maakha, wisaakha and songkraan) are normally delivered here. It is also the spot where dedicatory sand cetiya10 are moulded during songkraan and other festivals.

Within the realm of the buddhavaasa (where monks and and the laity meet together in Buddhist rituals) the most important building is the sermon hall (măewat; literally, "mother temple"; Malay: ibu ketik). Most rituals that involve the interaction between monks and the laity are conducted in this building. The sermon hall is known by various

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8In some temples which do not have ordination halls of their own, the most strategic building is the sermon hall, which houses the image of the Buddha and the living quarters of the abbot.
9The Malay word for temple, ketik (see above), is perhaps derived from the corruption of this term.
10These are made of sand brought from outside the temple's compound and shaped like cetiya. It is often decorated with flags and flowers. Traditionally the main objective of building the cetiya is to bring in as much sand as possible so that over the years the temple's compound would be raised above the level of surrounding areas, hence making it less susceptible to being muddy during rainy seasons. The building of the cetiya also has various religious significance. On this, see Swearer (1976a:83) for more details of its religious and symbolic importance. Although the compound of Baan Maalaj's temple is already sandy and raised above the level of surrounding land, the cetiya are still made as part of the tradition of temple celebration.
names, but its main function is to serve as the gathering place for the large number of people turning up at temple functions. Sermons on the Buddhist code of laws (dhamma) are delivered in this building; hence, it is often called "Dhamma Hall" (roong than). Some literature on Thai Buddhism refers to this building as the vihaara.

In strictly religious terms the sermon hall is less sacred than the ordination hall, but it is the most used building in the temple complex. With the exception of ordination, practically all temple business, sacred or otherwise, is held here including the rituals to mark the beginning and end of the Lent period (phansaa), gift-giving ceremonies (kathin and thaut phaa paa), offering of food to the monks (sajbat) and merit-making of various kinds. Impromptu meetings of the temple's lay committee are also conducted in the sermon hall. During the Lent retreat (phansaa) the nightly sermons are delivered here. Visitors are entertained in this building and sleeping accommodation is provided in this place if they decide to spend the night. The sermon hall is also the living quarters of the abbot. A corner of the hall is sectioned off as his sleeping cubicle.

The sermon hall also houses two altars for Buddha images (thii phra); both are bedecked with offerings, such as incense sticks, candles and flowers (plastic as well as real ones). On one of the altars sits a life size image of the abbot next to, but at a lower level than, a small image of the Buddha. Upon entering the sermon hall the laity usually go to this altar first in order to pay respect to the Buddha image ( waaj phra). Only after they have done so do they turn their attention to the monks -- if there are any in the hall at that time -- to pay the same respect.

The sermon hall is a large wooden building of two storeys and stands on piles. Its size is quite impressive by rural standards, with extensions sprawling from an originally small brick building. The first floor provides a large seating capacity for at least two hundred people, and divides into various levels to reflect the relative hierarchy with regard to the Buddha images, the monks and the laymen (see Figure 5-2). The second storey serves only as a storeroom for kitchen utensils (large basins, cooking containers,
serving plates and glasses which are used only during major temple functions) and pieces of timber salvaged from demolished, older buildings of the temple.

Behind the sermon hall is an open shed in which weekly classes in the Siamese vernacular are conducted by one of the monks. These are held on Saturdays, the school week-end. Next to the school shed is a small building which houses a replica of the Buddha's footprint relic (phrapkutthabaat camlaung) being a copy made from another one in Thailand. Other important buildings include various structures that are located across the sandy yard from the sermon hall. One of them is the kitchen house where large scale food preparation is done during temple festivals.

Not far from the temple kitchen is a building where ashes from mortuary cremations are kept in structures resembling the cetiya. These are called bua. The crematorium facilities (choeng takoon) are located outside the temple compound across an old dried-up river bed (Malay: alur). A concrete walkway joins the crematorium to the temple compound.

There is a bo tree (ficus religiosa) near the building that houses the bua structures. The present tree is said to be the "descendant" of an older one which used to grow not far away from it. Members of the congregation conduct special rite of water pouring (rodnaam) on to the base of the tree and the site of its "predecessor" during the celebration to mark the Siamese new year (songkraan). Because of this annual celebration is also known locally as chaljang tonphoo.

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11 Since October 1983, this shed has been pulled down to make way for a community hall (Malay: balai raya), the construction of which was fully funded by the government. Presumably these classes are now conducted in this new building. The fact that the community hall has to be built in the temple compound suggests the scarcity of land in the village. Since there is a large area of available space within the temple’s compound, it is logical for the community hall to be located there.

12 These structures are called bua although in standard Thai language this term means the flower "lotus". But the shape of the structure itself resembles the lotus bud.

13 Literally: "dedicatory celebration of the bo tree".
Figure 5-2: The Floor Plan of the Sermon Hall

1. Main gathering area of the lay congregation
2. Stepped area where gift items are displayed
3. Raised area where monks sit during rituals
4. Altar where the life size image of the abbot is located
5. Altar for a small image of the Buddha
6. Raised area where monks sit at other times when talking to the laity
7. Sleeping quarters of the abbot
8. Food preparation area
9. Store rooms
10. Bathroom and toilet
11. Covered porch of the main entrance to the hall
12. Stair case leading to the upper storey of the hall
13. Steps leading to area 3
Temple Residents

In 1982 the temple population consisted of six monks, one phautaa and two maechii.\(^{14}\) The abbot is 77 years old and has been ordained for 55 years. He was born in Baan Maalaj and is the most senior monk in the state after the Chief Buddhist Monk of Kelantan (Cawkhun). Poor health has now confined him to his living quarters for most of the time. In 1983, when his illness became very serious and required specialised treatments he was admitted into a hospital in Narathiwat where monks are normally given free first-class ward facilities.\(^{15}\)

This abbot is noted for his simplicity. While many other abbots are pre-occupied with the building of enormous sermon halls, large kitchen buildings and various structures of prestige, he appears not to be bothered by all this, for he is quite content with whatever buildings still stand in the compound, no matter how dated they seem to look. The sermon hall in Baan Maalaj is timber built on piles, and the only few of the kind still remaining in Kelantan. Most other temple have brand-new brick building as sermon hall.

The most recent undertaking at the temple in Baan Maalaj has been the building of an archway (sumpratuu) at the main entrance of its compound, but this happened only after persistent requests by the villagers who wanted to bear the cost of the construction and eventually it was built by joint owners of one of the two tobacco curing companies of the village. The dedicatory rite of the archway provided good reason for a large scale celebration (nguan chal~ng), one that involved not only the whole community but also many Buddhists from elsewhere in Kelantan and from the southern part of Thailand.\(^{16}\)

\(^{14}\)The phautaa and maechii are respectively male and female ascetics who observe the ten precepts and lead a reclusive life within the temple. They dress themselves in white garments which in Buddhist terms are the insignia of a pious layperson (Tambiah 1984:386, footnote 13). The women are not actually bhikkhuni in its traditional sense. The man is neither novice nor fully ordained monk. In terms of status, a maechii is considered as the lowest level of robed person in a wat hierarchy (Kaufman 1960:121), but they and the phautaa exemplify the closest a layperson can approach asceticism without actually being ordained. For further details on the institution of maechii, see Cook (1981) and Keyes (1984:229). For a further elaboration of the phautaa see Tambiah (1984:296 and 386).

\(^{15}\)No facilities of a similar nature are available to monks in Kelantan. See footnote on page 82.

\(^{16}\)For more details of this, see Chapter 8.
The abbot's preference for a simple life style appears very difficult for other monks and for most of the villagers to understand. One example of this concerns the use of television sets. While television sets and a growing number of video-cassette recorders are becoming standard equipment in the wealthier temples, the abbot is known to be against them. He never states his dislike for the television sets, but expresses his view by or means which the following account illustrates. A Chinese businessman from Kota Bharu, a dealer in electrical goods, wanted to donate a colour set to the temple. This offer the abbot did not refuse outright as to do so would be an insult. Nevertheless, the abbot resorted to an elegant use of diplomacy by asking the businessman to seek the consent of the other monks first. Should they agree to it, the abbot would have no objection at all. Though they would have liked the set the younger monks eventually decided to decline it, out of their respect for the abbot.17

The abbot is one of the most senior monks in Kelantan. Other monks of the temple are younger; the deputy abbot is about 32 years old, and has been in the Sangha for six years. Like the abbot, he was born in Baan Maalaj. Before becoming a monk he had been working with the Chinese in Kota Bharu, the state capital. During this time he had managed to acquire some proficiency in Hokkien, a Chinese dialect widely spoken among the rural Chinese of Kelantan. (His knowledge of the dialect makes him indispensable in dealing with the Chinese members of the congregation). The other four monks are much younger than the deputy abbot and all are outsiders of Baan Maalaj -- two from Tumpat, one from Aril and one from Kota Bharu.18

The phautaa and one of the two mæchii are Chinese, and both originate from Chinese settlements outside Baan Maalaj. The other mæchii is a Siamese resident of

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17 The case above also illustrates the fact that, despite the seemingly relaxed atmosphere of the temple, a rule of seniority operates between monks. In a situation like this, the younger monks must have read the motive behind the abbot asking the businessman to seek their consent first. How could the younger monks accept the gift when they knew for sure that the abbot was against it in the first place? Yet, no one came out the loser, and the businessman did not feel insulted by having his offer rejected.

18 The one from Kota Bharu eventually left the Order in early 1983 and went to work in Penang.
Baan Maalaj. The three of them, all beyond the age of sixty, could be considered as an integral part of the temple's population. Although they have living quarters at the temple occasionally they return to their respective homes. There is no formalised institution for māechii in Kelantan, but the two plus the phautaa are given due recognition during major temple functions. For instance, during thaut kathin or other gift giving ceremonies, the three also receive gifts from sponsors of the functions.19

The māechii and the phautaa are valuable to the monks in the sense that they minister to the needs of the monks. Not that the help of other laity is lacking, but the māechii and phautaa, being residents of the temple are able to provide help to the monks, especially the ailing abbot, at odd hours of the day, typically early in the morning or late at night when other laypersons are not around. They proved a great asset when the abbot was confined to bed in 1983 after a stroke paralysed him from the waist downwards. The three looked after the nursing needs of the abbot, prepared his medication, cooked his special dietary requirements and washed him. People who came to visit the abbot were also entertained by the two māechii. When the abbot was admitted into a hospital in Narathiwat, the two māechii and the phautaa followed him there and took turns to attend to his needs in the ward.

Apart from the monks and the three laypersons there is another temple resident worth mentioning here. He is an eighteen year old Chinese boy. Being slightly retarded, he is entrusted to the care of the abbot. Many Siamese temples and villages offer this kind of service. Although it is not a widespread practice, people are known to send their children or relatives, particularly those who are mentally retarded, to temples. Unless they are dangerously violent, placing them under the care of the temples is a better option than admission to government institutions for the mentally handicapped. On most occasions the child is symbolically "adopted" by one of the monks, usually the abbot himself. In this respect the temple provides the badly needed facilities to care for

19Usually a piece of white cloth and some money. See photograph in Figure 7-4 on page 184.
Meeting the Daily Needs of the Temple Residents

Throughout Thailand monks normally collect food (**pañthinthabaat**) from various households during morning rounds. In Baan Maalaj no monks do this, except symbolically on certain days of the year.\(^{21}\) The practice has been dispensed with for a long time in most places in Kelantan. Instead, households send food to the temple on a roster basis.

The sending of food to the temple simplifies two major concerns, as the villagers themselves explain: firstly, people can leave for work very early without having to spend time each morning waiting for the monks to come by first. Secondly, if each and every household were to provide food daily, then the total contribution would be too much for the temple residents to consume. There would be a waste, even if each household gave only a little. Moreover, it would be too cumbersome and not worth the effort for the individual household to get up early every morning to prepare food for the monks knowing full well that only a small portion is needed. Therefore, in Kelantan the setting up of a roster has become the standard procedure whereby nearly all villages with temples ensure that an adequate supply of cooked food reaches the monks daily. Cooked food is always prepared fresh on the very day it is sent to the temple.\(^{22}\) The preparation and

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\(^{20}\)Baan Maalaj's temple is not the only one providing this charitable service. In 1982 the temple in Bangsaë also accommodated a Chinese recluse from Penang. He is not exactly insane, but he shows some kind of psychotic tendencies. Golomb (ibid.) observes that in the Siamese village he studied there were two psychotic Chinese "patients" whose relatives paid fees. In Baan Maalaj no fees are paid, but the parents of the Chinese boy do send money, clothing and food regularly for his upkeep. See also Kaufman (1960:115) for a similar function of temples in Thailand.

\(^{21}\)Particularly on the day preceding the lent period, i.e. on was aasaakhaawuchaa, on the first two days of the lent, and also on the last day of the lent retreat. For details of this, see Chapter 6.

\(^{22}\)I must stress here that one may ask why not give the monks leftover food from the previous night, or for that matter why not cook a little extra for giving it to the monks the next day? To do either of these will definitely defeat the purpose of giving. Since the giving of food to monks symbolises the utmost in the laity's support of the monks and the Sangha, a gift of leftover food nullifies the merits that would otherwise be gained. In fact, I was informed by informants that the preparation of food to be given to monks involves a strict observance of procedure to ensure that, by default, the food so prepared will not become a "leftover". Prepared food will become technically a "leftover" merely by one tasting it (**chiim duu**), say, for salt or sugar while still in the process of cooking. By doing this, one has actually "touched" the food, causing the rest of it to become, therefore, a "leftover" -- thus not worthy of an offering to monks.
sending of food by a roster system is also a practice in some parts of Thailand. De Young (1966:115) notes that in northern Thailand, a village is divided into sections of between 16 to 20 households under an appointed head, preferably one who has been previously ordained as monk or novice. Each section is responsible for sending food to the temple. Interestingly, a bamboo bell is passed from one sector to another, and at dusk, the head of the sector who receives the bell sounds it to signal to households under his charge that food should be sent to the temple the next morning.23 Usually the temple receives enough food to cover the morning and afternoon meals of its residents. If not adequate, temple boys would be sent to collect additional rice and curry from households of the section responsible for sending food that day.

In Baan Maalaj, on a normal day, two households are involved in preparing food to be sent to the temple. The household members concerned, always the womenfolk, make sure they have no other arrangement for that day since they also have to do the waiting and the serving of food to the monks on two separate occasions -- one in the morning and another just before noon. If the roster goes well, there is usually a lapse (wen) of about thirty days before a household gets another turn. All in all a household needs only to prepare food for the temple once a month -- a responsibility considered very light indeed. However, not every household is involved in this roster. Exemptions apply to households consisting of a single males, or of couples who are too old even to cook for themselves.

The roster is faithfully followed by each household, except in emergencies, in which case arrangements are made with other households for relief of duty or for the turn to be passed on to the next household. It is a serious breach of community norms for a household simply to forget or deliberately miss its turn without first making

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23 In De Young's village of study the practice is known as "hua muad song kow" (sic) -- literally: "head section send rice" -- and appears to be a strictly northern innovation (De Young 1966:116). Kershaw (1981:93) says that the roster system is known as niraan. Although he does not elaborate on the origin of the term, I suggest it is derived perhaps from niraandoon, meaning "perpetuity", a term which signifies the never ending nature of the roster. I have not heard niraan being used in Baan Maalaj; the terms yok khaw and yok aahaan, meaning "taking rice, taking food (to the temple)" are used instead.
arrangements with others for replacement. The roster is not exclusive either, that is, any household can bring food, if it feels like doing so, to the temple even on days not its turn. This applies to food known to be the favourite of some particular monks and to delicacies which could not be kept until the household's turn comes. Exotic food purchased from across the border in Thailand is often presented to the monks on the same day it reaches the village, provided it arrives before noon. Otherwise, it would be kept overnight and given to the monks the next morning.

As mentioned above, the roster ensures a continuous supply of cooked food for the temple's residents. However, food is just a minor aspect of temple life. Money and material goods are needed to finance the running of temple affairs with a comfortable degree of prosperity and grandeur. Monks, despite the austerity of the life they lead, need money for various purposes, such as to buy items for personal use and to pay for transport costs when they travel from one place to another. The temple too needs money especially for the maintenance and repair costs of its buildings and for paying its running expenses, such as electricity bills. The temple also needs to buy various items for the use of its residents. These are mainly household goods such as mats, mattresses, mosquito nets, floor coverings, electric ceiling fans, water pumps, cooking utensils and kitchen goods. Some items for ritual use, such as candles, incense sticks and matches have to be bought by the temple itself to supplement those that are given by the people who come to make merit. While some of the items listed above may have already been donated by the lay congregation, a number have to be purchased by the temple, particularly when they

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24 The question of missing the roster is a hypothetical one here, for it seldom occurs. Furthermore, there are always two households involved every day. Should one miss the turn, there is always the other. Normally food sent by the two households is more than enough to feed all the temple residents. During the fieldwork period, I never came across any household missing its turn, nor was there any shortage of cooked food on any particular day.


26 People have who just got back from distant journeys usually bring back delicacies for their favourite monks and these are given immediately to them irrespective of the roster turn. In April, I noticed that a monk who just returned from Johor Bahru after a stay in a temple there was feasted with his favourite food by close relatives on the very day he arrived in the village. In order for him to really enjoy the food, it was served on the veranda of his living quarters (kuti), rather than in the temple's kitchen where other monks were also eating.
are running short. Even though the temple receives a daily ration of cooked food from the villagers it also buys and keeps an additional supply of other kinds of food, in particular boxes of soft drinks, canned milk, sugar, coffee, tea, biscuits, tobacco, betel leaves, betel nuts and cigarettes, which are not necessarily for the use of its residents, but which are served to visitors.

The Lay Community that Supports the Temple: *Phuak Wat*

A temple relies on support from residents of the village in which it is located and from outsiders, such as people in villages which have no temples of their own and from the Chinese communities of both urban and rural areas. Following Bunnag (1973:65) the term *phuak wat* is used here to describe the lay community which supports the temple by way of making merit there in preference to other temples, and by way of attending and sponsoring most of the temple's rituals and ceremonies. The concept itself is quite loose in its actual operation. It can include anybody who patronises the temple in various ways, usually by giving it donations, by attending its rituals and by having members of one's family ordained there.

*Phuak wat* consists of two types of people; the first are people who live in the village where the temple stands. By tradition these people become automatically *phuak wat* of that temple. The second category consists of outsiders to the village; they are usually rural Chinese of various settlements in Kelantan, town based "Peranakan" Chinese, and Siamese of villages where there are no temples. In many cases there is an overlap of membership: some people who are already *phuak wat* of one temple often support other temples especially when the serving monks are their relatives. Very often one finds that a person of one village sponsors ceremonies in temples of other places and this is quite expected given the overlapping nature of the *phuak wat* concept. 27

The main thing about *phuak wat* of the second category is that its size depends on the popularity of the temple and its ability to appeal to large number of people. To be

popular, a temple normally has to offer more than religious services. Some temples have resident monks who are known for their skills in traditional medicine. Temples like these become the focal point of visitors, especially during the week-ends. Senior monks who are thought to possess some supernatural power (saksiit) often attract more visitors to their temples, some coming from distant places, as far away as Singapore.

As for the temple in Baan Maalaj, its phuak wat consists of the majority of the village's residents, and secondly, people who were originally from Baan Maalaj but who now live outside the village. The latter consider Baan Maalaj as the home of their forebears to which they return regularly, especially during major celebrations at the temple. This group includes those who have migrated temporarily to towns to work, and also people who now live in land settlements, called (nikhom) in Thailand but who were originally from Baan Maalaj. These people return regularly to Baan Maalaj to take part in various temple rituals. Despite being permanently established in the nikhom many of them recognise their kinship ties with residents of Baan Maalaj and consider it their ancestral village. Because of this they prefer to make merit at the village's temple rather than elsewhere.

Apart from that, phuak wat members of Baan Maalaj's temple also include people whom I call, for want of a better term, "free-lance" supporters. They are complete

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28 Some are even Malays who seek the same kind of services from the monks.
29 All sorts of services are solicited by these visitors. While some may come for the curiosity of meeting the famous monk, others seek the monk's blessing so that their business ventures prosper and their children pass brilliantly in the coming school examinations. Some ask for various magical items such as a talisman to protect oneself against danger, to make oneself attractive in a courtship one is about to embark, to make oneself successful at job interviews and even to win four-digit lotteries. The request can be very personal and most intimate. In one case the help of a famous monk was sought by a Singaporean Chinese civil servant who, anxious to get a quick promotion, insisted that the monk use his magical influence so that the official's immediate superior would be sympathetic. Another Chinese, also from Singapore, was about to go through a court case. He asked the same monk to dispense a magical formula to be used to influence the judge's decision in his favour. There are also lay magicians in most Siamese villages who specialise in the making of love potions; their clients often include members of the royalty. Golomb (1980:71) mentions the case of a minor wife of a king who travelled all the way from a west coast state in her limousine to fetch some "love medicine" from one of the specialists (mau sanee) to reconcile her estranged husband. What Golomb did not say was that the distressed lady was actually a Chinese; she was converted to Islam before the king married her.
30 On the nikhom land scheme, see above, Chapter 3, page 72.
outsiders who support the temple in Baan Maalaj for various reasons. Although they do not consider themselves members of Baan Maalaj's community they are nevertheless members of the temple's congregation. In most cases they have a series of temples which they visit in their rounds, mainly during the week-ends, and because of this I call them "week-end pilgrims". An interesting thing about this group of people is that they may come from villages that already have temples of their own. "Free-lance" supporters of Baan Maalaj include Chinese of various rural settlements and towns in the state, such as Kota Bharu, Kuala Krai, Pasir Puteh, Tanah Merah and Machang. Siamese of villages that have no temples of their own are also part of this collectivity of supporters. During week-ends the temple in Baan Maalaj becomes the focal point where these town-dwelling members of the phuak wat converge. Most of these people are either long-standing friends or distant relatives of Baan Maalaj villagers. Urban-based Chinese who support Siamese temples are in the main of rural origin, but they have taken to the towns for business and employment.31

Some of these Chinese supporters who are town-dwellers have kinship ties not only with Chinese residents of Baan Maalaj but also with some Siamese of the village, the latter as a result of previous intermarriages between earlier Chinese migrants and Siamese women. The exact nature of their present kinship relatedness is quite difficult to establish since mixed marriages between Siamese and Chinese do not now take place as often as in the past. On the whole a large number of Siamese and Chinese recognise that they both have some kind of kinship ties to one another by virtue of earlier mixed marriages.

Some town-dwelling Chinese can therefore claim strong justifications for patronising the temple in Baan Maalaj. By invoking genealogical connections with the Siamese they proclaim the village to be a home of their forebears.

31Despite being urban, they are not to be confused with the other group of Chinese, also urban-based, whom I call Cina benua or Chinese of recent immigration period.
The Temple’s Steering Committee: Sangkhaarii

The membership of a phuak wat is by itself very large. Furthermore, because of the way in which it overlaps with those of other temples, and because it also includes outsiders, Baan Maalaj’s phuak wat is loosely organised. However, central to the phuak wat is a select group of laymen called sangkhaarii. This consists of people who play special roles in temple organisation. The sangkhaarii are bona fide residents of Baan Maalaj. They were born in the village and served as monks for a considerable number of years. In Baan Maalaj the sangkhaarii consists of five people. Four are Siamese and one is Chinese. All of the Siamese members of the committee have been ordained in the village for a number of years, ranging from 4 to 6 lent periods. The sangkhaarii member who is a Chinese, by contrast with others, was ordained only for one lent period. Although his length of ordination was comparatively short, he has an added advantage over other members of the select committee -- his son is Baan Maalaj’s headman. Because of this he exercises considerable influence in the village and in temple affairs.32

Members of the sangkhaarii group combine the roles of treasurers, temple caretakers and properties and public-relations officers. During temple rituals they become the lay ritual leaders of the congregation (phuunam), i.e. persons who lead others during temple rituals.33 Because of their close association with the monks, they are also in a position to advise others on details concerning ritual procedures. For instance, when the laity wants to make an offering of goods to the monks, it is improper for a layperson to ask the monks to stipulate the kind of gift that they would like to receive. Furthermore, monks are not supposed to openly express their desire for any particular gift.34 Any person who is knowledgeable in this matter will know that the proper way is to ask the sangkhaarii members first.

32The headman himself does not sit on the select committee. One of the likely reasons is that he has never been ordained himself, not even for the "token" period. As such he does not have the right experience that is usually required of a person who wanted to be a member of the steering committee.
33Swearer (1976b:160) also calls this ritual actor phū khruu.
34The Monastic Disciplinary Rules (patimokkha) clearly discourage the act of a monk expressing his desire for gifts, or even giving instructions as to how the forthcoming gifts are to be presented. On this see, for instance, Nanamoli Thera, particularly with regard to the "30 Cases Entailing Expiation with Forfeiture", i.e. rules 8, 9 and 10 (Nanamoli Thera 1966:36-40).
The *sangkhaarii* members also keep an inventory of temple properties. When co-ordinating gifts from various potential donors, the *sangkhaarii* members ensure that the temple is neither short of nor oversupplied with items of any specific kind.  

As temple spokesmen who deal with the public on behalf of the resident monks, the *sangkhaarii* members facilitate communication between the congregation and the clergy. The *sangkhaarii* members, therefore, inform the public of the necessary ritual procedures to be followed. They are able to do this because of their familiarity with ritual and temple procedures by virtue of having been monks for many years.  

**The Aacaan Wat**

Lester (1973:131) mentions that in Theravada Buddhist Southeast Asia, there are two categories of laymen -- the ordained and the unordained. Adult males who are former monks may enjoy a distinctly higher status and role than the rest of the laity and consequently they can become "lay ritual leaders on such occasions as the ubosatha and in a number of rituals which do not require the leadership of the monk" (ibid.:131). In Baan Maalaj one of the *sangkhaarii* members has been ordained for 6 years and spent most of the time in Thailand. He is among the few ex-monks in Kelantan with the qualification of *aacaan wat*, a title reserved for one who gives instructions and teaches the monastic rules to newly ordained monks. His many years of performing such duties has certainly given rise to the impression that, at times, he is more knowledgeable than any of the monks or other villagers about finer points of temple rituals. The abbot is an exception but nevertheless also consults him on some occasions. Because of his superb knowledge of temple procedures and the Buddhist religion, the *aacaan wat* is accorded a prominent position in the status hierarchy of the village, perhaps just below that of the monks.

The *aacaan wat* may not be the person who has been a monk the longest. It is the

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35 Apart from the yellow robes, all other gift items are known as "accessory gifts" (*khryangkhaarii*). Some are for the personal use of the monks (e.g. umbrella, sandals, medicine, toilet items, tooth brushes, toothpaste, washing powder) whereas others are for the general use of the *wat* (e.g. chairs and tables, large cooking pots, plastic buckets, brooms, fluorescent light bulbs, kitchen sinks, electric ceiling fans and buckets of paint -- to recoat the temple buildings) and become the undisputed possession of the temple.
kind of authority that he exercises which is important here. Therefore, it is normal to expect of him to lead the lay congregation during rituals. At temple functions he executes this role with an air of confidence and authority.

Despite the position of respect he commands he does not lead a life of extravagance owning nothing more than the bare essentials of household goods plus a television set and a radio which keep him in touch with the latest developments in Thailand. To him Thailand represents the ideal of a Buddhist religious and social life and is the basis of comparison with things on the Malaysian side of the border. Both the radio and the television set are tuned most of the time to stations in Narathiwat and Hadyai. He seldom watches a Malaysian channel, because, according to him, there is nothing interesting. Furthermore, the programmes on Malaysian television are screened in a language very foreign to him, whereas on Thai television, even foreigners (farang) speak Thai, the fact that delights him most.

The aacaan wat is not desperately poor, for he owns some land which he rents out to Siamese and Malay friends for tobacco planting. The rent he receives is barely adequate to support him for the whole year, but is supplemented by gifts of money and goods (mainly food and some articles of clothing) from people who come to consult him from time to time. The amount of money he receives varies and it depends on others’ willingness to give, rather than on him fixing the "fees."

The leading roles played by the sangkhaarii members, particularly by the aacaan wat, are comparable to those of the person whom Swearer calls the "layman

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36 This is in accord with Terwiel’s observation in Thailand; at most rituals lay leadership usually falls on a person who is superior than all others present in terms of religious knowledge and age (Terwiel 1979:195).

37 Television programmes in Thailand are dubbed in Thai, whereas in Malaysia programmes are screened in their original languages but subtitled in Malay.

38 Hence, clients who are rich tend to pay more than others who are not. The amount given also depends on the gravity of the problems that require his intervention. A matter of seeking his help to look for a misplaced gold ring, for instance, does not entail the client giving him more than two to three dollars, while a more serious matter of locating a stolen motorbike or a lost cow certainly warrants more than just a few dollars from the client.
extraordinaire" (1976b). In parts of Northern Thailand, this particular personality becomes the intermediary between the Sangha and the laity during rituals, and because of the expert knowledge that these personalities have gained while in the monkhood, laymen extraordinaire are also addressed by the respectful title of phāu khruu. They are looked up to by the laity for proper guidance not only in merit-making acts, but also in other areas of ritual activities from which monks are excluded either because of the monastic regulations or because of "... the symbolic limits inherent in the monk's role" (ibid.:158). Swearer (ibid.:160) summarises the importance of this layman extraordinaire as follows,

... It is he who directs the proper procedures and who says the proper words at proper times. He is, in short, the master of ceremonies when meritorious occasions of giving to the Sangha (wen dana or thawai dana) [sic] occur either inside or outside of the wat.

The aacaan wat of Baan Maalaj, apart from being a sangkhaarii member, is also a specialist in traditional medicine (mar; Malay: bomoh). His other speciality is Thai astrology and villagers consult him in matters pertaining to fixing of auspicious dates for undertaking serious ventures. His large clientele includes Malay and Chinese outsiders.39

The Layman Ad Hoc Committee: Kammakan Wat

Apart from the lay congregation (phuak wat) which supports the temple and the lay steering committee (sangkhaarii), there is another group of people whose function and membership varies from time to time. This group is what I call the temple's ad hoc committee. When the temple needs to organise an extraordinary function, for instance, a celebration to mark the completion of a building project, this committee is called into being. Members of this committee divide between themselves the responsibilities of organising the event.40 This committee is called kammakan wat and comprises a number

39In 1982, I was present when a Malay woman consulted the aacaan wat concerning her husband's marriage to a second wife. She dreaded divorce and asked for some magical charms to entice her husband back. For this she was given sacralised face powder and lip wax, together with instructions on how to use them effectively. The distressed Malay woman was by no means exceptional. There have been others who came to seek the help of the aacaan wat for various domestic problems. During week-ends, it is quite common for town-based Chinese to come and have consultation with the aacaan wat regarding various matters, ranging from fortune-telling to giving advice on the most auspicious day to travel or start a business.

40For more details, see Chapter 8 below.
of men (never women) who occupy prestigious positions in the community: monks of the village temple, the headman, elderly members of the community and also several distinguished outsiders. The last includes especially prominent Chinese business community leaders and well-known monks of temples of Kelantan and Thailand.

The inclusion of outsiders in the kammakan wat is quite logical, indeed pragmatic. Some of the well-known Chinese businessmen and community leaders have good contacts with the wider Chinese population of Kelantan on whose support the Siamese are dependent for material and monetary donations. Apart from that they also have good contacts with Malay community leaders and the bureaucrats. Excellent rapport with the Malay bureaucracy helps to facilitate dealings with the local authority. For instance, an application for a permit to hold a shadow puppet show at the temple tends to be issued with a minimum of fuss if it is arranged through those who are on friendly terms with the officials at the district office. Hence, intermediaries who can handle Malay officials well are included in the working committee of the temple for pragmatic reasons. 41 To cite another example, during the function held in May 1983 to celebrate the completion of the temple's archway 42 a troop of dancers and musicians was brought over from Thailand by the organising committee. A special permit was required for this and it was obtained with a minimum of difficulty from the authority, thanks to the mediation of an influential Chinese supporter of the temple. The number of people who are appointed kammakan wat members depends on the situation; large-scale temple functions call for more people to be involved in their organisation, but for smaller functions, fewer people sit on the committee. The inclusion in the working committee of well-known monks of other temples definitely adds prestige and glamour to the event, thus attracting more people to attend the function.

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41 This is typical of the kind of brokerage provided by the Chinese community in Kelantan for the Siamese. Chinese who are politically active are known to mediate on behalf of the Siamese in order to secure government aid for temples (Kershaw 1973:3) (see above, Chapter 2). This brokerage is not limited to temple functions alone. Even arrangements to have electricity installed in the village are often facilitated by these intermediaries.

42 See Chapter 8.
The involvement of women in temple affairs is very important because they are more numerous than men. They are able to provide the temple with the much-needed labour. They help to prepare and serve food to guests, organise and set up gift items and do other work necessary for the smooth running of temple celebrations. In fact, women constitute the majority of active phuak wat members, yet they do not occupy position of status and prestige. Such position is normally associated with the small and exclusive circle of the village's religious elite, a male-dominated institution.

Concluding Remarks

In this chapter I have shown that the temple of Baan Maalaj serves as the focus of identification of residents of the village. Nearly all households provide support and sustenance to the temple, at least through the roster of sending cooked food to monks. Hence, irrespective of ethnicity, nearly all households are involved in this. However, on closer examination, one can see that the organisation of the temple affairs is controlled by the permanent members of the clergy and the village's religious elite, and the membership of both is almost exclusively Siamese. Despite the fact that more than half of the village's population is Chinese, no Chinese residents of Baan Maalaj become monks permanently. The best that the Chinese could do in terms of becoming members of the clergy on a permanent basis is exemplified by the mâchî and the phautaa, but they do not normally play any decisive role in temple affairs. In fact, other laymen are more influential in matters concerning temple organisation -- these are members of the select committee sangkhaarii, who are Siamese except for one Chinese. As the case of Baan Maalaj demonstrates, even in a village with a sizeable Chinese population the staffing of the temple and the membership of the religious elite are almost exclusively Siamese. The Chinese nevertheless participate in the rituals held at the temple because by doing so they are able to claim themselves to be members of the same community as the Siamese. Without the temple the entirety of Baan Maalaj as a rural settlement would be nothing but a conglomeration of houses and tobacco-farm workers with no common interest to bind them together.
The involvement of the Chinese in temple affairs, however, is limited to the extent that they have only restricted access to the body of Buddhist religious knowledge. Despite their participation in and sponsorship of temple events the Chinese remain essentially "outsiders" to the gamut of rituals and ceremonies associated with Theravada Buddhism. But to the Siamese, the temple means more than just a place of worship. It underlies their identity as a distinct ethnic group; hence their persistence in a continuous maintenance of temple traditions by becoming monks on a "permanent" basis and by assuming control of the most crucial part of temple organisation.
CHAPTER 6
PATTERN OF RITUALS

This chapter highlights two important themes of this study: that firstly, Siamese ethnicity becomes most expressed through temple rituals and ceremonies, and secondly, it is at these ceremonies that the Chinese of Baan Maalaj identify with the Siamese as members of the same village. I have argued in previous chapters that although most of the rural Chinese are Buddhists, their involvement in the religion is subject to various limitations which differentiate them ethnically from the Siamese and which become most obvious in temple ceremonies. Typical of this is the fact that the majority of the more permanent members of the Buddhist Order of Monks (*Sangha*) are almost exclusively Siamese. Furthermore, laymen who are actively involved in temple affairs and its rituals are also largely Siamese. Even if a ceremony is fully sponsored by a Chinese devotee, its planning and actual conduct depend on the expertise provided by the Siamese religious elite of the village.

It appears that a relationship of complementarity exists between the Siamese and the Chinese (mainly *Cina kampung* and occasionally *Cina bandar*) with regard to their support of the temple. While the more sacred aspects of temple activities remain a preserve of the Siamese, material support from the Chinese is indispensable to the welfare of the temple and its residents. Their material and monetary contributions are needed to defray the cost of running expenses of the temple and the maintenance of its buildings. It appears that there exists some kind of tacit arrangement between the Siamese and the Chinese: the former provide the expertise and specialist knowledge for the proper functioning of Theravada Buddhism while the latter provide the material and monetary support to maintain the religious institutions and members of its clergy.
Religious Elite, Locality Group and Congregation

In Chapter 5 I have used the term *phuak wat* to describe the total congregation of any particular temple. The congregation of Baan Maalaj consists not only of residents of the village but also of people who reside elsewhere and yet regularly participate in Buddhist rituals in Baan Maalaj. Nearly every one who belongs to this group attends major temple ceremonies provided they take place at week-ends or on public holidays. The congregation of Baan Maalaj’s temple includes but vastly transcends the village itself. I shall argue that the roles which the residents of the village play in temple affairs not only distinguish them from the wider congregation but also largely account for the fact that they constitute people of the same village.

![Figure 6-1: Concentric Circles Representing the Congregation, the Locality Group and the Religious Elite of the Temple](image)

**Figure 6-1:** Concentric Circles Representing the Congregation, the Locality Group and the Religious Elite of the Temple

*The religious elite* -- This is the core of the congregation of Baan Maalaj’s temple. It is represented by the innermost circle (1) in Figure 6-1. This select group comprises a limited number of people including the abbot and monks, members the temple’s steering
committee (sangkhaarii), aacaan wat and the ritual specialists of the village. Also in this group are others who are present at the temple most of the time. Into this category we can also place the phautaa and the two mæechii who are permanent residents of the temple.

The locality group -- This comprises the rest of Baan Maalaj’s residents, i.e. those who are not members of the elite group. The group is represented by the second circle (2) in the same figure. Outside of the elite, Chinese residents of the village are no less part of the group than Siamese. All residents of the village support the temple regardless of ethnic identity. Also included in the group are people I call absentee members. They have migrated either temporarily or permanently from the village, but still consider Baan Maalaj as their "home"; they only "stay" in other places. These people regularly contribute to the support of a household in Baan Maalaj. The same household in turn supports the temple in various ways, the most regular of which is the sending of daily food to the monks through the village-wide roster system. Very significantly, despite the fact that these people are non-residents they still belong to the village of Baan Maalaj because of their indirect support of the temple through their respective households. Identification with these households also means identification with the temple.

The congregation -- This group consist of everyone who supports the temple of Baan Maalaj and who attend its rituals, though not necessarily on every occasion. Most of the temple's congregation consists of Buddhists who do not belong in any sense to Baan Maalaj’s households. They include both the Siamese and Chinese who do not consider themselves an integral part of Baan Maalaj village but most significantly they consider the temple of Baan Maalaj as their place of worship. Ethnically they include many Chinese whom I call "free-lance" supporters and "week-end pilgrims".1 The wider congregation also consists of Siamese of southern Thailand who were formerly from Baan Maalaj but have now settled permanently in the nikhom areas.2 Members of this larger

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1See page 115 for an elaboration of the two terms.
2See page 114.
congregation express their allegiance to the temple of Baan Maalaj by attending at least some of its functions, especially the major ones, provided they occur on week-ends. In general, the more devout of these outside congregation members are expected to attend more functions, even the smaller ones. The congregation is represented by the third circle (3) in the figure. Membership of the first category is exclusively male, while that of the second and third is made up of both males and females. However, during most temple celebrations women tend to outnumber men.

Outside the area represented by the three concentric circles are occasional visitors to the temple who contribute money and other gifts. Since their frequency of contact with the monks is irregular, if not unpredictable, they could not be included in the temple's congregation in the normal sense. Among them are urban Chinese who belong to the recent immigration group which I call Cina bandar or Cina benua. They are invited by rural Chinese (Cina kampung) as special guests, particularly when the latter are sponsoring the ceremony. There are also Malays who visit the temple for various reasons, such as to seek the service of monks in the curing and healing of certain ailments. At other times Malays go to the temple as part of the crowd during dedicatory celebrations to watch the entertainment provided in the fairs. In a way they support the temple because they pay for the service of the monks, and because proceeds from ticket entertainment sales go to the temple fund.

This classification of people who support the temple into locality group and congregation is by no means rigid; the boundary between the two should be seen as very fluid for various reasons. For instance, a large number of Chinese male residents do not take part in many temple rituals but they nevertheless belong to the village because their

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2 I have also referred to this group as phuak wat in the previous chapter.
households are located in Baan Maalaj and support the temple.\textsuperscript{4} Whereas the wives and daughters of such men regularly participate in all temple ceremonies, minor as well as major, the men themselves attend no more frequently than members of the congregation who live elsewhere.

The fluidity of the boundary between locality group and congregation is evident in yet another case. There are a number of outsiders who do not belong to the locality group but who display a stronger commitment and adherence to the Buddhist religion than many residents of Baan Maalaj. They show up even at minor temple ceremonies even when some residents of Baan Maalaj are conspicuously absent. Although these people are essentially outsiders, in practical terms they have closer association with the temple than many of the residents of the village. Yet because they are not part of Baan Maalaj's households, they could not be classified into the locality group of the village.

Levels of Adherence and Commitment to Buddhism: The Basis of Ethnic Differentiation

Within the congregation itself, which encompasses the locality group and the elite group, various levels of adherence and identification can be discerned. Firstly, there are those who are fully committed to the religion: they have a firm belief in it and will undertake various measures to ensure its continuous survival. This category is exemplified by the monks, the abbots, ex-monks, the village ritual experts, the aacaen wat, the sangkhraarii members and a small number of village elders who devote most of their free time to the temple. Together they constitute the religious elite of the village and are the custodians of Buddhist knowledge.

The second category comprises those who have some basic knowledge of the religion

\textsuperscript{4}This is typified by the daily food roster in which almost all households of Baan Maalaj participate. Moreover, at least one member of the household is familiar with the affairs of the temple. This individual at least represents that particular household during temple occasions when others in the same household do not attend the gathering. In the case of most households of Baan Maalaj women assume this responsibility, hence the preponderance of women over men at most temple functions.
and adhere to its teachings and practices to some great degree. They are considered devout Buddhists, but their knowledge of the religion is insufficient to warrant them a place in the first category, either because they are female or because of some other limiting factors. All Siamese outside the elite group, but who reside in Baan Maalaj, belong to this category. So do most Chinese women who reside in Baan Maalaj and who represent their respective households at both minor and major temple functions.

The third category comprises those who belong to neither of the first two, but who nevertheless feel that their association with the temple affords them some benefit, although not necessarily spiritual. They are for the most part Chinese and mainly men (but include a few Chinese women as well) who support the temple and its monks in various ways (usually through monetary and material donations), but see themselves as knowing very little about religious matters. For the most part they do not regard themselves as devout Buddhists. They attend some of the temple rituals and ceremonies, but do not take an active part in the actual conduct of temple rites. Instead, on most occasions they prefer to remain casual observers of the ritual proceedings. They may even sponsor some of the ceremonies, donate generously and extend their help to the temple voluntarily. However, in doing so they see themselves as supporting a worthwhile cause. They seek recognition as philanthropists but not primarily as seekers of religious merit. They take pride in identification with the temple whereas others (those in the second category especially) derive spiritual satisfaction from participating in temple affairs.

Let us now examine these three categories in terms of ethnicity. Those included in the first category are almost exclusively Siamese, with the exception of one or two Chinese. These people are the custodians and keepers of the sacerdotal knowledge and traditions of Theravada Buddhism. They see to its continuity by becoming permanent members of the clergy or by assigning their male children to monkhood for a considerable number of years. The custodianship is also invested in the ritual specialists of the village, aacaan wat and songkhaarii members. They perpetuate the tradition of Siamese Buddhist religion in the village by continuously invoking the standards of Buddhism in
Thailand. At the same time members of this religious elite are the ones others consult with regard to religious and temple affairs. Matters concerning theological aspects of the religion are not only their concern but their understanding of Buddhism surpasses that of anyone else in the village.

The second category includes those who have unquestioned belief in the religion but who are ineligible for the first category. Most Siamese women who go regularly to the temple belong to this group. So do most of the more devout male householders who have spent some time serving as monks. Some emigrants to the nikhom settlements in Thailand and residents of villages without temples could be included into this group. These people renew their pledge to the Buddhist religion by returning to Baan Maalaj’s temple regularly during its major functions. This category also includes some, but not all, Chinese women and men who are either residents of the village or outsiders. But on the whole, members of the second category are mostly female. As always women outnumber men during most temple functions.

The third category comprises the majority of Chinese men and a number of women who reside in Baan Maalaj. Many of the men may have been ordained but this does not place them in the the first category. If they have previously been ordained many have undergone the short-term ordination rather than the long-term. They consider their association with the temple to be an obligation of membership in the locality group. They may attend temple ceremonies, but in most cases they have only a vague idea of why they should do so. They blindly emulate others in the religious gathering, usually with little understanding of what is going on.

The first of the three groups above represents the religious elite of the village and one of its social responsibilities is to see to the continuity and persistence of Buddhist temple tradition. This group is almost exclusively Siamese and forms the basis of differentiation between the Siamese and Chinese residents of the village. Even though membership of the group is virtually closed to the Chinese, the rituals and ceremonies
organised by it are not. In fact participation by Chinese is so overwhelming that at times they seem to be just as committed to the Buddhist religion as the Siamese. In this way, the Chinese residents of Baan Maalaj are able to identify with the temple and the village's religious elite, but only as residents of the same village and not as members of the same ethnic group.

The Chinese residents of Baan Maalaj could only participate in this way and could not enter the first group because of certain limitations: many are not familiar with the intricacies of Buddhist ritual conduct. Not many Chinese are willing to spend a considerable length of time as monks, a necessary condition before a person could acquire the main bulk of ritual and religious knowledge essential for the proper conduct of Buddhist rites. Furthermore, Buddhist religious knowledge is transmitted through the Siamese language, including spoken and literary Thai. One needs to be proficient in reading the Thai script, a skill which does not come naturally unless one has been through formal Thai education of some sort, normally by virtue of having stayed in the Sangha for some time. Not many Chinese could read or write the Thai script because most Chinese monastic candidates do not stay in the order longer than the token period.

**Temple Rituals and Ceremonies**

In Thai Buddhism, most temple rituals and ceremonies centre on merit-making (thambun). The concept is very broad but in the context of temple ceremonies merit-making is closely associated with the offering of gifts (thawaaj khryangthaan), including food, to members of the Sangha.

Food offering is the symbol *par excellence* of the laity's support of the monkhood. The presentation of food to monks is one of the various means of making merit and the availability of monks provides the opportunity for that achievement. On the other hand, because of the roster system, the daily offering of food to the monks is now no longer a religious activity in which the entire village is involved at one single point of time.

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5See Chapter 5.
Yet there is always the conscious need to re-emphasise publicly, every now and then, the significance of food offering to monks. Hence, the laity always perform a special rite, by way of a simple but highly revered act of placing cooked rice into the monks' bowls. This ritual is known as sajbaat or thakbaat and forms an integral part of major temple ceremonies. The main point about this rite is that it is purely a symbolic act because only a small portion of the cooked rice collected by the conclusion of the rite is consumed by the temple residents. Most is taken back by the villagers to be used at their own discretion. This ritual usually takes place in the sermon hall where each of the laity serves spoonfuls of cooked rice into various receptacles. As everyone present insists on doing this, even when the containers are already overflowing beyond capacity, large amounts of rice are collected at most occasions of sajbaat. Such is the emphasis on this particular ritual act that practically speaking no temple rituals and religious undertakings take place without incorporating it. Usually the rite is conducted on the last day of a temple's major function, as a special occasion in its own right.

Merit-making also includes other charitable acts which support the well-being of the temple and monks. Thus contributions to the construction and maintenance of temple buildings or to the purchase of land or parks for the use of the Sangha are considered worthy of merit. Although land has now become too expensive a commodity to be disposed of to temples, a number of Kelantanese temples are known to have been erected on originally private lands. In some temples, certain sections of the complex are on land which was private property but which has since been donated to the Sangha. But the laity's support of the temples by way of merit-making may assume other forms. As mentioned in Chapter 3, many temples undertake the construction of new buildings or the renovation of existing ones. Building materials for such work are normally bought at Chinese hardware stores whose owners are also the benefactors of the temples or have some personal contact with the monks. Such purchases are normally made at cost price and the shopowners justify this concession as their special way of helping the temple.

6In Aril, for instance, a significant part of the temple compound lies on land bequeathed to the temple by one of the villagers. In Pok Xiang, Bukit Yong and Batu Bala, the monastic residence (saalaa phak song) is built on a private property donated to the Sangha.
Merit-making through gift-giving is more valued than merit-making through the observance of the Buddhist precepts and the pursuit of Buddhist ethical aims (Tambiah 1970:148). The most important thing about merit-making through the gift-giving ceremony is that it occasions the mobilisation of the whole village and centres the attention of its members on the temple and its monks (ibid.:57). In Kelantan it also provides the opportunity for the gathering of people not only of the same village but also of other villages who would have remained isolated from one another had there been no such function. It also brings the Siamese and Chinese together under a single religious congregation.

Gift-giving to temples and monks allows the opportunity for a public show of some significance because the kind of goods given to the temple indicates the wealth and prestige not only of the givers, but also of the congregation and the villagers who support the temple. One must consider this point in order to account for the overt display of all gift items during such occasions. For instance, during merit-making ceremonies associated with kathin and thāut phaa paa all gift items are prominently displayed in the sermon hall, sometimes, for days on end, prior to their final presentation. Under the guidance and assistance of members of the temple’s steering committee (sangkhaarii) the sponsor of the function arranges the gift items at a prominent location within the sermon hall (maewat). In the sermon hall of Baan Maalaj this particular spot is the stepped area leading to the upper level of the preaching hall. It is the most strategic location because next to it is the altar where an image of the Buddha and the image of the abbot are placed. When the laity and monks first enter the preaching hall, they always go to this altar to make reverence (waajphra). The altar and the stepped area face outwards into the spacious hall and anything that is placed there is bound to catch the sight of any person coming in.7 If there is limited space left within the stepped area, larger items are

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7The stepped area and the altar are respectively locations no. 2 and no. 4 in Figure 5-2. The stepped area forms a physical divide between the monks and the laymen during most ritual occasions. It could be considered as some kind of transitional area where gift items are placed and displayed before being eventually presented to the monks. During the course of a ritual no one, not even the monks, sits in this stepped area. As a general rule should a monk need to approach the laity, the stepped area is the lowest point to which he would descend.
placed by the side of the steps or on the floor below. Finally these items are paraded around the temple compound on the day of the ceremony for the grand finale of the display. No secret is made of the expense involved and people talk quite openly about the total cost even within the earshot of the sponsor.

Also on display are usually a number of ton ngoen, the symbolic money-trees made of banknotes. The number of trees presented depends on how grand the occasion is. There are many ways of donating money to the temple, but the presentation of the money-trees definitely adds colour and glamour to the occasion, especially when several trees are put on parade around the temple ground.8

The way the trees are made is of interest here, particularly in regard to the choice of the banknotes and their attachment to each tree (see Figure 6-2). Each and every branch is pinned or stapled with banknotes of various value. The purpose is to create an impression of a tree having a heavy foliage of money, the thicker the better. Hence, banknotes of lowest denomination (i.e. one dollar) are mostly used. Notes of higher denomination (i.e. ten, twenty or fifty) are also used but very sparingly and are placed at the very top of the tree where they are most conspicuous. Malaysian currency is mostly used but occasionally Thai banknotes also find their way onto the trees. (For an account of the making of a money-tree, see Appendix A).

The Ritual Calendar

As in other Siamese settlements in Kelantan, Baan Maalaj's ritual calendar is set according to lunar dates (chantharakhati). This has always been the practice as far as the Siamese themselves could remember. Because of the emphasis on lunar dates certain

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8The tree is a significant symbol in Buddhism. Tambiah (1970:165) referring to Northeast Thailand attributes the trees to a Buddhist symbolism perhaps unknown to the villagers. They appear to resemble the 'trees that gratify the desires of men' (Kalpavriksha). In popular Buddhism they are said to represent "the four trees that will blossom at the four corners of the city in which the next Buddha, Maitreya, will be born. They will then produce all kinds of delicious fruits in fabulous quantities" (ibid.). Terwiel associates this symbolism with the heavenly kapparukkha trees "which reputedly yield any object individuals may wish them to yield" (1979:239).
This tree was presented to the temple on the first day of Lent in 1983. The container holds sacralised water (naammon) which is sprinkled onto the congregation at the conclusion of the day’s ceremony.
ceremonies may not necessarily coincide with their performance in Thailand. For instance, the *songkraan* festival, an annual event celebrated on 13th April in Thailand, is celebrated at an earlier date in Baan Maalaj to coincide with the exact lunar calculation (i.e. on 15th day of waxing moon of the fifth lunar month). In 1983, the *songkraan* festival was celebrated in Baan Maalaj on 28th March, more than two weeks ahead of the official celebration date in Thailand. However, Baan Maalaj also celebrates 13th April although on a smaller scale than earlier.

The calendar of temple events for a lunar leap year (*athikamaat*), in which there are thirteen months instead of twelve, varies from that of ordinary years. Most of the rituals occasions are held twice to accommodate the extra month (see Table 6-2). For instance, during an ordinary lunar year of twelve months two occasions of food offering are made to the "returned spirit of the dead" (*preet*); once in the middle of the tenth lunar month (about early September) and another at the end of the same month. In contrast, during the lunar leap year there is an extra occasion for the same kind of ritual, making a total of three. When asked why this is so, the most common explanation the villagers give is this: because of the extra month in the lunar leap year, the *preet* may become confused and they may return to the village in the wrong month presumably earlier than expected. To be on the safe side, one must make sure that the extra occasion is held in addition and prior to the two usual ones in case the confused *preet* should return on the right day but of the wrong month.

Tables 6-1 and 6-2 list the major temple rituals conducted in the village. The main

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*9Siamese residents of Baan Maalaj even think that some of their customs and traditions (*prapheenii*) may not be the same as those prevalent throughout Thailand but add that the closest similarities are southern Thailand (*phaaktaaaj*). Even between various Siamese villages in Kelantan there are differences in the details of conducting the same rituals. The Siamese also recognise dialect differences between various villages (Kershaw 1969:51).*

*10* *Athikamaat is the Siamese leap year of lunar reckoning, usually indicated in the Siamese calendar by an extra eighth month. Skinner (1965:156) mentions that the Siamese calendar is based on the lunar year but is adjusted to the solar calendar by inserting "an extra 'thirteenth month' once every three years, intercalated after the normal eighth month" (*ibid.*). The ninth month follows as usual. Wyatt also makes a mention of this old luni-solar [sic] calendar (1974: 16, n. 49).*

*11* For more detail on *preet* see page 148.
difference between the two tables is that in the first, all ritual occasions are held once throughout the year, but in the second table most of them are held twice. Hence there are two occasions for the celebration of *maakhabuuchaa*, *wisaakhabuuchaa* and *songkraan*. There was also an additional occasion for the ritual of food offering to the *preet*. However, not all occasions are repeated. For instance, the rituals to mark the beginning and the end of Lent season (*phansaa*) are held only once even in a leap year.

Most temple rites are determined by the lunar calendar and correspond with the anniversary of major events during the life of the Buddha. Hence during the month of January or the third lunar month the most important ceremony is *maakhabuuchaa* which commemorates the gathering of 1250 monks from the four corners of earth. In Baan Maalaj this is celebrated on a moderate scale, the main ceremony being at night when a procession of people bearing candles takes place followed by the reading of a special sermon outdoors. The ceremony in the morning involves the offering of food to the monks and the *saýboat* rite.

The next calendrical rite at the temple is the celebration of the Siamese lunar new year (*songkraan*) which takes place in March. In Baan Maalaj, and elsewhere in Kelantan, it is celebrated on a different day from that in Thailand (see above). There is also a *saýboat* rite and the offering of food to monks. The fifth lunar month is associated with elderly people, hence merit-making during *songkraan* is also known as (*thambun khon kae*). In some places, *songkraan* is also celebrated (for the second time) on the same day it is held in Thailand. In Baan Maalaj the second celebration of *songkraan* takes place, although on a smaller scale than the one held previously.

*Wisaakха* celebration to commemorate the enlightenment and the death of the Buddha is held in Baan Maalaj in a manner quite similar to *maakhabuuchaa* above, with a procession by candlelight at night and the delivering of special sermon. The ritual offering of food monks and the *saýboat* rite also take place in the morning.

The next temple rites take place over the three days that mark the beginning of
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Siamese Lunar Calendar</th>
<th>Events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28 March</td>
<td>15th day waxing moon</td>
<td><strong>Songkraan</strong> - this one is celebrated in the village.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5th month</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 April</td>
<td>2nd day waxing moon</td>
<td><strong>Songkraan</strong> - this is the one officially celebrated in Thailand; also celebrated on a limited scale in Paan Maaalaj and a few other Siamese villages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6th month</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 May</td>
<td>15th day waxing moon</td>
<td><strong>Visakha</strong> day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6th month</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 July</td>
<td>14th day waxing moon</td>
<td>Eve of <strong>sa sa al ah b u u ch a a</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8th lunar month</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 July</td>
<td>15th day waxing moon</td>
<td><strong>sa sa al ah b u u ch a a</strong>. Today is also the birthday of the abbot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8th month</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 July</td>
<td>1st day waning moon</td>
<td>Beginning of Buddhist Lent; <strong>Sa b a t</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8th month</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 September</td>
<td>1st day waning moon</td>
<td><strong>Sa r a a n</strong> - food offering to the <strong>p re e t</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10th month</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 September</td>
<td>15th day waning moon</td>
<td><strong>Songkraan</strong> - the second and the last occasion of food offering to the <strong>p re e t</strong>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10th month</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 October</td>
<td>15th day waxing moon</td>
<td>End of Lent period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11th month</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 October</td>
<td>6th day waning moon</td>
<td><strong>Kathin</strong> Ceremony.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11th month</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 6-2: Major Temple Ceremonies in 1983 (A Lunar Leap Year)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Siamese Lunar Calendar</th>
<th>Events</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>28 January</td>
<td>15th day waxing moon</td>
<td>Maakhabuuchaa - the first of two in a lunar leap year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3rd month</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 February</td>
<td>15th day waxing moon</td>
<td>Second maakhabuuchaa for a lunar leap year. (This is indicated in the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4th month</td>
<td>Thai calendar as the official one in Thailand).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 March</td>
<td>15th day waxing moon</td>
<td>Songkraan - this is the one celebrated traditionally in Baan Maalaj.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5th month</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 April</td>
<td>2nd day waning moon</td>
<td>Songkraan - this the official day in of celebration in Thailand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6th month</td>
<td>Celebrated on a small scale in Baan Maalaj.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 April</td>
<td>15th day waxing moon</td>
<td>The first wisaakha for a lunar leap year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6th month</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 May</td>
<td>15th day waxing moon</td>
<td>The second wisaakha for a lunar leap year. (This is the official</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7th month</td>
<td>celebration day in Thailand as indicated in the Thai calendar).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 June</td>
<td>1st day waning moon</td>
<td>This day has its special significance because in ordinary year (i.e.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8th month</td>
<td>non-leap year) it marks the beginning of Buddhist Lent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Event</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 July</td>
<td>14th day waxing moon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Second 8th month</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eve of <em>aasaalahabuuchaa</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 July</td>
<td>15th day waxing moon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Second 8th month</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Aasaalahabuuchaa</em>. Also the birthday celebration of the abbot.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 July</td>
<td>1st day waning moon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Second 8th month</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Beginning of the Lent period for a lunar leap year.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 September</td>
<td>14th day waning moon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9th month</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Sajraa</em> - the first in the series of three for a lunar leap year.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 September</td>
<td>1st day waning moon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10th month</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Sajraa</em> - the second one for a lunar leap year.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 October</td>
<td>15th day waxing moon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>10th month</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Songraa</em> - the last in the series of three for a lunar leap year.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 October</td>
<td>15th day waxing moon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11th month</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>End of Lent period.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28 October</td>
<td>7th day waning moon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>11th month</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Presentation of gifts to monks and temple -- <em>chaut kathin</em>.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Lent retreat (*phansaa*) in about July (8th lunar month). The day before the first day of Lent is known as *aasaalahabuuchaa*. The significance of *aasaalah* is that it commemorates Buddha's first discourse to his first five disciples at the Deer Park in Benares. This commemoration also entails a procession by candlelight and an outdoor sermon similar to the one held on *maakhabuuchaa* celebration. In *Baan Maalaj* *aasaalah* day has another significance because it is also the birthday of the abbot. In the afternoon the abbot is given a ritual bath by members of the temple's congregation. Hence, this occasion is also known as *wan aabnaam phau than* (literally: the day of bathing the reverend father).

There is a symbolic act of monks going round collecting alms food on the three days that mark the beginning of *phansaa* retreat. On the eve of *aasaalah*, on the *aasaalah* day itself and on the first day of Lent the *sajbaat* rite is held outside the sermon hall. Residents of the village and outsiders who are members of the congregation form a line from the entrance of the ordination hall to the temple's gate with containers of cooked rice ready in their hands. As monks pass along this line spoonfuls of rice are placed by the congregation into their bowls. With the exception of the abbot (who is sick) all monks of the temple take part in this symbolic act of *paJbinthabaat*.

On the first day of Lent, a merit-making in the form of offering of yellow cloth and accessories takes place. Traditionally Lent is associated with the rainy season but in Kelantan the wet season usually starts well after Lent, usually from November onwards. Nevertheless, the gift-giving occasion is still known as the offering of "cloth for the rainy

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12 In Kelantan special ceremonies are held to celebrate the birthday of many senior abbots. Members of the temple's congregation and monks take part in pouring scented water over the person of the abbot who is seated on a specially erected dais. Usually a temporary structure is built in the temple compound for this purpose but in *Baan Maalaj* a more permanent one has been constructed (structure no. 9 in Figure 5-1, page 102). An interesting point about this ritual bathing is that the bath water running off the body of the abbot is thought to be auspicious, hence many people, especially women and children, collect as much of it as they can by holding various containers close to the abbot's body as scented water is poured over him. The bath water is used to wash one's face, and as a basis for medicinal concoctions; some is poured into the well at one's house so as to sacralise its content. Since the celebration is also associated with a birthday, a number of wealthy Chinese donate specially made western-style birthday cakes complete with candles for the abbot to cut during the religious ceremony.
season" (thawaaj phaa aabnaamfon). Usually this gift-giving ceremony is privately sponsored and only family members of the sponsor participate. The event takes place in the afternoon after the monks have taken their last meal of the day. In 1983 the family of one of the sangkhaarii members organised this merit-making occasion. A gift of white cloth and money was also presented the phaua and the two maechii during the same ceremony.13

During the Lent retreat itself there are two other days of important calendrical temple rites. On these days the "returned spirits of the ancestors" (preet) are feasted with food. These rites are conducted some time in September around the ninth and tenth lunar month. The end of Lent season, in October, calls for another ritual gathering at the temple. This also involves another outdoor saibaat rite similar to the one that marks the first three days of the Lent retreat.

The temple events that I have just mentioned above are rites which are determined by precise lunar dates. However, there are other temple ceremonies which are held on certain dates not necessarily determined by the lunar constellation. For instance, gift-giving ceremony of the thaut phaa paa kind can be conducted at any time of the year. However, gift-giving ceremony of the kathin type can only be done within the limitation of one month period after the Lent retreat, but the actual date of the ceremony is not rigidly determined as in the case of maakhabuuchaa or wisaakhabuuchaa rites.

Apart from the calendrical rites there are also temple events of extraordinary type. Kelantaneso temples hold special functions to raise money (ngaan haa bia) for the construction of new sermon halls, kitchens and dining facilities, and for paying the cost of repair and extension to other buildings in the complex. Sometimes a celebration is held when the construction of a building is finished. This is basically a dedicatory celebration (ngaan chalaung). In Baan Maalaj, the archway that spans the temple entrance became

13See photograph in Figure 6-6, page 161.
the cause for this kind of celebration in 1983.14

The ritual calendar of the village is by no means very demanding on the residents of Baan Maalaj. Major temple ceremonies take place at well-spaced intervals, except during the period just before and after the Lent retreat. Apart from that the temple remains quiet and the only occasions when the monks and the laity get together are during the fortnightly rites of the Buddhist Sabbath (wanphra).15 This entails the gathering of permanent residents of the temple (the monks, the maechii and the phautaa) plus other members of the village's religious elite such as the sangkhaarii and the temple "regulars", i.e. the few elderly men and women who spent most of their free time at the temple.

Attending Temple Functions

At most temple functions, the women attending far outnumber the men. This seems to conform to similar observations in other Theravada countries of Southeast Asia (Cf. Tambiah 1970:144, 145). The preponderance of women over men at religious gatherings gives the impression that "... the more conspicuous practising Buddhists are women rather than men" (Tambiah 1970:144). And it is a common thing for women to sometimes sponsor merit-making ceremonies. In Baan Maalaj, for three successive years (1981, 1982 and 1983) all the sponsors of kathin ceremonies have been women and of the three, two were Chinese. The preponderance of women over men among the congregation is even more conspicuous among the Chinese. Chinese women tend to spend more time at the wat than their men (Kershaw 1973:6).

The number attending a temple function is determined by two major factors. Firstly, temple functions that are held on week days attract fewer people than those held over week-end holidays. Some temple functions, because of their exact lunar reckoning, cannot be manipulated so as to fall on week-ends. When functions have to be held on week days many people, particularly men, cannot attend and the number of women is, therefore, much larger.

14 This celebration is described in detail in Chapter 8.
15 For wanphra see page 145.
Secondly, when rituals at several temples coincide fewer people, especially outsiders, are able to attend each. This is mainly because some of them are also members of other temples’ congregations.\textsuperscript{16} Clashes of temple functions are unavoidable because rituals like maakhabuuchaa, wisaakhabuuchaa, aosaalahabuuchaa etc. are organised simultaneously at all temples due to their exact lunar reckoning. On such occasions residents of a particular village attend the function at their respective temple, while outsiders who have no temples of their own but who belong to several congregations may have to choose between various temples that organise similar functions. Usually kinship and friendship factors determine this choice. Outsiders usually attend functions at the temple where their relatives or friends live, and by doing so they emphasise their identification with and loyalty to that particular wat.

Other temple ceremonies such as thaut kathin, thaut phaa paa and ordination are not subject to any specific lunar dates and they, therefore, may be organised on any day within the specified period. Thaut kathin, for instance, can be held any time within one month after the end of the Buddhist Lent, thaut phaa paa any time throughout the year. They are usually organised during the week-end holidays to ensure that a maximum number of people will be able to attend.

Therefore, one of the organising principles most temples follow in setting the day to hold its function is to see that if possible clashes do not occur with similar events held at other wat. Secondly the function, if possible, should be held on the week-end holiday, which in Kelantan is Friday.\textsuperscript{17} A function held on days other than Friday will also clash with working days and consequently the number of people attending will be less.

By looking at the attendance at temple functions one revealing aspect becomes quite clear. Only the high points of the ritual calendar affect the entire congregation. These

\textsuperscript{16}The overlapping nature of phuck wat membership has already been discussed in the last chapter.

\textsuperscript{17}Unlike in most of the west coast states, in Kelantan, government and large business operate on a week of five and a half days, starting from Saturday through to noon on Thursday, which is a half working day. The week-end starts from afternoon Thursday until the whole of Friday.
include the kathin occasions (provided that they do not clash with too many functions of similar nature at other temples) and the special occasions like commemorative or dedicatory celebrations which are organised on special dates to avoid clashes. Smaller events on the calendar, like wanphra, do not involve more than the usual core of temple devotees and the religious elite of the village. Slightly bigger events on the calendar, like maakhabuuchaa, wisaakhabuuchaa and aasaalahabuuchaa, entail a larger number of people but not necessarily the whole village, nor would they involve all members of the congregation who live outside the village.

This brings us to a significant point regarding ritual calendar, temple attendance and ethnic differentiation. During small temple events, like wanphra, ethnic differences become most explicit, because those who attend such rituals are mostly Siamese. A typical attendance consists of the clergy and other temple residents, members of the sangkhaarii, the handful of temple "regulars" and occasionally a few devout outsiders who return to the village for the morning service. Most of these people are Siamese, with the exception, as always, of one or two Chinese who may join the group of worshippers. However, as a general rule Siamese predominate at these small scale rites and the absence of Chinese is indeed conspicuous. As a general rule too, more women than men attend the ceremony. The few men present are mainly members of the temple's lay committee.

During slightly bigger ceremonies, such as the feasting of the returned spirits of the dead (sajpreet or sajraan) the number of Chinese increases considerably, and perhaps even equals to that of the Siamese. Generally the number of people present is also increased by the gathering of outsiders who belong to the temple's congregation. For instance, Chinese from various towns and other settlements may make the trip to their favourite temples on this occasion. Likewise Siamese who consider Baan Maalaj as their place of worship and those who consider the village their ancestral home gather at the temple for the function. Ceremonies of this scale involve a larger number of Baan Maalaj's residents and a considerable number of outsiders. In terms of ethnicity it is not very clear which group predominates.
During the biggest of the ceremonies, the Chinese are made quite conspicuous not only by their large turn up at the temple but also by their generosity in the sponsorship of the ceremony. On these occasions one can expect to see other Chinese as well, especially those who do not normally belong to the temple's congregation, but who are nevertheless invited by the sponsors as special guests.

To illustrate the point described above, I devote the rest of the chapter to a discussion of two temple events, one illustrative of the simplest of the ceremonies in which the Siamese predominate, the other a slightly larger one in which both Chinese and Siamese members of the village and the congregation participate. The case example for the biggest of the temple ceremonies will be the subject of Chapter 8.

The Buddhist Sabbath

The Buddhist sabbath (*wanphra; wan uboosatha*) is a regular event in Baan Maalaj but only a small number of people participate. Usually, elderly people of either sex go to the temple for a short morning service which marks the day. With the exception of one or two elderly Chinese most of these people are Siamese residents of the village. The ritual is conducted just after the monks have taken their morning meal, usually at about 8 o'clock. The main part of the ritual consists of the laity asking for and receiving the eight precepts. As most of the laity who follow this rite are old people with few family responsibilities they normally spend the rest of the day at the temple reading religious texts or talking to the monks. Some may find the comfort of the temple surroundings ideal for an afternoon nap in unoccupied cubicles or at the pavilion (*saalaa*).

Regarding the observance of the eight precepts, more people are involved when the sabbath coincides with any of the major celebrations listed in tables 6-1 and 6-2. Otherwise, sabbath rituals held on days other than these festive occasions tend to lack the spirited atmosphere, partly because the number of those taking part in the morning service is very small, rarely exceeding 15 people, and partly because the occasion does not entail the gathering of people other than the temple "regulars". Apart from the clergy,
these comprise the ten or so elderly people,\textsuperscript{18} the five \textit{sangkhaarii} members plus occasionally one or two outsiders who make the special trip to the temple to attend the morning rite.\textsuperscript{19} Hence, Buddhist sabbath rites held on normal days usually involve people who are already part and parcel of the temple scenario, the "regulars" so to speak. There is indeed a conspicuous absence of many people whom one usually sees during major occasions at the temple.

Despite the quietude which characterises Buddhist sabbath observances in Baan Maalaj there are two important aspects which must be mentioned here. Firstly, on these days the second temple which remains inactive most of the time \{see page 100 above\} becomes useful. About four or five people gather at this temple to wait for the monks of the first temple to come by and conduct the service for the Buddhist sabbath observation. The special effort on the part of the monks to make the trip and to conduct the morning service at the second temple is for the sake of these elderly people who find it more convenient to go to the second temple rather than having to walk quite a distance to the first.

The second point about Buddhist sabbath observances is that in normal circumstances it is the laity which goes to meet the monks and not they the laity.\textsuperscript{20} However, not everyone can do just that; because of illness or old age some of the laity are confined to their respective houses. In this case the monks visit them instead in order to conduct the \textit{wanphra} rite. In Baan Maalaj monks visit these people regularly during Buddhist sabbaths soon after the service at the temple finishes.

\textsuperscript{18}These are mainly people who lead a retired life and depend on the support of their grown up children or relatives. In most cases they are already spending most of their time at the temple, helping the monks with various chores.

\textsuperscript{19}As usual no regular pattern of attendance could be determined with regard to outsiders taking part in the \textit{wanphra} rite held on normal days. Occasionally people who now reside outside the village, but who still consider themselves as \textit{phuak wat} of Baan Maalaj's temple attend the morning service. These are usually elderly men and women, mostly Siamese but occasionally there are also some Chinese from various settlements in the district.

\textsuperscript{20}Tambiah (1970:9) notes that the separation between the \textit{wat} and the village means that the monks keep to the minimum their interaction with the villagers outside temple boundary; it is the villagers who visit them and not they the villagers.
The extension of ritual services to the sick and the aged is not unique to Baan Maalaj alone. In the Siamese village of Pok Kiang, in the neighbouring state of Terengganu, whenever monks visit this settlement, they also make the effort to visit lay people who are too old or too sick to join others at the usual gathering place. As there is no temple in Pok Kiang whenever monks from other villages come visiting, they are accommodated at the monastic residence (saalaa phak song) where the laity gather in order to make merit and participate in the rituals at which the visiting monks officiate. However, not every person can go to the saalaa due to sickness or old age. Soon after the service at the saalaa one or two monks visit these people. The ritual of asking of the five precepts, or if it is a Buddhist sabbath, the eight precepts, is conducted in the comfort of the laity's houses, although in an abbreviated form. One can see that there is always a conscious effort on the part of both the villagers and the monks to observe the Buddhist sabbath even to the extent of making this kind of arrangement whenever possible.

Feasting of the Preet

During the tenth lunar month (about September) there are two occasions of merit-making for the "returned spirits of the dead" (preet). These occasions are held twice during the month, first on the full moon and then fifteen days later. During the lunar leap year (athikamaat) an additional occasion is held for the same kind of rite.

The main part of the ritual entails food offering to a kind of spirit called preet. Special food is prepared for the occasion. Typical of this is a kind of glutinous rice, cooked in coconut milk and sugar, then compressed and wrapped tightly in shoot-leaves of

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21 See map in Figure 4-1. This settlement is also known as Bukit Keluang among the Malays.

22 There are three occasions altogether; the first is held on the 14th day of the waning moon of the ninth lunar month (i.e. the last day of the ninth lunar month). The other two are held exactly on the same days as in the normal lunar year. See tables 6-1 and 6-2 above.
a palm tree, then steamed. The Siamese call this food *khaawtom* (Malay: *ketupat*). Other kinds of food are also offered, including cooked rice, various kinds of sweet cakes and delicacies. Since the rite usually coincides with the fruit season, the offering also consists of all sorts of fruits. However, there is no real limit to the range of food offered, but *khaawtom* appears to be closely identified with the *preet* occasion.

*Preet* are associated with the belief that neither rebirth after death nor entry into heaven is immediate. Because of their previous sins the deceased will have to undergo punishment before they can be either admitted into heaven or reborn into the world. Part of this punishment takes the form of having to spend some time in the vicinity of hell until their bad *kamma* is exhausted. These underworld beings are known as *preet*. Some people consider *preet* as a kind of ghost or *phii* (*phii chanit neung*) but not as potentially dangerous as an ordinary *phii* and certainly not similar to *winjan* or soul. The general belief is that these *preet* may be ancestors who are unfortunate enough to be retained close to hell marking time for their eventual release and rebirth.

Richard Davis (1984:61, 75) explains that in folk Buddhism all persons are believed to become *preet* immediately upon their death and are then reborn into some other

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23 Of the *Licuala* species; Malay: *palas*.

24 This is quite different from *ketupat* that one usually finds in the west coast states where they are made from ordinary white rice, boiled in small rectangular-shaped packets woven from shoot leaves of the coconut trees. While both the Kelantanese and the west coast versions are generally known as *ketupat*, in Kelantan the term refers specifically to the one that is made from glutinous rice and "wrapped" in *palas* leaves whereas the one that is made from ordinary rice and "wrapped" in shoot-leaves of the coconut palm is called *ketupat nasi*.

25 In Malay oral tradition, *ketupat* is associated with food that one takes along when embarking on a long journey, since it keeps for many days and does not become stale very easily. It is most appropriate too for the *preet* to be offered the same kind of food because of the presumably long journey they take from an underworld abode to the village.

26 *Sajpreet* involves the same concept as that of the Chinese "Feast of the Hungry Ghosts" which is celebrated on the fourteenth day of the seventh Chinese lunar month (Golomb 1978:216). But in Baan Maxalaj there is no separate occasion held by the Chinese residents; instead they participate fully in the Siamese version of the rite. Token money is burnt by some Chinese women during the same rite although none of the Siamese do so. See page 153. For a recent account of a similar festival, see DeBernardi (1980); see also Purcell (1948:126-127) and Maeda (1967:77). Golomb says that among Kelantan Chinese of Hokkien dialect group this occasion of feeding the *preet* is known as *Dewa Day* (1978:167).

27 Davis uses the term *preta*. 
forms of existence. In one sense, according to Davis, preet are recently deceased, but in another, they are "a particular form of spirit (phii) which suffers constant thirst and hunger because its tiny mouth cannot take in enough sustenance to nourish its tall and emaciated body." Davis adds further that preet in this latter sense "are given to making nocturnal appearances, especially on the night of full moon and new moon. They are frightening, but harmless" (p. 76).

According to Buddhist cosmology, preet occupy one of the five Worlds of Desire. The five consist of the following, starting from the lowest,28

1. Hell (Narok; Pali: Niraya)
2. Sphere of Animals (Pali: tiraccheanabhuumi)
3. Sphere of Ghosts (Pali: petavisayabhuumi)
4. Sphere of Demons (Pali: asurakaayabhuumi)
5. Sphere of Human Beings (Pali: manussabhuumi)

Into the last four of these levels of existence are born people whose misdeeds outweigh their good deeds (Davis 1984:75). The level which the preet occupy (the third in the order above) is slightly higher than that of the animal, but lower than that of the demons.

In Baan Maalaj the villagers consider the preet to be the spirits of the dead which have been left outside but within the vicinity of hell (narok). Their position is quite precarious; although they have some good kamma this is not enough to warrant them a place in heaven (sawan) for they still has some demerit (baap) or bad kamma which must be paid for first. Yet the same bad kamma is not serious enough for them to enter hell. Hence the preet is supposed to mark time within the vicinity of hell until such time as its bad kamma (kam chua) has worn off.

Although the preet are supposed to be confined to their underworld dwellings, they are, however, released during the tenth lunar month and permitted to return to their surviving families to seek food from them. During this time a returning preet may

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28 For more details on this see, for instance, Davis (1984:75-77) and Schumann (1973:51). See also Reynolds (1976:204, 205 and 207).
observe the goings-on among the living members of its family --- whether they are leading a proper and fruitful life or whether they are wasting away their life by merely feeding on the worldly property the *preet* left behind and not doing anything much to gain further merit by putting the inherited wealth to good use.

Upon returning to their former villages, the *preet*, sitting themselves on tree branches close to their former houses and on roof rafters, observe the goings-on among their descendants (*laauklaan*). Other favourite haunts of the *preet* are cross-roads and paths of the village. Occasionally a *preet* may not be satisfied with what its descendants are doing\(^{29}\) and may punish them by inflicting illness especially yellow fever. When this happens or a strange sickness strikes the family member particularly around this time of the year, the villagers associate this misfortune with the curse of the *preet*.

During the tenth lunar month, the released *preet* enjoy various merits that are made in their names. The villagers as a tradition reserve two separate days for the purpose of holding the rituals of food offerings to the *preet*. A number of terms are used for the occasions. The more general one is *sajpreet*, but the generative terms for this include *sajraan* and *songraan*. These terms need a little elaboration. *Sajpreet* means putting out something for the *preet*. There is a special structure in the form of a small platform used for the purpose of placing these offerings. It is called *raan*, hence the name *sajraan* (putting something on the platform -- *raan*). The two terms are used interchangeably, and when one talks about *sajraan* or *saj preet* one refers to the special ritual of food offering conducted during the tenth lunar month. One also knows that there are normally two occasions for doing this if it is during the usual year but three if it is during the lunar

\(^{29}\) *Preet* are believed to be very concerned with what eventually happens to the worldly property they leave behind to their surviving kin. Their concern is that it should be used wisely, and in particular that income gained from this property be used for making merit in the name of the deceased. If it is not, the *preet* will be displeased and may bring back luck to their descendants.

\(^{30}\) I have no information in regard to what the villagers would do if yellow fever were to strike them. Perhaps there would be some rite of *sukhwan* type performed to wade off the curse through the manipulation of some ritual specialists or the monks. As no one in the village was known to have suffered yellow fever or some other strange disease associated with the *preet*, the villagers take it that they have performed enough merit to the satisfaction of the *preet*.
leap year. The other generative term, *songraan*, is also used, but it specifically refers to the very last in the series of two ritual events (in the case of normal lunar year) or in the series of three (in the case of a lunar leap year). The word *song* -- meaning "to send something away; to bid farewell to some one" -- is used by the villagers to show that the *preet* are now returning to their dwelling at the close of the tenth lunar month,\(^{31}\) after they have been feasted by their descendants.

On the day preceding a performance of either *sajraan* or *songraan* two platforms are constructed by the villagers; one inside and another outside the temple compound. The first is called *raan naj*, the second, built close to the main entrance, is called *raan nok*. Each one is about 1.5 metres high with a floor area of about 1.5 by 1 metre. Both are made of wooden planks raised on poles. The floor is lined with freshly cut banana leaves (*baatōng*; *baatōngktaw*). At one corner of the floor is placed an opened black umbrella, the handle of which is tied to one of the four poles supporting the *raan* structure. Under each umbrella are placed a kettle (or a large mug) of tea (*naamcha*) and a young coconut, its top portion sliced off a little to reveal the juice and the flesh inside. (This is to tempt and attract the *preet* to the *raan* because under the hot tropical sun nothing looks more inviting than the shade of an open umbrella, a container of cooling tea and a young coconut with its refreshing juice ready for the drinking and its tender flesh for the eating). There is a mock ladder made from the midrib of a banana leaf (*kaantaung*) leading from the ground up to the floor of the *raan* (for the *preet* to climb the *raan* and feast on the offering). It is absolutely necessary to build a second *raan* outside the temple compound because the sin of some *preet* excludes them from entry. On the actual day of the *sajraan*, the *preet* by a special ritual invitation of the monks are summoned to come and enjoy the offering of food and to rejoice in the merit made for them.

A yellow cord (*saa jsiin*) is tied to the tip of an umbrella fixed to the outside *raan*.

\(^{31}\) I could not figure out why the word *song* is used here because in actual fact it is the *preet*, not the *raan* which is being sent back to the underworld dwelling.
This cord is then passed and tied to the tip of another umbrella on the second *raan* inside the temple compound. From there it is led into the sermon hall (*maewat*), where it is wound around an image of the Buddha, after which it passes in front of the row of seated monks, each of them holding the cord in their hands with palms pressed together. The cord ends up in a small ball placed by the side of the last monk in the row. The explanation for this is that the string will carry the merit and the magical charge from the Buddha image and the chanting monks to the two *raan* outside the *maewat* and then to the *preet* who are enjoying the offerings.32

*The Ceremony Proper of Feasting the Preet*

The actual ceremony of food offering to the *preet* does not normally begin until just before noon. People start to gather within the *wat* compound early in the morning of the appointed day. Those from distant places have already arrived in the village the day before and perhaps have spent the night in the temple itself or with relatives in the village. The monks themselves, however, have already begun the day's ceremony much earlier. Just after they have finished with their morning meals (*chaan chaaw*) they gather inside the *boot* to read the special *suat* for the *preet*. No lay person is involved in this.

At about 9.30 a.m. a drum is sounded to call the villagers who are not already at the temple to proceed there because the offering of food to the *preet* is about to begin. Actually between the first sounding of the drum and the ceremony itself there is plenty of time to spare. So there is no sudden rush of the congregation to the temple, but rather a steady, unhurried flow of people streaming into the temple compound and filling the sermon hall. Nearly every female person carries along various containers of food and other items which will be offered to the monks and the *preet*. At about 10.30 a.m. when most of the people have already arrived, the first sequence of the ceremony begins. This

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32 Cf. Tambiah (1970: 159) who gives a slightly different interpretation with regard to the ritual significance of the cord. According to his interpretation the cord encloses all people within the boundary of a merit-making activity, thus they themselves acquire the merit so generated. In any case the cord could still be seen as the conduit of magical power and merit in the ceremony concerned.
takes the form of the customary *waajphra* and the asking and receiving of the five precepts (and where appropriate the asking for and the receiving of the eight precepts). As usual this is done with one of the *sangkhaarii* members acting as the leader (*phuunam*). This done the monks read a chant, *(suat hajphaun)*, which incorporates a blessing for the congregation.

While the monks are chanting, the crowd forms a queue within the centre of the hall, women first, in order to do the *sajbaat* rite, whereby spoonfuls of cooked rice are placed into various containers consisting of a large basin and a number of monk’s bowls. After this the same people proceed to the two *raan* and make their offering of rice and other food items to the *preet*. It takes quite a while before everyone has done so. Meanwhile, the monks continue with the chanting.

It is at this particular time of ritual sequence that some, but not all, Chinese participants may distinguish themselves from the rest of the congregation. They burn token money (normally used during Chinese funeral ceremonies) at the base of each platform; as a contrast none of the Siamese present do so.

Everyone who has placed the food on the two platforms then returns to the sermon hall. This marks the beginning of the next phase of the ceremony. One of the *sangkhaarii* members, this time the *aacaan wat*, acting as the lay ritual leader (*phuunam*), leads the congregation in intoning the formula of offering *(khaataa thawaaj)* to the monks and the *preet*. The essence of this act is to dedicate the food to the benefit of the members of the *Sangha*, the *preet*, and other living beings seen or unseen that may be within the temple’s precincts. The congregation also asks for the merit to be transferred to the *preet* as well as to deceased parents, ancestors and relatives.

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33 This rite precedes most ceremonies at the temples and prepares the congregation present for the immediately following ceremony. Terwiel (1979:188) interpretes this as a ritual act of cleansing, a purification which enables the laymen to receive the benefit of ceremony in a proper manner. The villagers explain that this ritual prelude puts one in the purest state of mind a layman can achieve.

Figure 6-4: Putting of Offerings to the Preet

This is the platform in the temple’s compound (*raan naj*). Note the yellow cord which leads into the sermon hall. It originates from another platform *raan nok* on the outside of the compound.
**Figure 6-5:** Feasting of the *Preet*

At the foot of the platform Chinese women (partly hidden) burn paper money.
The thawaaj ceremony finished, the monks read the anumoothanaa chant (to bless the offering of food and gift to the preet and the monks). As soon as this finishes the congregation read the truatnaam formula, in which once again they seek the transfer of merit to the preet and other beings worthy of rejoicing in the merit thus made.

As soon as this is all over, one of the sangkhaarii members takes a basket full of small balls made of woven green coconut leaves (luuk krapau) and throws them to the waiting crowd of children already milling in anticipation outside the sermon hall. This is a treat for the children because most of these coconut-leaf balls contain coins. There is normally quite a tussle among the children as they elbow and push each other for these balls. On this particular occasion these balls were made by one of the two māechiīi of the temple. The coins used were her contribution to the merit-making occasion.

The chanting, the thawaaj ceremony and the throwing of the balls finished, the monks descend from the higher level of the hall in order to take their last meal of the day. By this time trays of food brought over by households and others from outside the village have already been set up and each of the monks takes his place ready to eat. Since there is a large number of trays, as is the usual case, each monk is offered between four to five trays of food. Members of the sangkhaarii and a few lay members of the congregation hand over the trays of food to the monks. Female members of the same congregation who have been previously busy arranging the food in the trays watch the whole thing from a distance. A monk, upon being presented with the trays, touches their edges to symbolise his acceptance of the food. He does not eat from all the trays offered him but rather concentrates on just one, picking bits and pieces from other trays every now and then. The sangkhaarii and the few lay members wait on the monks as they dine by filling their drinking utensils and seeing to their immediate needs.

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35 For a typical text of this formula, see, for instance, Wells (1975:119,120).
36 The throwing of these coconut-leaf balls is quite common during temple ceremonies. In the village where Golomb (1978) did his field work the money is contained in banana-leaf instead of coconut-leaf balls. The people in this village called these balls luug kamphyrg (Golomb, 1978:168). I could not find the equivalent of this term in standard Thai; perhaps it is the local pronunciation of luuk krapau, meaning "bulb", or "something having the shape of a bulb", which the coconut-leaf balls look very much like.
After the monks have finished with their meal, they read another short chant and then take leave to retire to their respective quarters. Other monks make themselves available for brief audience with members of the lay congregation. The nature of the conversation is not necessarily religious but rather more of a social kind. Many of those whom the monks talk to at this particular moment are also relatives and friends who have come from outside the village. Exchange of news and gossip usually takes place during this meeting.

As soon as the monks have finished eating, the trays of food are claimed by their respective owners who repack whatever is left into the containers such as picnic-pinto or tiffin carriers. These are taken home, but some trays, often with food hardly touched, are passed on to various groups in the congregation. As this day is also the Buddhist sabbath (wanphra) some of the congregation members are observing the eight precepts and one of the requirements of these precepts is to abstain from eating after mid-day. As soon as they get their trays of food these people group together to take the last meal since the mid-day is getting close.

While the monks are still eating children begin to mill around the two platforms, getting ready to help themselves to the food items that are placed on them. As soon as the monks have finished eating the stampede to retrieve a share of the offerings on the platforms begins. Some energetic children even climb right up the platform floor itself. Adults may also join the scramble for the offerings and whatever can be salvaged from the two platforms is filled into baskets and plastic bags. The whole platform is cleared of everything, except for the umbrella, the young coconut and the container of tea (naamchaa), within a matter of minutes. Food that spills over during the scramble onto the ground is picked up by dogs which move in as soon as the area around the platform is clear of people.

Insofar as ordinary members of the congregation are concerned this concludes the day’s event of feasting the preet. The sangkhaarii members, however, do not go home
immediately for there are a few more things to do. They gather at one corner of the sermon hall to count the money received while the day’s ceremony is going on. This is the anumoothanaa money which is donated by members of the congregation, typically by outsiders and visitors, at various times during the morning just before the sajbaat and sajraan rites. Usually a monk’s bowl is placed at the foot of the image of the Buddha for this purpose. The content of this bowl is emptied and counted at the conclusion of the day’s ritual, usually just after the monks have just finished eating. The amount collected is then divided equally according to the number of monks officiating at the ritual. Each share is wrapped in newspaper or in a page torn off a used calendar. These packets are then distributed to the monks by slipping them into their shoulder bags.

Concluding Remarks

My main aim in discussing the details of temple rituals has been two-fold: firstly, to highlight the concept of locality group of Baan Maalaj, and secondly, to distinguish the various levels of adherence and commitment to the Buddhist religion not only within the locality group but also within the larger grouping that constitutes the whole congregation. By looking at these rituals and the participation of the congregation along ethnic lines one can discern varying levels of adherence and commitment to the religion. The basis for ethnic differentiation becomes very clear when one sees that the Siamese are the ones who undertake the effort to maintain the persistence of Buddhist religion and tradition with which Siamese ethnicity is related. It is during temple rituals that the specialised role of the Siamese as keepers of the sacerdotal knowledge associated with Theravada tradition becomes most explicit. Details of the ritual calendar, the precise timing of certain ceremonies and the planning of temple events are the responsibility of the monks, members of the sangkhaarii and others of the religious elite. During temple rituals members of the steering committee demonstrate this specialised role through their adroitness at organising and supervising the ceremonies concerned. It is the religious elite

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37 Sometimes while the counting of the money is going on, there may be a last minute donation. An old lady may hurry back towards the group of sangkhaarii frantically waving some banknotes which she forgot to put into the receptacle earlier on. If this happens then the whole division has to be redone (much to the visible irritation of the sangkhaarii members).
of the village which maintains the Buddhist tradition, thereby perpetuating the basis for a definition of Siamese ethnicity.
Figure 6-6: Gift-Giving on the First Day of Lent

This is the ritual of giving the cloth for the rainy season (*phaa aabnaam fon*). At the forefront is the member of the temple's steering committee who supervises the laity.
CHAPTER 7
THE KATHIN CEREMONY

The kathin ceremony is one of the most important events of a temple, for it not only proclaims the end of the Lent season for the monks, but also marks the month of merit-making for the laity. It marks the change of mood from 'ascetic' Buddhism observed during the Lent to 'festive' Buddhism which is associated with temple fairs and celebrations.¹ When monks come out of their retreat the laity organise feasts for them and offer them gifts of cloth and other useful items. The kathin thus provides the opportunity for the laity to make merit. Gift-giving during this month is believed to generate more merit than at other times of the year; the most meritorious of acts include sponsorship of a kathin ceremony.²

Kathin ceremonies take place during the month after Lent retreat, usually in October. In terms of the Siamese lunar calendar, this period starts from the first day of the waning half of the 11th month to the 15th day of the waxing moon of the 12th lunar month). The retreat (phansaa) itself ends on the 15th day of waxing moon of 11th lunar month. The central event is the presentation (thawaa) of yellow robes to the monks. However, on most occasions the symbolic significance of the yellow robes is overshadowed by other gift items, known as khryangbauriwaan,³ particularly the 'accessory items' and the money-trees, the total cost for which surpasses that of the sets of yellow cloth.

¹ On this Tambiah observes that the Lent is symbolic of 'ascetic' Buddhism (monks in retreat, elderly full of salvation thoughts); kathin month is symbolic of 'festive' Buddhism (monks emerging, the old presenting gifts and the young participating in fairs and collective merit-making) (1970:160).
³ On khryangbauriwaan, see page 117 above.
Davis (1984:200) makes similar observation in Thailand regarding the kathin affair and the significance of the robes,

As the custom has evolved in Thailand, the robes themselves no longer hold the ritual focus of the kathina [sic] ceremony. They have come to be overshadowed in value and significance by the splendour and magnitude of other gifts presented to the monks at the same time. Along with robes, the group sponsoring the festival donate furniture and useful equipment, sacerdotal paraphernalia, and often large sums of money.

The actual cost of holding of a kathin ritual can be tremendous. Terwiel (1979:237) mentions that one of the main reasons why kathin ceremony carries great prestige and honour to the main sponsor is that it is extremely expensive. However, the spiritual and social rewards outweigh the expenses involved. Because of this, there is never a real shortage of potential sponsors of the ceremonies. In fact, many wealthy members of the congregation, typically the Chinese, compete with one another to become the sponsor. As a result many temples have a long waiting list of potential sponsors for each year's kathin. A wait of two to three years is quite common, and may extend to five years especially in temples with a large number of supporters.

According to the local belief the most significant thing about kathin is that the store of merit it generates will be more than enough to ensure the sponsor a better re-birth and future life. The great prestige accorded to the sponsor is further enhanced by the limited occasion a kathin could be held -- kathin ceremonies can only be held once a year by a temple and they must take place only within the month after the Lent (phansaa) retreat. One could of course make a valuable presentation to the monks during other times of the year but the merit and the social dividends from doing so are incommensurate with the rewards of a kathin presentation. A gift-giving ceremony held outside the kathin month is technically known as thāut phaa paa, (literally, to lay the cloth in the forest -- a reference to the collection of discarded pieces of cloth as practised by mendicant monks). Unlike kathin, a thāut phaa paa can be conducted at any time of the year, even during the kathin month itself.

Kathin ceremony occasions the gathering of the temple's congregation for the
purpose of merit-making. It also occasions the presence of outsiders who do not normally belong to the congregation but who nevertheless are invited to the function by the sponsors. In most cases of kathin the sponsors are usually outsiders to the village community but there are many contributing factors as to why the sponsorship is undertaken in the first place. Kinship is one of them. The sponsors of kathin ceremonies in Baan Maalaj during 1982, 1983 and 1984 were outsiders to the village community, but were members of the temple's congregation. The one thing that they had in common was that they had close relatives living in the village. Two of these sponsors were women, one being a Chinese. The sponsor for the 1984 kathin was a Siamese man who lived in Pok Kiang, a Siamese settlement without a temple in northern Terengganu. He not only had both of his parents living in the village, but his wife's father was one of the monks of the village's temple.\footnote{This particular monk, a Siamese of about 65 years old joined the monkhood for the second time. He had been ordained before, about twenty years ago prior to his marriage. When all his children have grown up and set up families, he decided to return to monkhood, especially after his wife has passed away. In Kelantan, monks who joined the Sangha for the second time, especially late in life is addressed by the title of phau luang. Despite their age they are not normally expected to play an active role in temple affairs, let alone to take over the responsibilities already assumed by the abbots or his deputies.} Whereas in Thailand it is quite usual for the kathin ceremonies to be sponsored by government agencies and private companies (Davis, 1984:200) in Kelantan many wealthy Chinese families undertake the sponsorship.

Some of these Chinese are not residents of Baan Maalaj, but they nevertheless provide support to the temple due to the fact that many have kin connections in the village. Sponsoring temple functions is one way of expressing their desire to maintain genealogical links with the village's population. It also provides them with some sense of belonging since the temple is the focus of the village social and religious life. In this regard the kathin ceremony also provides the occasion for the Chinese to express their support of the temple as members of its congregation.
Private and Public Kathin

Generally in Kelantan, there are two types of kathin ceremonies and the main difference between them lies in the nature of the sponsorship. If a kathin ceremony is sponsored by an individual or a family, then it is known as 'private' kathin (kathin cawphaap, kathin cawkhaung). In contrast if the kathin is jointly sponsored by many people, including people from outside the village, the occasion is called 'public' kathin (kathin saamakkhii).

Because of the large number of potential sponsors available each year the private type of kathin is most common. Despite this some temples have occasionally dispensed with privately sponsored kathin and the main reason for doing this is quite complex and needs some elaboration here. In the case of a privately sponsored kathin the greater part of the merit accrues to an individual as well as to his or her immediate family members; others attending may gain some merit too, but not as much. This compares with a publicly sponsored kathin whereby the merit is evenly shared by everyone taking part in the ceremony. Apart from this, some abbots and temple steering committees are known to discourage sponsorship by an individual specifically to prevent discord within the community (and the congregation), particularly when contending sponsors are not on good terms with one another -- if one gets to be the sponsor, others are likely to boycott the function and vice versa. The best alternative, therefore, is to organise the kathin on a public basis without any particular person becoming the sponsor. The occasion is thereby credited to everyone of the community and the congregation who participate in the ritual.5

Another distinction between a private kathin and a public kathin is that former has a host (cawphaap) or owner (cawkhaung). This compares with public kathin which does not have any host in particular. Moreover, because of this it becomes an open, free-for-all kind of affair. This is not to say fewer people attend a private kathin. The attendance at

5In 1983 the temple in Bangsae had its kathin organised in this manner, apparently to avoid the complications that would have been generated by two rival factions within the temple's congregation.
either may be equally large but the point is that people just do not normally go to a private kathin without an invitation from the sponsor. On the other hand, the same people would not hesitate to attend any publicly sponsored kathin no matter at which temple it is held because of the "open invitation" which is the very essence of the spirit of the function.

Any thoughtful sponsor of a private kathin would be quite mindful of this complication. If the kathin is to be a success the sponsor has to pay meticulous attention when drawing up the guest list to ensure that as many people as possible are invited to the ceremony and no one that the cauphaap knows is overlooked. Invitations are therefore extended as widely as possible and one way of doing this is to delegate this responsibility to the staff of the temple at which the kathin is going to be held. The name of the prospective sponsor is thus made known well in advance. The normal procedure, and perhaps the most effective, is to adhere to personal invitation which is most likely to invoke the complexity of certain reciprocal principles. Chances are that the guests will be the same persons whose kathin (or other religious or social undertakings) the sponsor had previously attended.

Another difference between the two types of kathin relates to the money collected during the course of the celebration. At any temple ritual usually a special receptacle is placed strategically somewhere in the sermon hall. It is customary for people who attend the day's ceremony to put some money into this receptacle (a monk's bowl (baat) often serves as the container) as their contribution towards the cost of organising the ceremony. At the conclusion of the day's ritual, this contribution, called anumoothanaa money, is counted. If the kathin ceremony is of the private kind, then all the money collected in

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6 A sponsor might deliberately leave someone out for personal reasons or for any excuse at all although this seldom happens.
7 Thus advised, people on bad terms with the announced sponsor will not attend: they will consider the invitation was not really intended for them no matter how general and open it may appear.
8 In the sermon hall of Baan Maalaj this is the stepped area next to the altar where members of the congregation make veneration waajphra whenever they first enter the hall.
the receptacle rightfully belongs to the sponsor (khyn cawphaap) rather than to the temple. Since the cawphaap has already made a considerable cash outlay to finance the ceremony he or she has the right to keep the takings. On the other hand, if the sponsorship of the kathin is of a public kind, then whatever amount collected as anumoothanaa money automatically belongs to the temple (khyn wat). Normally private sponsors donate this collection to the temple as well. This act distinguishes a magnanimous sponsor from one who operates strictly in accordance with the rule.

The exact date for holding a kathin, as is the case with major temple ceremonies, is determined to avoid clashes with similar functions in other places, particularly at the nearest temples within the same district. This is to allow for the participation of the maximum number of people. If neighbouring temples were to organise functions on the same day outsiders who are members of the congregations of these temples would have to make the difficult decision of choosing which functions to attend. It is difficult for a person to attend ceremonies in two different villages on the same date because the crucial parts of each are exactly simultaneous: i.e. in the mid-afternoon. Nevertheless temple functions do clash if their dates are determined by exact lunar dates, or, as in the case of kathin, when there is limited number of preferred days on which the function is to be held. Attending one function and missing the other amounts to choosing between sponsors, a difficult decision given the small and closely-knit nature of the local Buddhist population. Because of this many of the guests whose absence may look too conspicuous and likely to offend the sponsors would make token appearances at the functions. They would show up at one temple first during the morning of the day on which the ceremony is held. After being served with food they would hand over their contributions of money to the sponsor, and in the course of short exchange of politesse and small talk they would excuse themselves before rushing off to other temple to be just in time for the tail end of similar ceremony.

9 The next nearest temple from Baan Maalaj is about 17 kilometres away in Aril.
10 See footnote 14 below, page 174.
Generally a kathin is held on a Friday, the weekend holiday, to allow for maximum participation; on week days many people will not be able to attend because of commitments to employment. Preparations for the function begin several days ahead but ironically the day immediately preceding the kathin is called 'starting day' (wan roem ngaan). There is nothing ritually important about this day except that all preparations for the occasion must be finalised by then, including last minute additions of gift items to the collection, most of which have been on display in the sermon hall for the last three or four days.

It is on the preceding day too that members of the congregation from distant places, particularly from Narathiwat and the nikhom, begin the trip back to their 'ancestral village' of Baan Maalaj to be in time for the next day's ceremony. Others may already have arrived days ahead to help with the preparations. It is important for these people to be in the village at least one day in advance. Public transport is unreliable and if these people were to start the journey back to the village in the morning of the day the ceremony is held chances are that they would not arrive before mid-afternoon when the crucial part of the ritual takes place. Hence, by the eve of the ceremonial day most of the members of the congregation from distant places have already arrived in the village and they will spend the night either at the temple or at their relatives' houses.

The 1983 Kathin in Baan Maalaj

The kathin ceremony has been described in detail in the literature (e.g. Kaufman 1960:185-89; Tambiah 1970:157-160; Terwiel 1979:236-40 and Wells 1975:106-112, 173-178) but the occasion which I am about to describe is quite different in one particular sense. It was an occasion originally planned for a kathin ceremony right from the start but was changed to a thaut phaa paa due to some complications at the very last moment. Nevertheless, this particular event illustrates the kind of adjustment the temple has to make in the light of decreasing number of monks who are conversant with details of Buddhist rituals. The case is also illustrative of the ritual dominance the Siamese have over the Chinese with regard to temple affairs even though the ceremony itself was
sponsored by the latter. The major part the preparation for and the entire ritual conduct of the ceremony relied heavily upon the involvement of the Siamese, particularly members of the religious elite.

The *kathin* for 1983 was held on October 28, and was sponsored by a Chinese woman from Kota Bharu, to make merit for her late father. Although she was not a resident of Baan Maalaj, she had many close relatives living in the village. The expenses for the sponsorship of the ceremony approximated M$4,000. A part of this went to pay for the cost of food served to guests and members of the congregation. Apart from this, she spent about M$3,000 on the seven money-trees (*ton ngoen*). The total value of banknotes pinned on each trees ranged from M$60 to M$200.\(^{11}\) There were also six trays of yellow cloth, one for each monk of the temple. Another tray was later added to the six just on the eve of the *kathin* day by a relative of the sponsor. The content of this extra tray becomes the property of the temple and not of the monks.

Yellow cloth for the garments of the monks is the most important of all items of presentation, for without it the *kathin* ritual will not be considered complete. The yellow cloth was bought in Narathiwat sometime during the year by one of the monks at the request of the sponsor. The same cloth could have been bought in Sungai Golok, but would have been more expensive.\(^{12}\) Other items of presentation which are ritually important, known as 'the eight necessities' (*baurikaanpaet*), were also given. Each set of these basic requirements consists of a monk's bowl *baat*, needle with thread, slippers, razor blade, water filter, nail clipper or knife, umbrella, toothbrush and toothpaste.

In addition, other items, listed as 'accessories' (*khryangbauriwaan*) are also presented. The total cost of these additional items was around M$400. They comprised an electric fan, two sets of flourescent lamps and tubes, two sets of round dining tables

\(^{11}\) Each tree is valued by the total amount of banknotes actually pinned on its branches. See Appendix A, for description on the making of the *ton ngoen*.

\(^{12}\) In Sungai Golok, a set of robes of medium quality costs about M$100-00 but a pair of equivalent make costs between M$80 to M$90 in Narathiwat.
and 10 wooden stools, an aluminium kitchen sink, an aluminium kettle, mats and a kerosene stove. Some of these items were previously given to the sponsor by her relatives and friends to be added to the *kathin* offering. Some of her friends and relatives, however, chose to give her money instead, well in advance of the *kathin* day, so that she could buy additional accessories herself. Some of the money she received in this way was also used for the 'money-trees' (*ton ngoen*). A small gold-plated image of the Buddha, bought in Bangkok for M$1,000 by a relative of the host, was also presented as part of the *khryangbāuriwaa*n.

The sponsor explained that all the items presented for the *kathin* were collected gradually over the previous year, that is, as soon as she knew that she had been selected to become the next sponsor. An intending sponsor for the coming year's *kathin* gets to know whether his or her bid for sponsorship is successful at the conclusion of the current year's *kathin*. Usually lots are drawn to determine the next sponsor. Some temples do not draw lots but place the names of all intended sponsors on a waiting list. A year's notice gives the sponsor time to accumulate the items to be presented, to inform and invite friends and relatives and most importantly, to find and save enough money for financing the undertaking.

Most things to be presented at the *kathin* ceremony are sent to the temple and placed in the care of the temple steering committee (*sangkhaarii*) during the week before the ceremony. Deliveries of larger 'accessories' such as tables, chairs, kitchen sink, etc. may have been made even earlier on. During the few weeks previous to the *kathin* day the sponsor usually makes regular visits to the temple to check on the final details of the arrangements and to consult with the monks and the *sangkhaarii* members. Arrangements for cooking and waiting duties on the day of the function are also worked out by the *sangkhaarii* members. The selection proves to be of no great concern because there are always many volunteers for the jobs. Apart from that there is a steady source of labour from outsiders, members of the congregation who come to assist with the preparation for the occasion.
No single person actually administers and supervises these tasks. Yet things are done with an unobtrusive efficiency by all who come to help; if there are cups, glasses, kettles, spittoons, plates and serving containers that need washing after collecting dust in the temple's store rooms, they are washed and arranged at proper places in the temple's kitchen, ready for use; if the food serving area is full of rubbish it is swept clean; if chairs and tables are still in the storage area they are fetched, dusted and arranged at the right spot; if the cooking sheds need repair this is done almost instantly by the person who first notices that need; if the firewood supply is insufficient it is replenished; if the water tank is empty, the pump is started.

Generally, on the last few days before the kathin members of the village community and others of the wider congregation of the temple help in whatever way they can without being told. Women, both Siamese and Chinese, provide the main source of labour. Most are residents of Baan Maalaj, but it is not uncommon for outsiders to come and help as well, especially those who belong to the wider congregation of phuak wat and those who are, at the same time, friends and relatives of the sponsor. There is an atmosphere of a festive occasion but there is also much hard work to be done. However, this is of no great problem because there is no shortage of helping hands. These activities gain momentum as the kathin day approaches.

Meanwhile in the village, three days before the kathin day friends and relatives of the sponsor prepared the huge quantity of food to be served to guests on the kathin day. Since the sponsor in 1983 was not from Baan Maalaj the preparation took place at the house of her relatives. Fish was bought in huge quantity and delivered to this house where relatives, neighbours and friends helped with the cutting, cleaning and cooking. Apart from the fish, vegetables were also prepared by the same group of people. Bags of rice, sugar, milk, tea, coffee and syrup for the drink, bought on the previous two or three days, were sent to and kept in the temple's kitchen.

13 Usually the cleaned fish is placed in several large cooking pots, together with salt and dried rinds of a fruit the Malays called asam gelugur (garcinia atroviridia) (Ridley, 1922b:173) and steamed for a while. The finished product will be taken to the temple's kitchen where it is further prepared into various side dishes (kabkhaaw) and served with rice to the guests.
The monks and the two maechii, together with other sangkhaarii members helped with the laying out of the display of gift items in the sermon hall. Elderly women of the village who came in the evenings to wrap and decorate the presentation items. The money-trees are made in the sponsor’s house and delivered to the temple on the eve of the celebration. By the evening of the same day most of the gift items had arrived at the temple. All were arranged on the stepped area of the sermon hall in readiness for the ceremony the following day. The whole collection looked somewhat ostentatious but this was exactly the intended purpose. Villagers, guests and people who had just arrived at the village from distant places came to admire the display. The host sat in one corner of the sermon hall talking with her guests. The quiet conversation lasted till the early hours of the morning.

*The Day of the Kathin Ceremony*

Activities on *kathin* day itself started very early. People who had been assigned cooking duties arrived at day break to cook the rice and heat the accompanying dishes (*kabkhaaw*) prepared the day before. Some of the food was served to monks as their morning meal.

The morning also saw the arrival of more guests and relatives of the sponsor from various places. As usual there was a steady stream of people coming to the temple; they first went into the sermon hall where the host was to be found. The exchange of small talk between the host and the guests usually ended with some money being given by the guests to the sponsor. Sometimes the money was not handed over directly to the sponsor but put into the container specially set up next to the stepped area where the collection of *kathin* gifts was displayed. The purpose was to defray the cost involved in the sponsorship as well as to generate merit for the giver.

After meeting the sponsor the guests were ushered towards the temple’s kitchen where they were shown to the tables and served a hearty meal of rice and relishes plus some sweet cakes. After eating, they were quite free to do anything they please since the gift-giving ceremony would not begin until mid-afternoon. Meanwhile, people who had
arrived earlier settled themselves in empty monk's quarters, on the pavilion (saala) in the temple compound and in the sermon hall itself, mostly talking to one another, exchanging news and renewing old acquaintances. People who had been invited by the sponsor continued to arrive and the same procedure of receiving and serving them with food was repeated over and over again. As Baan Maalaj was not the only place at which such a function was taking place that day, some of the guests had to leave early for similar functions at other villages. Hence, by late morning, there was a constant flow of people coming and going. Even as the crucial part of the ceremony was about to begin people were still arriving.

The next part of the day's ceremony was the procession of gift items. It was a very colourful event because nearly all the items, except the heaviest and the bulkiest, were taken off the display area and paraded. Most people who were present selected something from the collection and carried it to a marshalling point outside the temple compound. At the junction where the main road joined the approach road to the temple there was a pavilion (saala). The parade originated from here, led by a group of young boys and men playing music. A man carried a triangular yellow flag at the frontmost of the procession (see Figure 8-6, page 209). Others present also joined the procession even if they were not carrying any of the gift items.

With the musicians in the lead the procession made its way along the approach road to the temple. The trays of yellow cloth and the money-trees were carried by the women, mainly close relatives and friends of the sponsor. Women formed the majority of those who took part in the procession. They helped to carry the numerous gift items which were previously displayed in the sermon hall. Men who joined the procession carried heavier items.

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14 Clashes between kathin ceremonies in different temples are inevitable because there are only four Fridays in the month during which such events have to take place and because there are eighteen temples in the whole state.

15 Because of this procession, this day of kathin presentation is also known as 'procession day' (wanhae kathin).
On entering the temple ground, the procession circled the ordination hall three times before making its way into the sermon hall. Monks did not join the procession but awaited its arrival while sitting on the raised section of the sermon hall. The people in the procession carried the gifts to the stepped area and then sat themselves on the floor facing the monks. By then glasses of iced drink were passed to everyone in the congregation by a number of women who did not join the procession but stayed behind to help prepare the refreshment. The drinks were eagerly received because the procession had taken place under the hot afternoon sun.

The next phase of the ceremony differed drastically from the boisterousness of previous proceedings. It was marked by a quietude and seriousness as the lay ritual leader (*phuunam*), who was also one of the *sangkhaari* members, took up a position to lead the congregation in uttering homage to the Buddha, followed by the rite of seeking refuge in the three symbolic elements of Theravada Buddhism (*phraratanaatra*); the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha (the Teacher, the Teaching and the Order of Monks). The deputy abbot, representing the clergy, dispensed this formula, phrase by phrase, each repeated by members of the congregation. After the formula of refuge was said for three times, the five precepts\(^\text{16}\) were uttered by the monk and repeated by the congregation. To request and to receive the five precepts was believed to put the lay congregation in a state of spiritual purity and in readiness for the gift-giving rite which was about to begin.

By now the congregation was ready to follow the next stage of the ritual, that is the presentation of the offering (*thawaa*) khyangthaan. However, there was going to be a change to the day’s proceedings. The deputy abbot waved his hand to the leader of the congregation; the *phuunam* then approached the monks on the upper level. After a brief exchange of words with them he returned to the lower level and whispered something to other *sangkhaari* members. Soon after the deputy abbot stood up to address the

\(^{16}\) Refrain from killing creatures; refrain from stealing; refrain from sexual misconduct; refrain from lying; and refrain from spirits and fermented drink. For more details on this see, for instance, Terwiel (1979:185; 1972:333-343).
congregation. First he apologised to the congregation and especially to the sponsor because the gift-giving ceremony for that day would have to proceed in the form of a thūt phaa paa instead of a thūt kathin. He also explained briefly why the change was necessary: since the abbot was not very well the kraankathin rite could not be performed. Hence, the gift-giving ceremony in the form of a kathin could not proceed as planned.\textsuperscript{17}

The majority of the lay crowd seemed oblivious to the change except for the few, including the sangkhaarii members, who understood the implication of the sudden shift in the ritual emphasis. This was most noticeable when they continued to whisper to one another even when the deputy abbot was making the announcement. There was no visible reaction from the sponsor either. However, the deputy abbot convinced the crowd that despite the slight change the ceremony remained basically the same. He stressed that what mattered most in any merit-making ceremony was the good intention of giving rather than the form of the ceremony itself. The deputy abbot had consulted the phuunam before making the announcement so that the leader of the congregation could make appropriate changes to the formulae (khaatha thawaa jphaa) that would accompany the presentation of gifts.

Despite being very sick, the aged abbot made the effort to be present at the gift-giving ceremony. He took his usual position in front of other monks, but was propped up by several large cushions. The role of the leading monk for the ceremony was delegated to his deputy. Despite the change in the ritual emphasis, only a few adjustments were necessary and the rest of the proceedings continued smoothly.

The next phase of the ritual involved the deputy abbot uttering a string of phrases

\textsuperscript{17}This needs some explanation. A kathin ceremony ends with a ritual procedure called kraankathin during which the yellow cloth given by the laity is assigned to a particular monk to be made into yellow robes. (For more details of this, see Wells 1975:173-178). The whole rite concludes with a special chant called suat apphalok, usually intoned by the most senior monk. The abbot of Baan Maalaj was the only one familiar with this particular suat but on this particular day he was too sick to chant it. The other monks were not quite prepared to take over the responsibility because they hardly knew the suat by heart. Furthermore it took time to learn and memorise it.
for a rite called jauk thuunhua, the essence of which was to ask for the merit gained to be transferred to everyone present, to deceased members of one’s family and relatives and to various living beings including spirits, angels and all other living beings. For the benefit of the last category of beings, the deputy abbot intoned the formula (khaathaa chummnumtheewadaa) inviting them to come and rejoice in the merit so made.

When the deputy abbot had finished with this incantation the phuunam uttered the formula of offering (khaa thawaajphra) which was repeated after every phrase by all members of the congregation, including the sponsor. The main purpose of this rite was verbally to offer the monks the gift of the yellow cloth and the accompanying items (khryangbauriwaan) so that merit accrued to all present, the deceased members of their families, their ancestors, their parents and their teachers.18

The next part of the gift-giving ceremony involved only the sponsor and her immediate family members. On the instruction of a sangkhaarii member she moved to the upper level of the sermon hall and sat facing the abbot and other monks. Another sangkhaarii member then took up a position on the lower level of the stepped area behind her but to her left (see photograph in Figure 7-2 on page 179). First he handed her a tray of yellow cloth.19 She presented this to the abbot, followed by a monk’s bowl, an image of the Buddha and a tray of flowers.20 Several of her relatives, all women, joined her and presented more of the gifts to the monks. When all the smaller items had been given the deputy abbot descended to the lowest level of the stepped area to receive items which could not be easily carried up to the raised level of the sermon hall; e.g. kitchen sink, mats, cooking pots, flourescent lamps and brooms. A male relative of the sponsor

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18 As mentioned by Kaufman (1960:89) this is actually a reverence paid to the abstractions of the teacher and learning. The exact term for this category of people is ‘upaachaa, khruu laek aceaan’, but I have dispensed with the translation because in translated form it seems to have lost its specific meanings.

19 The yellow cloth always takes precedence over other things in the sequence of giving. The yellow cloth, like the monk’s bowl, constitutes one of the eight basic necessities of the monk (baurikaanpaet), the cloth being the most important item in the list.

20 In the presentation of the offerings, the items were not placed directly into the hands of the receiving monk. As the sponsor was a female, and in accordance with the monastic rules, she placed the items on a piece of cloth which the monk spread in front of him.
performed the presentation. Bulkier items (the table, chairs, a large basin containing bananas, crates of drinks etc.) were dealt with as follows. A ball of yellow cord (sæjšiin) was tied at one end to a leg of the table and then unwound to enclose the rest of the gift items within a boundary. The remaining ball was then offered by the same male relative of the sponsor to the deputy abbot symbolising the handing over of all the items enclosed by the yellow cord. The sponsor and her relatives held the trailing cord with the tips of their fingers while the ball of string was being handed over to the receiving monk (see photograph in Figure 7-3).

Money-trees were not presented to the monks during this particular rite. In fact, they were not subject to a ritual of presentation at all. Throughout the ceremony they remained at the side of the stepped area as if being totally ignored. Despite the huge capital outlay spent in their making and the apparently glamorous treatment they received in the procession, they never actually became the main item in the presentation rite. Moreover, great effort was involved in their making and they were always prominently displayed together with other gift items as if they are pièces de résistance of the entire collection. In fact, they were left alone during the entire rite and were given due attention only after the day's ceremony was over and when most of the congregation members had gone home.

Gifts were also presented to the phautaa and the two maechii. They each received a set of white cloth and money worth five dollars. The sponsor also presented each of the five sangkhaarii members a piece of man's sarong (phaathung; Malay: kain pelikat) and a piece of 'shoulder' cloth (phaaploj; phaakhawmaa; Malay: kain lepas).21

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21 The 'shoulder' cloth is a two-metre strip of patterned light material used for various purposes: e.g. as a towel, loincloth, sash or head cover. During rituals most people of either sex in the congregation have this piece of cloth with them as a mark of reverence. Men place the cloth, folded, on their left shoulders but women wrap it around their body from the top of the left shoulder and under the right armpit like a sash (see photograph in Figure 7-1). Usually one end of this strip of cloth is let loose at the front and this is spread open on the floor so that when a person prostrates (kraab) before a monk or a Buddha image, or during ritual, the hands and the face rest on the cloth and not on the bare floor. See also Terwiel (1979:192) and Kaufman (1960:229) on the significance of this cloth as part of the ritual dress, especially on Buddhist sabbaths.
The sponsor (cawphaap) is handing over a tray containing yellow cloth to the abbot. A member of the temple’s steering committee (sangkharaaii), extreme right, assists her with the correct order of presenting the gifts.
Figure 7-3: Presentation of Gifts by the Saaijn Method

Heavier and bulkier items are given symbolically by handing over to the monk a ball of yellow cord. The cord, with one end tied to the leg of the table, encircles other items. The host and her relatives hold the cord with the tips of their fingers as it passes in front of them and as it is being handed over to the monk.
After all the gift items had been presented to the monks, the phautaa, the maechii and the five sangkhaarii members, the receptacle for cash donations (anumoothanaa money) was emptied by a member of the steering committee while another member counted the total: M$887-50. By right this sum belonged to the sponsor (see above, page 166) but she decided there and then to donate it to the temple instead. The deputy monk announced this decision to the congregation.

After this the deputy abbot rejoined other monks to chant together a suat to give a blessing to the crowd (suat hajphaun). Just before the suat began, another sangkhaarii member took the ball of yellow cord which had one end tied to the leg of the table. He wound some cord around a pillar at head height and then extended the rest via other pillars around the perimeter of the lower level of the sermon hall. In this way the lay members of the congregation were enclosed within a boundary marked by the cord. The other end of the cord, still remaining in a ball was passed in front of all the monks sitting on the upper level and eventually placed by the side of one who sat at the far end of the row. Each monk then took the cord and pressed it between the palms in the familiar waaj gesture. Soon after the chanting began.

At the end of the chanting another rite took place. This was when the abbot, despite being very sick and looking very tired, took over from his deputy for the next stage of the rite. This was a special proceeding which involved the sponsor alone. The main objective of this particular rite was for the sponsor to utter her gratitude to all those present in the congregation for taking part in the kathin ceremony. This was also another utterance of the truatnaam formula to transfer the merit accrued in the kathin to all present at the ceremony including unseen celestial beings and spirits present within the vicinity of the temple. For this she repeated after the abbot the formula phrase by phrase. After this, the rest of the crowd did their own saying of the formula quietly, in a tone almost like a whisper. This signified the conclusion of the gift-giving of the day. The monks descended from the upper level, some returned to their respective cubicles while the deputy abbot talked to some family members of the sponsor.
By this time most of the congregation members were on their way home. Only the five sangkhaarii members remained plus several others. These were the few old men and women, the temple 'regulars', who usually stayed a while longer to tidy up the place after every temple ceremony. The sponsor and some close members of her family also stayed back. The gift items were taken into the store rooms of the sermon hall where they were kept until needed. This was also the time when due attention was given to the money-trees. The banknotes on them were carefully removed and sorted according to denomination. At the same time the money in the receptacle of monk's bowl, being the contributions by the sponsor's guests (the anumoothanaa money) was also sorted. The banknotes were recounted into hundred dollar stacks and then handed over to a sangkhaarii member. He wrapped the money into a paper parcel which he handed over to the deputy abbot for safe keeping. The sponsor watched these informal proceedings from one corner of the sermon hall. Her ceremony was now over.

Concluding Remarks

In Baan Maalaj temple rituals bring members of the community and others outside the village into a single congregation devoted to the village's religious institution. This is the occasion when the Buddhist community of the village is joined by others in the region, including those of southern part of Thailand. This is also one of the occasions when the Chinese, including outsiders who are not the usual members of the temple's congregation, and the Siamese get together for a religious gathering.

However, temple ceremonies also reveal that there are different levels of commitment to Buddhism which coincide with the differentiation of the congregation along ethnic lines. Thus, the key roles in temple ceremonies are the prerogative of members of the religious elite who are almost exclusively Siamese.

As the kathin ceremony illustrates, even when the occasion is sponsored by a Chinese, the conduct and the running of the proceedings are undertaken under close supervision of the Siamese and in consultation with the sangkhaarii members as well as the monks. Because of this the proceedings assume characteristics which are typically
Siamese in both form and content. The dominance of the Siamese over the Chinese in matters pertaining to temple affairs prevailed despite the fact that the occasion was sponsored by the latter.

In this chapter I have also illustrated that the Siamese have full control of their temple rituals even during the crisis of a 'ritual emergency' as demonstrated by the 1983 kathin ceremony. The year's occasion was not a 'normal' kathin event for the reason that it had to be transformed into a thaut phaa paa. In the switching of the ritual from one type to another only the sangkhaarii, the monks and a few of the congregation members knew the significance of the procedure because knowledge regarding theological aspects of Buddhism rests with the religious elite of the village rather than with most people in the congregation. There was no real panic as the shift was not really, to borrow Geertz's term, a 'ritual failure' (Geertz 1973a:146) but rather a change in the emphasis of an ongoing ceremony which nevertheless served the same integrative function.
Figure 7-4: Offering of Gifts to the Phautaa and the Macchii

The sponsor is handing over a gift of white cloth and money to one of the Macchii during the 1983 Kathin.
In previous chapters I have mentioned that although Chinese are part of the community and of the wider congregation there are certain limits to their involvement in temple affairs. Normally they do not provide the personnel for the temples on a long term basis, except in one or two cases. Their role in ceremonial and sacred aspects of temple affairs is constrained by the fact that the body of sacerdotal knowledge associated with Theravada Buddhism is vested in the religious elite of the village, the membership of which is almost exclusively Siamese. However, there is one area where the Chinese support of the temple is most conspicuous. Generally, they show little interest in the intricacies of knowledge regarding temple rituals; but they display enormous generosity in giving money and material support to the institution, particularly during most merit-making ceremonies.

In this chapter I will demonstrate that the village temple receives both the support of the Siamese and Chinese residents and there is no lack of this at all. In fact, in most merit-making ceremonies the temple can expect large contributions not only from the residents of the village but also from outside members of the congregation consisting of Chinese and Siamese elsewhere in Kelantan. To illustrate this, I have chosen one particular merit-making ceremony which was conducted in 1983. The occasion was held to celebrate the dedication of an archway and the fence that encloses the temple compound. The most important thing about the archway is that it was built by money donated by a group of Chinese residents of the village.

When the archway was finally completed in early 1983, a celebration was held to
dedicate the structure to the temple. The event lasted for four consecutive days and was one of the major temple affairs in the state involving the participation of representatives of nearly all Siamese settlements in Kelantan and northern part of Trengganu. Delegations of monks from all other Kelantanese temples were invited to attend the function as well as monks from southern Thailand and people of the nikhom settlements in Narathiwat province in Thailand.

What follows in this chapter is an account of this celebration, how it was organised and how the people in the larger group of the temple's congregation were involved. In the discussion I will show that the involvement of the Chinese was crucial to the success of the whole affair, not only because of their money but also because of the political and business contacts they have. These special attributes of the Chinese were used to the advantage of the Siamese to solve some of the problems associated with organisation of temple functions on a grand scale.

Sources of Temple Income

Buddhist temples in Kelantan do not normally receive grants from the state. Despite this there are other means whereby the temple is able to raise money. Part of this income comes from regular donations by members of the congregation during rituals on Buddhist holy days such as aasaalahabuuchaa, maakhabuuchaa, wisaakhabuucha and songkraan. On other occasions money is also given to the temple, such as during kathin, thāut phoa paa and ordination ceremonies. The amount collected during these occasions may not be adequate to finance the temple's more ambitious building projects. However, the most important occasions for fund raising are functions organised specifically to celebrate something — normally the completion of a temple building project. The amount of money actually collected during this function may be very large, sometimes more than enough to start the construction of another building.1

Sometimes temples may run short of money to continue with the construction of

1See below, page 189.
buildings in progress. In such cases special merit-making ceremonies are organised and appeals sent to other Siamese villages for donations. Most villages respond by either sending two or three people as representatives bearing whatever gift of money they have managed to collect from their fellow villagers. In 1982, a temple in the district of Tanah Merah ran short of funds to complete the construction of its sermon hall and a special merit-making ceremony was organised. Enough money was collected and the temple was able to complete the construction of the building by the end of the year.

Even without a special occasion of merit-making, which is about to be described below, the temple in Baan Maalaj is not actually short of money and material wealth. Monetary donations are always forthcoming from its congregation (phuak wat) typically from the residents of the village. No exact figure could be calculated on how much an individual Siamese or Chinese household contributes to the temple annually simply because these contributions are not given in one lump sum. Apart from the daily gift of food on roster basis, money and material goods are given during numerous calendrical temple rites. On one single occasion a household may give between two to five dollars, plus other material items, but over the period of one year, the total cost involved, after considering the frequency of these ceremonies, is quite substantial. Nevertheless, most households do not consider this amount a strain on their family budget because it is spread evenly throughout the year.²

Visitors also contribute significantly to the temple’s income. The amount depends on the nature of their relationship with the temple and the monks; but at the least the temple can expect a few dollars being put into the charity box every time visitors come calling. Moreover, the majority of visitors do not come empty-handed in the first place. The more frequent ones bring along food for the monks. This includes dry foodstuff such as sugar, canned goods or whatever they think is appropriate to the occasion and to the

²One could presume that the case would be otherwise for a household which sponsors a ceremony single-handed, but then, such a household prepares for the undertaking by saving on its income well in advance. Furthermore, as the case of a kathin sponsorship has demonstrated, the sponsor has at least one whole year to raise adequate funds. In addition, relatives and friends of the sponsor assist by contributing money and goods to help defray part of the expenses.
time of the year. During fruit seasons visitors bring along and give the monks the best fruit they can buy from the local market or pick from their own trees.

Contributions received from the public are used for various purposes, mainly to pay for the running expenses of the temple (such as electricity bills, travel costs of the monks, gifts to other temples and miscellaneous expenses) and for repair and maintenance of its building. It follows that the more money and material goods it receives the more luxury and comfort the temple can afford. It follows too that the well-being of a temple can be measured almost instantly by making a general assessment of the physical appearance of its building, the material goods it possesses and the facilities it offers. For instance, the fact that a temple's buildings are in a poor state of repair and maintenance certainly says much about the kind of support it gets from the laity.

A temple well-endowed with material wealth is usually the one which receives support not only from its village residents but also from outsiders. The larger the membership of the phuak wat the more contributions the temple may expect. In contrast temples which are located in remote places and which have poor road accessibility tend to be visited by fewer people and consequently receive less in outside donations and help. However, this does not mean that these temples cannot survive. In general, even in the poorest villages, the residents are quite capable of providing for the basic needs of the monks. Their daily requirement of food is easily met by the residents of the village concerned because the number of monks to be fed is not large. However, if the temple can solicit extra material and monetary support over and above this daily provision of food, then it could certainly help itself with the construction of better buildings for the conduct of worship for both the monks and the laity. A huge sermon hall, a large kitchen and a dining complex are hallmarks of a temple well-endowed with ample gifts of money and material goods from its supporters and the congregation.

To have better buildings and to maintain existing ones the temple definitely needs to raise extra money over and above the minimum it requires for its day-to-day running,
expenses. For this the temple’s lay committee often organises special merit-making ceremonies to raise contributions of money and material goods. Sometimes sponsors are solicited to finance major temple celebrations, typically that of thaut kathin and thaut phaa paa. Popular temples, as I have mentioned in the last chapter, even have a waiting list of future sponsors. A considerable number of these are Chinese.

Money collected during these occasions is saved and over the years adequate amounts are accumulated for carrying out renovation and necessary repairs to existing buildings. For instance, a temple in Pasir Mas district managed to save some $30,000 over the period of five years from the gifts received during its calendrical temple ceremonies and from donations of visitors at other times. This money was subsequently used to repair and repaint its ordination hall. Sometimes new buildings are built to replace older ones with money collected in this manner.

Dedicatory Celebration

I have mentioned above that apart from the regular donations received during the calendrical rites, huge amounts of money and material goods are given to the temple during dedicatory celebrations (ngaan cha’a; ngaan buuchaa)\(^3\).

An important point about this kind of function is that the temple gains far more than the structures which are dedicated. For example, in Baan Maalaj, during a celebration to dedicate an archway and a fence in 1983, many people other than the donors of these structures contributed cash to the temple which thereby raised sufficient finance for the subsequent construction of a kitchen and dining-hall complex. The dedication of this building will undoubtedly generate funds for even more structures.

Dedicatory celebrations of this kind are common in Kelantan. Most temples have some kind of building project going on and every completion is marked by a grand celebration, an undertaking seen as an integral part of temple activities, one which is

\(^3\) Malay: kerja ketik.
always looked forward to not only by the residents of the village but by the larger congregation including the Chinese members in the towns and other settlements in the state and southern part of Thailand. Quite ironically it is also looked forward to by the local Malays because they too enjoy the entertainment on such occasions.

Dedicatory celebrations have a festive atmosphere because they blend personal enjoyment (khwaamsuk) with the spiritual satisfaction of merit-making. Unlike religious functions on certain holy days in the Buddhist calendar (e.g. wisaakhabuuchaa and makhabuuchaa) ngaan chaalung are special occasions and usually include performances of traditional folk theatres such as manoora (Malay: menora), mak yong and shadow puppet shows. Other forms of entertainment include ramwong,4 and lately, the staging of open-air concerts in which professional troupes of singers and dancers from Thailand perform Broadway-style musical reviews.5 However, the more traditional type of entertainment such as manoora and mak yong is becoming less frequent because there are now fewer theatrical groups. The entertainment includes raffling of expensive prizes and games of chance which raise proceeds for the temple.

Temple celebrations of this kind carry special meaning for the Siamese as a minority group. The temple is about the only place where they can hold these performances with relative degree of freedom and without having to consider the sensitivity of their Malay neighbours and bureaucratic regulations regarding entertaining and gaming activity. However, this does not mean that Malays are excluded entirely from temple fairs and celebrations. A considerable number of local Malays are attracted by the entertainment provided. In fact, it has always been the tradition that during such celebrations Malays from surrounding villages form a significant part of the crowd, although no Malays are known to participate in merit-making ceremonies or other religiously oriented activities. Where tickets are sold, the presence of Malays in the crowd helps to increase the gate.

4 In central Thai dialect the term means some sort of dance, but in Kelantan, the term is more applicable to a group of young (and not-so-young) girls who dance with members of the audience by ticket. A special platform is built within the temple compound for this purpose.

5 The local Siamese call these troupes phuak dontri.
However, the fact that these entertainments are taking place within the temple compound reminds the Malays that they are merely spectators whose free pass on Siamese territory is well-tolerated.

Although Malays are admitted into the temple ground during these dedicatory celebrations there are proper times when they are expected to be present there. Malays go to the temple to watch the entertainment and it is only during the evening, when the shows start, that they are seen mingling with the Siamese and Chinese crowd. At other times during the course of the celebration, Malays are not to be seen, except for one or two who have close friends in the village. Nor are they expected to make a tour of religiously significant buildings such as ordination and sermon halls. Although food is served to the public, Malays are not expected to eat at the temple's kitchen. Partly for this reason the temple’s organising committee set up stalls to sell to Malay clients bottled drinks and a limited variety of food, mainly packaged snacks brought from outside the village, but rarely food cooked on the spot.

Dedicatory celebrations also bring together Siamese from all over Kelantan and many parts of southern Thailand. Invitations are extended to as many people as possible. This is done by the temple committee through word of mouth -- particularly during previous temple functions held at other places -- and also through specially printed leaflets (batchoén), which announce the forthcoming event at the temple.

Invitations are extended without fail to all known Siamese settlements in Kelantan and the southern part of Thailand. Without fail too members of the laity and monks from these villages make a point of sending at least one or two people as representatives.

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6 One main reason for this is the taboo they have against pig. For more details on Malay avoidance of commensality at temples as well as at Siamese and Chinese houses, see Appendix C.

7 For this reason Malay petty traders take advantage of temple celebrations to sell cooked food outside the temple compound on the nights entertainment is held because of the assured patronage they get from Malays attending the show.

8 A copy of the batchoén printed for the dedicatory celebration at Baan Maalaj in 1983 is in Appendix B.
particularly if such functions are held in far away places and if transportation proves to be a major problem. From villages more accessible by good roads busloads of people arrive to take part in the celebration. Some villages are known to send to the host village an advance party of monks, men and women to help with the preparation of the celebration. It is not uncommon too to see monks from distant places, including Thailand, arriving two or three days ahead of the celebration day to give whatever assistance they can render or to give advice on matters concerning the organisation of the function.

Sometimes, a number of people from distant villages may not be able to attend the celebrations in person for various reasons but this does not mean that they are denied the opportunity of making merit during such occasions. They may still do so by giving "absentee contributions" ranging from two to five dollars, or even more, through fellow villagers who are attending. At least one or two people of most villages attend such functions regularly, often they are the sangkharaai members, and they represent their respective settlements.

Another significant point about this celebration is that, apart from the Siamese, the Chinese from the towns and other Chinese settlements in the state are also invited. Existing kinship ties between these Chinese and residents of Baan Maalaj is one factor which ensures that the former are invited to participate in merit-making ceremonies and other celebrations at the temple. Influential Chinese, particularly those who have a wide range of business and social contacts, are often co-opted into the temple's working committee specially set up to organise the celebration. The reason for this is more on the pragmatic side but the usual rule is that it is always good politics to include the Chinese because many of the completed projects, which are the focus of these celebrations

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9 These are "school buses" chartered from local Malay entrepreneurs. During school holidays and on weekends they are used for other purposes, including transporting people to weddings, soccer games etc.

10 This working committee is not to be confused with the temple's permanent steering committee, the sangkharaai.
in the first place, are built entirely or largely from Chinese money. Even if no Chinese contributes money directly to the construction of these projects, the temple still receives some forms of indirect benefit from many Chinese business establishments in Kelantan. Nearly all the building materials for the projects are bought, usually at heavy discounts, from Chinese shops whose owners are well-known to the temple and the monks.\(^{11}\)

There is, therefore, a sense of pride among the Chinese, because the celebration also means the recognition of Chinese patronage of the temple. Many temple structures bear the names of those who contribute towards the cost of the construction. For instance, the photograph in figure 8-2 shows the base of the archway at the main entrance of Baan Maalaj's temple. On it are written the names of various people who jointly contributed money towards the cost of its constructions; all were Chinese except for one. It is a common thing for many buildings in the temple to bear the names of various donors.

So far the most prestigious building project (and perhaps the most expensive) ever undertaken by a Siamese temple in Kelantan is the construction of a reclining image of the Buddha, 42 metres long and 10 metres high -- claimed to be the biggest of its kind in the country. This ambitious project is located in Tumpat district. The abbot of this temple is not only one of the more outgoing monks in Kelantan but also one of the two who are Chinese.

The construction of the statue was first started in 1973 and completed in 1983 at a total cost of $160,000. The donors included a large proportion of members of the congregation, Buddhists elsewhere in the state and visitors to the temple from various parts of Malaysia and southern Thailand.\(^{12}\) A giant overhead shelter for the reclining statue has already been planned at an estimated cost of around $400,000 and the dedicatory celebration in 1983 raised a large sum to initiate this project.

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\(^{11}\) See above, page 131.

\(^{12}\) Souvenir publications in the form of booklets distributed to guests during a dedicatory celebration of the image contain, not surprisingly, numerous advertisements for Chinese business concerns, testifying to the support the temple receives from the Chinese.
In 1980 the Supreme Patriarch of Thailand (Phrasangkharaat) visited the temple and blessed the image. The statue has also become one of the main tourist attractions in the state, and most package tours include a trip to this temple where souvenirs are sold by the villagers on behalf of the temple's financial committee.

The Archway in Baan Maalaj

Nearly every temple has an archway which marks its main entrance. This structure usually bears a statue or painting of the Buddha and a bas-relief of images depicting characters of Hindu origin, typically those of god Indra (Phra In). The archway also bears the temple's name usually written on a decorative top panel (see photograph Figure 8-1).

The archway that spans the main entrance of the temple in Baan Maalaj was a gift from a group of residents of the village, joint owners of one of the two tobacco curing companies of the village. The original estimate to build the structure was less than $15,000 but when it was finally completed in early 1983, the cost came close to $25,000. For the construction, Siamese craftsmen of the village were hired while the monks of the temple also helped with part of the labour. Despite the fact that the cost of the construction was fully borne by the Chinese, the design and the style of the archway remains distinctively Siamese. Only the base panels of the archway indicate that it was a gift of the Chinese (see photograph in Figure 8-2).

Planning for the Celebration

Setting the Date of the Ngaan Chalaung

Although the archway and the temple fence were completed in the early part of 1983 the celebration was planned to take place in May, about five months later. This was done in order to take into account the tobacco growing season which normally ends in April. During the early part of the year people were too pre-occupied with work in the tobacco fields. The timing of the celebration was perfect too because the end of the cultivation season also meant that most households in the village have a good reserve of cash, from sale of the tobacco harvest.
Figure 8-1: The Archway at Baan Maalaj’s Temple
The names of shareholders of the tobacco company which donated the archway are displayed in raised lettering on the base panel. On the left is part of an advertisement banner of another company which donated money to the temple. This photograph was taken on the first day of the 1983 dedicatory celebration.
Moreover, the areas immediately outside the temple are heavily planted with tobacco trees. A celebration held during the growing season would have threatened crops with damage by the huge number of people attending the function. At the same time extra space was also needed to park motor cars, motor cycles and bicycles. There were also a number of Malay traders who took the opportunity to sell their wares outside the temple gate in an open-air night bazaar (pasar malam).13 The tobacco fields which were vacant by about April served these purposes well. In short, it was the cycle of the growing season which determined the date of the celebration.

**Organising Committee of the Celebration**

Prior to most temple celebrations invitation circulars (katchoën) are distributed to Siamese villages in Kelantan and southern Thailand. Judging by the circulars printed for the celebration at Baan Maalaj's temple, the organising committee looked very impressive indeed. Heading a committee of abbot and monks was the Chief Monk of Kelantan (caw khana cangwat). Also included were two high ranking district head monks (caw khana amphōe) of Pasir Mas (in Kelantan) and Sungai Padi (in Thailand). Also on the list was a monk of a temple in Nikhom Waeng, a land settlement in Narathiwat province of southern Thailand.

Those who represented the laity’s side of the organising committee consisted of two members of the temple’s steering group, the sangkhaarii. Also included were influential Chinese residents of the village, including the headman. All told there were nine people on the list who represented the laity, five Chinese and four Siamese.

An interesting point about this committee is that of those who represented the Sangha all were Siamese, while those who represented the laity were either Chinese or Siamese. One of the Chinese was not a resident of Baan Maalaj at all but was nevertheless co-opted into the committee for pragmatic reasons. This Chinese was an executive member of the local branch of the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA), a

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13 A wide range of items were offered for sale, including food, drinks, clothing, kitchenware and household goods.
major political party. His greatest contribution to the success of the celebration was the special immigration permit which he arranged for the musical troupe from Thailand. Had it not been for the contact he had in the local bureaucracy, by virtue of his position in the party, the permit would not have been easily obtained. In fact, MCA party members have been helpful in many other respects as well, ironing out some of the problems which normally arise when organising temple functions on such a grand scale. The task of getting official permission for the performance of the show and for setting up stalls during the celebration was also left to MCA members. As the celebration involved a gathering of a large number of people, including Malays, there was a possibility of drunkenness and of fights. Generally local authorities are quite cautious about giving permission unless someone provides a guarantee against unruly behaviour. With regard to this, the MCA executive members and the headman gave personal assurances that adequate crowd control would be provided by the organising committee. The help rendered by the MCA members received due recognition; the name of their party accompanied a greeting inscribed on a temporary archway (Malay: pintu gerbang) which welcomed visitors to the celebration. This imposing structure spanned the road to the temple and was the first thing that visitors noticed when they arrived at the village.

The inclusion of Chinese residents of Baan Maalaj in the organising committee is not unusual when it comes to organising temple celebrations on a large scale. They usually have good contacts with business concerns in Kelantan's major towns. These Chinese companies responded very generously to requests that they support the celebration. For instance, a vehicle dealer in Kota Bharu contributed three brand-new motorcycles as prizes in a raffle of tickets sold in conjunction with the performance of the musical troupe from Thailand. Another company, which distributes petroleum products gave a substantial cash donation during the celebration. In return advertising banners of both companies were hung over the entrance leading to the place where the concert was

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14 On the general relationship between the MCA and the Siamese of Kelantan, see Chapter 2.
15 In Malay and Thai, but not Chinese.
Getting Ready for the Celebration

The initial preparation of the celebration began about two months ahead when women washed and sorted kitchenware which had collected dust in the store rooms and men attended to whatever repairs were necessary around the temple. Unoccupied living quarters had their broken floor boards replaced, leaking roof fixed, etc. New coats of paint were applied to the interior and exterior walls of the sermon hall. The temple compound was cleared of all rubbish.

Close to one week before the date of the celebration, the backyard section of the temple compound was fenced off to provide an enclosed area for the performance of the musical troupe from Thailand. Six stalls were built inside which would sell food and drinks to the crowd that attended the open-air concert. One of these stalls offered games of chance similar to those at most fairs. The archway itself, the focus of the celebration, was given final touches, particularly to the details of its bas-relief design. All in all the whole temple looked like it had been given a new lease of life.

Looking After the Guests

An important part of organising temple celebrations is the preparation of cooked food to feed the large number of participants. In Kelantan it is customary for both guests and residents of the village hosting a function to eat at the temple during the course of the celebration. Food and drink is normally served at specially built shelters or in the temple’s kitchen. A kitchen committee sees to this and arriving guests are shown to these places where they are properly attended to. This committee is specially appointed by the temple’s steering committee (sangkhaarii), but in the normal course of events many more people are actually involved, especially women who volunteer and help in the preparation and serving of food to guests.

The custom of feeding the guests is especially important in rural villages where food

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16 See photograph in Figure 8-1 above.
shops are normally scarce. Even if there are some it is unlikely that these shops have the capacity to cater for the large number of people. As a result the temple usually provides enough food for every one who cares to eat throughout the duration of the celebration. During minor ceremonies, although food is brought along and intended for the monks, there is usually enough food for everyone who attends the function (see above, page 157). Generally outsiders expect to be provided with at least the midday meal.

The reasoning behind the provision of food for attending members of the congregation was explained by one of the sangkhaarii members of Baan Maalaj's temple: most people who come to the temple give a donation of some sort, usually money. In view of this it is most appropriate for the temple to reciprocate by providing food. This arrangement also grows out of the consideration for people who come from distant places who may arrive at the temple quite famished after a long journey. The same sangkhaarii member also explained that people are willing to contribute generously if they are properly fed. Furthermore it is the congregation's money that is used to pay for the food in the first place.

Seeing that guests are properly fed is one of the major concerns of the temple's organising committee. Temples which do not provide adequate food to their guests normally become the subject of gossip. To ensure that every one is properly fed, the committee in charge tends to over-estimate the number of guests arriving and the standing policy is to prepare more food than that is actually needed. Extra stores of uncooked food, such as rice and other items, are kept handy in case more food needs to be prepared. To run short of food is embarrassing and reflects badly on the organisers of the function.

The large number of people attending a temple function means that special arrangements need to be made with regard to the kind of food served and the quantity involved. It also means that the temple needs to have adequate facilities to prepare and serve the food to the guests. This explains why nearly every temple has a large kitchen complex and a dining hall spacious enough to cater for a capacity crowd.
The most common food served at major temple functions is either *khaawjam* (Malay: *nasi kerabu*)\(^{17}\) or *khanomein* (Malay: *laksa*).\(^{18}\) Both are simple to prepare and do not require elaborate side dishes. They can be prepared in bulk and keep for the whole day or even the next. Ordinary white rice, if served, would normally require between two to three kinds of side dishes and this certainly calls for more work. In general, food served at temple functions is not necessarily luxurious but nevertheless is filling. No fancy food and delicacies are prepared and served except to monks and some selected guests.\(^{19}\)

In order to feed the large number of people attending the celebration at Baan Maalaj's temple, a work force consisting of 74 men and women was formed and assigned the responsibility of preparing and serving of food to the guests. These people represent various households of the village.\(^{20}\) They were divided into three groups and each of them took turns to carry out the responsibility. However, on the actual day more people were involved when there were volunteers from other villages.

On the first three days of the celebration, *khaawjam* was served as part of the main meal. The food bill was estimated to have cost around $4,000. Some of the uncooked rice, vegetables, coconut, sugar and milk had already been given by various households of the village. Nevertheless, six sacks of rice of about 100 kilograms each were bought plus another sack of sugar. Most of these were consumed by the end of the fourth day of the celebration.

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\(^{17}\) It consists of plain rice mixed with finely chopped vegetables and herbs, grated coconut flavoured with fish floss and fish sauce (*naamplaa*). Sometimes thick gravy made from coconut milk and chilli goes with it. There may also be pieces of fried chicken or fish served but these last two items are optional.

\(^{18}\) This is thick rice noodles served with coconut gravy flavoured with fish and relished with chopped herbs and vegetables. Normally the noodle is bought ready-made in bulk from the local market or ordered from Thailand. As the noodle is ready cooked one needs only to prepare the accompanying gravy and vegetables.

\(^{19}\) They are mostly eminent Chinese businessmen who are singled out by the reception committee and entertained separately. Many of them are current employers of residents of Baan Maalaj who work in the town.

\(^{20}\) I have not been able to determine how many Chinese and Siamese were involved, but the man heading this work force and the one responsible for looking after the money to purchase the food was a Siamese. Although he was not a member of the *sangkhaarii* he was one of those who rightly belong to the religious elite of the village.
Dedicatory Celebration at Baan Maalaj's Temple

The dedicatory celebration (ngaan chalaung) of 1983 was a most notable event in Baan Maalaj because there had been no undertaking like it since the last one was held in 1976, i.e. when the building which houses a replica of the Buddha’s footprint relic (phraphuttabaat camlaung) was officially dedicated. It was a four-day affair in which people from other villages participated in large numbers and made merit. There were also performances of ramwong and shadow puppet shows. A special sermon (theetsanaa) was delivered by the Chief Monk of Kelantan.

The 1983 dedicatory celebration was planned to take place for four consecutive days, starting from 19th to 22nd May. On the first day of the celebration (wan roem ngaan), delegations of monks representing various temples in Kelantan and southern Thailand took part in the opening ceremony, headed by the Chief Monk of Kelantan. The ceremony was very brief but impressive and colourful. It started at just after nine o'clock in the morning. A special platform was built inside the temple compound next to the main entrance to seat nine monks representing various temples of Kelantan and southern Thailand. The ceremony began with the Chief Monk reading a short speech accepting the archway and the fence on behalf of the state’s Sangha. Then he cut the ribbon that was straddled across the archway (see Figure 8-3). As soon as this was done, the nine monks read a chant (suat cayantoo). At the same time a group of musicians that normally took the lead in the processions around the temple during other major merit-making ceremonies, played their instruments. Another orchestra, consisting of what remained of the village’s manooraa group, played music in a style of its own. The temple drums and the bell were also sounded. The combined sound of the chanting monks, the two orchestras, the drums and the bells was beyond description, but it marked the climax of the morning ceremony. When all this had finished, about fifty helium-filled coloured balloons were released into the air. These were attached to a cloth banner, 3 metres long, on which was written in Thai and Malay the name of the occasion, the date

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21 Structure No. 7 in Figure 5-1.
and the place.22

At about 10.30 a.m. there was an ordination ceremony for three men. One candidate was a Siamese resident of Baan Maalaj, the other two were Chinese from two small towns in the district. They were first ordained as novices in the morning and as monks in the afternoon.23

An afternoon procession was held at about 4.00 p.m. by the residents of Baan Maalaj bearing money-trees. Households in the village were divided into groups of 8 to 10 and each household put up between twenty to fifty dollars towards the making of a money-tree.24 There were two money-trees presented that day which deserve special mention here. While most other trees were made from banana trunks and strips of bamboo fastened with metal wires, these two trees appeared to be rather innovative and perhaps most symbolic of a major occupation of Baan Maalaj. They were actually tobacco trees which were replanted, root and all, in two tin can containers, their leaves stapled with banknotes and decorated with artificial flowers and paper ribbons. The trees were presented by a group of households whose members have a major controlling interest in the tobacco companies of the village.

The procession did not involve the entire village, but representatives of most households were present. It started at the junction where the main road branches off to the temple and resembled that at the kathin ceremony described previously (see Chapter 6) except that it was led by a group of young people playing music on traditional percussion instruments of four long drums, two short drums, cymbals and two pieces of wood clapped against each other.25 As usual the procession went round the ordination

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22Incidently, a note was also written, in Malay, to the effect that if the banner was later to be found and returned to the temple, a reward awaited the finder. However, nothing has ever been heard of the banner since.

23All the three candidates were ordained in the "token" manner (buat bon) and only for three days.

24The average worth of the trees was around three hundred to five hundred dollars.

25This was the same group of people which played music at the opening ceremony of the archway in the morning.
Figure 8-3: The Opening Ceremony of the Archway in 1983

The Chief Monk of Kelantan officiating at the ceremony. On his left is the Deputy Abbot of Baan Maalaj’s temple; kneeling is an ex-monk of the temple.
Figure 8-4: Dedicatory Celebration in Baan Maalaj 1983

A chapter of nine monks representing various temples in Kelantan and southern Thailand are chanting at the opening ceremony.
hall three times before going into the sermon hall for the presentation ceremony of the money-trees. At night there was a reading of special suat by the monks followed by a sermon from the abbot.

People from Baan Maalaj chose to parade their money-trees on the first day of the celebration because they would be preoccupied with various work for the subsequent three days. Most had been assigned duties such as cooking, serving of food and drink to the guests and washing of plates and utensils. Their ritual procession had to take place before the grand occasion of merit-making the next day, when people and members of the clergy from other villages and temples started to arrive with their contributions of money-trees and other gift items. To some extent the procession of money-trees on the first day symbolised the collective effort of the residents of Baan Maalaj. As a contrast the offering of money-trees by outsiders on the second day symbolised contributions by the rest of this temple's congregation and Buddhists from elsewhere in the state.

On the second day of the celebration people from other Siamese villages came to take part in the merit-making ceremony by bringing along their money-trees and other gift items. Groups of people arriving by cars and specially chartered buses were met at the main road by the temple's group of musicians which led them around the ordination hall three times before escorting them into the sermon hall. The waiting sangkhaari members received the delegations. A short rite of presenting their gifts to the monk took place. This procedure was repeated for every new group arriving at the temple. At least one of the sangkhaari members was present at all times to receive the delegations. Immediately after they had presented their gifts to the temple the guests were shown to the dining sheds where the main meal was served. This continued for the whole day until late in the afternoon when the last delegation arrived.

Most of those who had eaten did not go home immediately but stayed on within the temple compound to meet friends and relatives. The younger ones looked forward to the entertainment programme to be shown in the evening, while the elderly ones remained in
the sermon hall following closely whatever rites were going on inside. Many of the guests spent the night at the temple. Some slept in vacant monks' quarters; others in buildings of the second temple. Some were invited over to spend the night with relatives and friends among the residents of Baan Maalaj.

The second day of the celebration was of great significance. Baan Maalaj became the focal point for the gathering of delegations of people and monks representing various Siamese villages in the region. It can be safely said that nearly all Siamese settlements were represented at this stage of the celebration. This was also the occasion when the rural Chinese of Kelantan and some of their urban counterparts who also support Buddhist temples turned up to participate in the same event. The total gathering of people on the climactic day, therefore, included the elite of the village, the community, the congregation and the larger group that transcends all the three.

On the third day of the celebration a procession was organised outside the temple gate similar to the one held on the first day only this time a careful selection was made of various gifts items and money-trees accumulated during the last two days. This selection was supposed to represent the collection of gifts given by residents of Baan Maalaj as a community, by outsiders as members of the congregation and by other Siamese settlements and temples as expressive of their membership of the same Buddhist population of the region. These gifts were then put on a parade which now involved more people than previously; it was a manifestation of the total Buddhist population of Kelantan. This procession ended with the rite of presentation (thawaaj khryangthaan) which was basically similar to the one held on previous two days except that a larger number of gifts and money-trees was involved.

On the last day of the celebration there was a rite of giving of food to the monks (thakbaat) just before they took their noon meal. By this time most of the guests had gone home, leaving only the few who purposely stayed behind to help with the tidying up

26See page 101.
Figure 8-6: Dedicatory Celebration: the Procession

The procession of gift items including money-trees on the third day of the celebration. Trailing behind are two cars (Mercedes-Benz, partly hidden) belonging to wealthy Chinese supporters of the temple.
of the place after four days of celebration and merit-making. By the afternoon of the
same day the festive atmosphere had toned down almost completely. The musical troupe
from Thailand had packed up and returned home. Although the temple looked much
deserted, there were still some activity in the sermon hall. The collection of gifts donated
by other temples and guests was unpacked and placed in the store rooms of the sermon
hall by the sangkhaarii members with the help of some of the laity who had stayed
behind. The money-trees, which were also kept in the store rooms over the previous three
days, were brought out. A number of these trees were entrusted to a group of men and
women who detached the banknotes, sorted them according to value and counted them
before handing them over to one of the sangkhaarii members who verified the amount.
The bundle of banknotes was later given to the deputy abbot for safe-keeping.

The money-trees were not counted all at once, nor was the same group of laity
involved in all the counting. Throughout the afternoon between four to five trees were
removed from the store rooms and assigned to one group of laity. When all the
banknotes on these trees had been detached and counted, another fresh group of laity
would take over the task and were assigned another set of trees. By the late afternoon a
considerable number of trees had been counted with a few still remaining in the store
rooms. Although the counting was done openly in the sermon hall, nobody really knew
the exact value of the money collected at any stage, partly because of the constant
replacement of people involved in the counting and partly because the trees were not
brought out and counted all at once. The only person who could estimate the total was
the deputy abbot. Even the sangkhaarii members could not work out the final tally
accurately.

The procedure of rotating the people who do the counting was done mainly for the
sake of security because the amount of money involved was very large. My rough
estimate is that the total amount collected from the money-trees was between $30,000 to
$40,000. The number of trees donated to the temple was more than one hundred and the
average value of each tree was around $300 to $500. Again, no one was really sure of the
exact number of trees donated to the temple because most of them were whisked away into the store room by attending sangkhaarii members as soon as they were ritually given by the groups bearing them. Only a token number of trees were displayed on the stepped area of the sermon hall at any time throughout the course of the celebration; the rest were kept in the store rooms by the sangkhaarii members under tight security.

During the second, third and fourth night of the celebration a musical troupe from Thailand (dontrii) put on their performances in the enclosed area behind the ordination hall. As this open-air concert was organised to raise money for the temple, entrance fees were charged. Tickets were sold at $8.00 per adult and $5.00 for children. Although a capacity audience turned up on the first night the attendance for the other two nights was very disappointing.27 The takings for the first night amounted to about $8,000 and out of this $3,000 was paid to the troupe. The takings from the other two nights were much less. The management of the troupe decided not to charge performance fees for on the third night and assigned all receipts to the temple.

Concluding Remarks: the Siamese Content of the Celebration

The celebration of the archway and the fence of Baan Maalaj took place in a festive atmosphere typical of similar functions in other Kelantanese temples. Although the Chinese and their money were also involved the celebration was essentially a Siamese affair; the proceedings of the four-day ceremony were conducted in truly Siamese temple tradition regardless of the fact that the archway was built almost entirely with Chinese money.

The circulars announcing the celebration are revealing in this respect. They were

27 This was made worse by the power failure during the first and second night. Those attending were quite frustrated by the interruption and although the power was eventually installed others who planned to see the show on the third night changed their minds lest the power might fail again. Electricity is supplied to Baan Maalaj by cables that run through an adjacent Malay village. Some Siamese suspected that it was a sabotage by the local Malay youths who short-circuited the power lines. However, there was no concrete proof of this and power failures were quite common in rural areas of Kelantan sometimes lasting for days on end.
printed in Thai on one side and Malay on the other. One would have expected that with a village population of about fifty percent Chinese some of the circulars would also be printed in the Chinese language. However, the sangkhaarii members explained that there was no need of this as not many of the Chinese residents of the village could read Chinese anyway. There is yet another interesting aspect of the invitation circular. The Thai version of the announcement used a language style of some sophistication known only to those who have received some degree of monastic and formal Thai education. Elegant terminologies normally used only in monastic writing were deliberately incorporated in the Thai version of the batchoen. In contrast, the language of the Malay translation was almost colloquial in style and seemed to have been meant for the majority of the Chinese members of the congregation whose knowledge of Thai is usually limited to its spoken local dialect.

The Thai version of the circular mentions that the coming event was going to be "a celebration according to the popular tradition of the Thai people". Persons who were literate in the Thai language could have easily realised the implication of this. However, the same phrase was translated with a slightly different gloss in the Malay version and was rendered as "a celebration ... according to the traditions of the Buddhist people", a deliberate mistranslation obviously meant to accommodate as well as not to slight the Chinese supporters of the temple.

Although the invitation circular contains an impressive array of people who made up the organising committee, some of these names were included in order to give the occasion an air of authority and grandeur. Thus the Chief Monk of Kelantan was included as a matter of symbolic significance because ecclesiastical affairs, including

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28 See Appendix B.
29 Kaan chalaung taam prapheenii nijom khaung khon thaj.
30 Perayaan ... mengikut adat resam kaun Buddha.
31 There could be another reason for this seemingly deliberate mistranslation; in the context of Thailand the term "Thai" is synonymous to the term "Buddhist".
temple celebrations, rightfully come under his jurisdiction. Likewise the inclusion of high ranking monks from Thailand (such as the caw khana amphoe of Sungai Padi) and the monk from the nikhom settlement gave the occasion an authentic Thai atmosphere. In an equally pragmatic way, some Chinese were also drawn into the organising committee; the headman of the village, who was also a Chinese, was included in the organising committee because of the official position he held. Such was also the case with the MCA member and influential Chinese entrepreneurs of the village.

On the whole one is most tempted to conclude that the impressive array of names listed in the batchoën was merely a formality whereas the hard work of organising the celebration and co-ordinating various responsibilities was actually left to the deputy abbot, the monks, members of the sangkhaarii and some of the village elders who form the select group which looks after temple affairs. In other words the closed group of the village’s religious elite, comprising mainly the Siamese, was the one really involved in the organising of the celebration. Despite this the celebration went well because the working committee was able to get full co-operation not only from the residents of the village but also from other members of the larger congregation of the temple.

It is also during this occasion that one can observe the varying levels of Chinese participation in temple affairs. For instance, a Chinese businessman from Kota Bharu who had donated a generous sum of money was at the temple during the second day of the celebration but did not actually join the groups of worshippers in the sermon hall. He remained at the pavilion with other Chinese, some of whom were his business colleagues who, like him, were attracted to temple celebrations but were quite reluctant to be involved in the rituals going on inside. Although he and his friends appeared to be quite

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32 The Chief Monk himself arrived at the temple on the first day of the celebration, in time for the opening ceremony of the archway and the fence, but left soon after the midday meal.

33 In fact, the headman himself was not deeply involved in the rites that took place during the four-day celebration. He chose to be at the temple only at some of the crucial moments of the celebration. Thus during the rite of offering of gift items to the monks on the third day the headman was not anywhere around the temple although his father, who was the only Chinese sangkhaarii, was there.
aloof in terms of taking an active part in the rituals, their contributions were nevertheless expressive of their support of the temple.

Likewise a number of Chinese from various townships of Kelantan and even from other states made day trips to the temple during the celebration but did not take active part in the rituals although they gave large donations. Their very presence was of great significance because it expressed the kind of support the temple enjoys from the Chinese.

Of course some Chinese visitors were more involved in ritual participation than others. For instance, a Chinese family from one of the townships in Kelantan spent the whole day at the temple but only the elderly members of the family, mainly women, entered the sermon hall to join other worshippers. Meanwhile the husband, the young son and the grandchildren waited outside the building in one of the empty monk quarters, keeping themselves occupied by talking to acquaintances and relatives.

One of the main points that I have demonstrated in this chapter is that Buddhist temples in Kelantan seldom run short of money and material support. The temple's congregation, consisting of residents of the village and outsiders who are either Chinese or Siamese, continuously provides for the needs of the temple. However, the major difference between Chinese supporters of the temple and the Siamese lies in the fact that while the former are generous in giving money and material support, the latter are more involved in running temple affairs. The more permanent members of the clergy and the people who constitute the religious elite of the village are always predominantly Siamese. As the case of Baan Maalaj's celebration illustrates the Chinese have a limited involvement in the actual organisation of the occasion, let alone in the intricacies of temple rituals, even if they are able to contribute money to the institution more than the Siamese themselves could.

My final remark concerns the Chinese owners of the tobacco company who jointly donated the archway. I expected them to be given special recognition at least through special seating arrangements during the brief event over which the Chief Monk of the
state presided. After all if not for their money the celebration would not have been held in the first place. Instead their importance was overshadowed by the nine monks who were seated on a specially erected dais (see photograph in Figure 8-4). In fact, as the celebration unfolded itself, it became clear that the three-day affair was essentially Siamese in both content and form. Although huge sums of Chinese money were involved the Chinese never really did exert any decisive influence on the actual running of the function.

It can be seen that the Chinese involvement in temple affairs is limited by the fact that they do not occupy any position of importance in the upper level of the religious hierarchy. It can also be said that whereas the Siamese participate in temple ceremonies as part of their quest for merit in the usual Theravada tradition, the Chinese do so for the purpose of maintaining their genealogical links to the village, as well as for enhancing their position of prestige by way of their generous donations to the temple.
CHAPTER 9
CONCLUSION

The main concern of this thesis has been with Theravada Buddhism as it is practised in a village in Kelantan. This study serves to illustrate that despite the overwhelmingly Malay and Muslim nature of Kelantanese rural society Buddhism thrives in the state as the religion of the Siamese who constitute a small minority of the population. My thesis has been that it is through Buddhism that they have been able to maintain their distinctiveness as an ethnic group vis-à-vis not only of the Malays but also the Chinese. As Theravada Buddhism underlies a Siamese ethnic identity the continuity and survival of the tradition ensures that identity.

The village of study, Baan Maalaj, is by no means exclusively Siamese in ethnic composition. About half of the population is Chinese, yet all people who live in the settlement regard themselves as members of a Siamese settlement and no less so than residents of Aril, my previous village of study, and whose population is almost completely Siamese. I attribute this comparable characteristic to the existence of the temple and its monastic residents in both villages. To the local Malays, Baan Maalaj is synonymous with the Siamese even though they recognise that many Chinese also live there.

The Chinese residents of the village are an integral part of Baan Maalaj because of their involvement in the maintenance of the temple and because of their participation in temple-based activities. In this study I have also emphasised the fact that there are fundamental differences between Siamese Buddhists and Chinese Buddhists by comparing the levels of commitment and adherence of both the Chinese and the Siamese to Buddhist religion. The membership of the "congregation", "locality group" and "religious elite" is illustrative of these varying levels of attachment to the religion.
A general statement can be made to the effect that while both the Chinese and the Siamese are Buddhists, the Siamese are more involved in the religion than the Chinese; while Chinese support is undoubtedly important for the continued maintenance of the temple and its clergy, it is the Siamese who staff the institution on a permanent basis. Membership of the religious elite are almost exclusively Siamese and they control the organisation of Buddhist religion at both the village and regional levels.

There is, therefore, a difference in the meanings which the Siamese and the Chinese assign to their respective involvement in temple affairs. Siamese normally consider their attendance at temple functions as part of their social and cultural behaviour as custodians of the Buddhist religion, whereas the Chinese consider their involvement as a means of earning them an identification with a Siamese village community, of which they themselves constitute a considerable number. Total non-involvement by the Chinese could be construed as something negative in the context of a well-integrated community, thereby undermining their claim as members of the same village.

The Temple and the Religious Congregation

The temple of Baan Maalaj provides services to the residents not only of this village but also of outlying settlements where there are many rural Chinese. Their culture has to be sharply distinguished from that of more recent Chinese immigrants to Kelantan and is heavily Malayanised. But religiously the former are Theravada Buddhists rather than Muslims and they continue to engage in some distinctively Chinese religious practices.

Wat Pathumwihaan of Baan Maalaj is part of a network of temples in the region which covers not only the state of Kelantan but also southern Thailand and the northern parts of the neighbouring states of Terengganu. In terms of the ecclesiastical hierarchy the network could be considered as an extension of the Thai Sangha. The network binds together the Buddhists of Kelantan with those of other places in the region through ceremonial exchange of visits during temple functions.

The participation of the rural Chinese in temple rituals and ceremonies underwrites
their sense of belonging and identity. Insofar as it concerns the Chinese residents of Baan Maalaj, their involvement in temple-based activities places them in the same locality group as the Siamese. This also has some implications for other rural Chinese who are not residents of Baan Maalaj. In the context of Kelantan society it is most desirable for the rural Chinese, who are also a minority group like the Siamese, to align themselves with like groups. Their association with the Siamese is illustrative of a case of one minority identifying with another when confronted with threats, even if only imaginary, from the more dominant majority. Golomb (1968:106) explains the existence of a good relationship between the Chinese and the Siamese in the following way:

The overall socio-political alliance between the two ethnic groups in recent years has been strengthened by the fact that they share the same status as rather powerless minority groups in an overwhelmingly (92 percent) Malay state. It is a basic tenet of group conflict theory that weak minority groups show greater hostility towards a dominant and powerful majority group than toward each other.

In fact, Kershaw regards the Kelantan Chinese as unique in Malaysia because they not only adopt a significant proportion of the Malay culture but also upholds many Siamese tradition.

Alliance with the Siamese is preferred by the rural Chinese to alliance with the Malays because of the existence of a good social relationship, mainly in the form of kinship ties dating back to several decades, between the Siamese and the rural Chinese. Apart from that the familiarity of the earlier generation of rural Chinese with the Buddhist religion, even though not of the Theravada type, has facilitated such an identification. Moreover, Chinese religion is very accommodative, and the familiarity of the first migrants with Buddhism made Siamese Buddhism more attractive than, say, Hinduism or even Islam. Most importantly, identification with the Siamese through Buddhist religion does not necessitate a loss of an ethnic identity on the part of the Chinese. By contrast to become a Muslim in the Malaysian and Kelantanese context means to forgo one’s ethnic identity, by becoming Malay at the same time. Furthermore, unlike the case with Islam, adherence to Theravada Buddhism does not entail "a confession of faith" (Tobias 1972:313) and, therefore, does not require abrogation of
another religious affiliation. Despite being Buddhists, the rural Chinese of Kelantans may identify themselves with the mainstream Chinese of Malaysia while the Siamese cannot do so.

There is also another significant distinction between Chinese Buddhists and Siamese Buddhists. The rural Chinese, despite being Buddhists, also practise religious beliefs which are essentially part of the general phenomenon of the Chinese religion, which are alien to but nevertheless tolerated by the Siamese. Hence, it is not uncommon for some practices associated with the Chinese religion to "infiltrate" Siamese temples. There is now a growing trend in some temples to accommodate Chinese deities by giving these figures appropriate places in the temple's compound; e.g. a statue of the goddess Kuan Yin stands in a temple in Wakaf Baru and there are figures of two Chinese deities in a temple in Bangsae.¹ The Chinese accommodate to some Siamese practices in their own way. A case in point is ordination which for the Siamese is the hallmark of being a devout Buddhist. The majority of Chinese monks pass through ordination of the "token" type; ordination for a prolonged period by no means typifies the Chinese. Insofar as renunciation is concerned, the Chinese, to use Wijeyewardene's term, have "misunderstood" it, while the Siamese have "over-emphasised" it (Wijeyewardene 1985:1).

There is an intricate relationship between the Siamese and the Chinese. On one hand the Siamese need the support of the Chinese for gaining access to those areas of economy and politics in which the Siamese are themselves quite powerless. Hence Chinese are relied upon for their intermediary and brokerage role by Siamese who seek employment in the wider economy and in getting the benefits from the larger system of politics. Yet the Chinese, particularly the rural group, need to identify with the Siamese for some pragmatic reasons too. The Chinese of Baan Maalaj depend on the goodwill of the Siamese for providing them with an identity as members of a Siamese village. This

¹However, I must emphasise here that despite such tolerance, these deities do not occupy strategic places within the monastic compound. None of them are placed in the most sacred part of the temple complex, i.e. in the ordination hall, for instance.
intricate relationship also provides the Chinese with an identity of their own, that is, in Chinese terms. They are able to use Siamese facilities to carry out their own forms of worship, to continue links which their forebears had with the village population, and to maintain prestige among the villagers whom they employ. But there is a limitation to a full-fledged expression of Chinese identity. In view of the fact that the surrounding Malay environment is quite hostile to the Chinese it is strategic for the Chinese to underplay their "Chineseness", and to identify their social and religious behaviour with the Siamese, because the Siamese are known to be more tolerated by the Malays as proven by their long history of establishment in Kelantan and with no known record of Malay hostility.

There is also a relationship of power and status between the Chinese and the Siamese. While the Chinese may hold economic and political power, the Siamese clergy holds status. In Baan Maalaj, economic wealth does not necessarily bring about a recognition of status as such. It is the Siamese clergy and members of the religious elite who occupy the highest status positions in the village. Yet wealthy Chinese sponsor temple events regularly because this gains them benefits in terms of an increased social prestige. Even the Chinese-owned tobacco company realises this fact; hence the donation of the costly archway. Chinese support of the temples can also be seen to result from an inability to establish a system of status of their own and in its absence the Chinese rely on the Siamese clergy.

For generations the Siamese have provided religious services, including magic, which the Chinese seek from monks and ritual experts. These include officiation at funeral rites, house blessing ceremonies, and the opening of supermarkets and other business establishments; also, the production of amulets for predominantly Chinese buyers. Medallions of famous Kelantanese monks, like the late abbot of Aril, have become most sought after objects among the Chinese who frequent rural temples particularly during the week-ends and who also collect water from the ceremonial baths of famous abbots for sprinkling around their shops and houses.
For all their wealth the Chinese could very well build a temple themselves. However, this could prove redundant because Siamese temples have already provided most of the ritual and religious services the Chinese require. No Siamese temples have ever closed their doors to the Chinese, let alone turned their backs on Chinese requests for spiritual and religious assistance. And in any case such a move would be against the interests they foster: indentification with Siamese rather than proclamation of their own ethnic identity.

The Siamese have proved to be very accommodative and tolerant towards the Chinese, even to extent of compromising certain aspects of temple traditions. Hence, adjustments are made wherever possible so that temple rites coincide with public holidays and week-ends in order to allow the maximum participation of the Chinese, especially those from the towns. Golomb (1969:166) discusses the growing trend of Siamese temples to attract Chinese patronage by resorting to various techniques of "pragmatic salesmanship" even to the extent of "scheduling of festivities to coincide with urban Chinese weekends and particular dates on the Chinese ceremonial calendar."

However, there is a limit to this flexibility. Golomb does not mention that ritual calendars are adjusted only if the changes are allowable in Buddhist tradition. Thus the beginning and the end of Lent season, maakhabuuchaa, songkraan and wisakhabuuchaa are celebrated on the exact days of the Buddhist calendar regardless whether they fall on week days. They are never "timed" to coincide with any of the Chinese holidays, not even with public and national holidays. There exists, therefore, a core tradition which the Siamese maintain despite accommodation to the convenience of the Chinese. However, for ceremonies like kathin, which are not tradition-bound to a precise lunar timing, adjustment of the date to coincide with public holidays is not only possible but desirable, because these are also the occasions when the temple may draw heavily upon the resources and material support of the Chinese.
The Predominance of the Siamese over Chinese in Temple Affairs

I have set out to study the social organisation of the Buddhist religion in Kelantan and how it constitutes the basis of Siamese ethnic identity and how it also differentiates Siamese Buddhists from Chinese Buddhists.

As Chapter 6, 7 and 8 demonstrate there are varying levels of participation by the Chinese and the Siamese in temple events. Even though both the Siamese and the Chinese participate in the same rituals, it is during these temple functions that ethnic lines become most emphasised. During the simplest ceremonies, like wan phra, ethnicity becomes most explicit by the fact that participants are almost exclusively Siamese. Likewise, during the biggest ceremonies, such as the ngaan chalaung, the expression of a Siamese ethnicity also becomes most profound. As illustrated in Chapter 8, the celebration assumes a totally Siamese form and content, even when its raison d'etre is a Chinese gift (i.e. of an archway) and even when the attendance involves a large number of Chinese.

The largest of the temple ceremonies also demonstrates the capacity of the Siamese to mobilise themselves. On any of these occasions, a very large proportion of the entire populations of most (if not all) Siamese villages in Kelantan and Terengganu (and of some settlements in southern Thailand) comes together. They rarely congregate at the same temple but they frequently do so at many different temples and they thereby proclaim their solidarity on a scale which neither Malay nor Chinese ceremonies ever achieve. Buddhism thus becomes the main cause for rallying Siamese from many village communities which would otherwise be isolated from one another. Together they overwhelm the number of Chinese in the congregation of any particular temple.

This cycle of temple celebration also demonstrates that Siamese Buddhism, to use Forge's term, is in itself very "transportable". Exchange of visits and residentship between monks of temples in Kelantan and Thailand and the visit of monks to Siamese

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2Forge 1980:223.
settlements without temples, and the persistent desire of the Siamese to make merit even if they have to travel long distances or through an "absentee" contribution, prove that Siamese Buddhism is not only "transportable" but has a much wider appeal than, say, Chinese religion, which is usually confined to the village cult, and seldom transcends the locality in which the cult itself originates. Such a localised cult seldom attracts the participation of members of other Chinese villages in the same way Siamese Buddhism does.

Because it is so "transportable", Theravada Buddhism in Kelantan remains essentially both a Siamese and a rural phenomenon, in the sense that its religious activities are confined to temples in rural villages in which the Siamese usually predominate, and where a permanent community of people exists to support and staff the institution on a regular basis. Baan Maalaj is perhaps an exception to this general pattern because of its substantial Chinese population, but then even in this village, the form of Buddhism that persists remains essentially Siamese.

The Interplay of Temple and Tobacco

In this study I have devoted a considerable discussion on the importance of tobacco to the village economy. Although the introduction of tobacco industry has brought about a radical change in the village's economy, by an onslaught of a cash-oriented economy geared towards market forces external to the village, Baan Maalaj is well-integrated and should continue to be so as long as the temple continues to exist. The temple thus plays the most crucial role in bringing together Siamese and Chinese residents of Baan Maalaj under the same social and religious banner.

The establishment of the two companies in the village has also brought about a change in the structure of social relationships among the residents of Baan Maalaj. On one hand there are landowners and growers of tobacco, and on the other, shareholders of the tobacco company; each is dependent on the other to sustain the industry which has now become such a major source of livelihood of Baan Maalaj. Even though most growers work on land they own, in actual fact they are working for either of the two
tobacco companies which have a total control of nearly every aspect of agricultural production and farm management. Yet the real situation is even more complex than this because despite the control they exercise, the companies monopolise neither ownership of land in the village nor its labour force, since the land owners and growers are not obliged to register with either of the two Baan Maalaj companies at all. They could easily register with other similar companies, which are Malay-owned, in neighbouring villages. Yet none of the growers in Baan Maalaj chooses to do so. What then makes the relationship between the shareholders and the growers so amicable that the companies are never really seen to be exploitative?

The clues to this are to be found in the temple's archway and the tobacco plants that were presented as money-trees in the dedicatory celebration described in Chapter 8. Tobacco companies in the village not only provide employment to the villagers but also support the temple generously. Relationships between the shareholders and the growers have not actually been defined in opposing terms but always in reference to the temple; the growers and the shareholders are no strangers to one another and all are members of the same village that supports and sustains the temple in Baan Maalaj. It is, therefore, in the interest of the tobacco companies to maintain their image not only as providers of jobs for the villagers but also as generous sponsors of the temple. The gift of the archway and the tobacco trees stapled with banknotes is a spectacular proclamation of this very notion.

The two tobacco companies of the village thrive due to the existence of a good personal relationship between the shareholders of the companies and the grower-landowners. The companies need the registration of Baan Maalaj's landowners and their strategy is to invoke and enhance a feeling of mutual obligation as members of the same village by constantly referring to the temple as their symbol of integration. The archway is a stark advertisement for the notion that the prosperity of the company not only benefits the residents of the village but also the temple, the binding factor of the community. Now that one of the companies has donated the archway it will be
interesting to see what the other company will offer to the temple in the immediate future. A new sermon hall perhaps? This is what Wat Pathumwihaan really needs in view of the run-down maewat it now has.
Appendix A

THE MAKING OF A MONEY TREE (*TON NGOEN*)

There are many ways of making the money-tree but most commonly it is constructed from a young, leafless banana trunk (about 0.75 metres high with a base of about 10 centimetres, tapering at the top). The trunk stands upright in a tin can. To stabilise the container and make the banana trunk stands upright, sand is poured into the cavity between the inside wall of the can and the trunk's base. A bamboo rod of a length slightly longer than the diameter of the can is pushed into the lower part of the trunk from one side, about the height of the can, so that the inserted end of the rod comes out from the other side. Another rod is inserted in the same manner, but at a right angle to the first one. The four ends of the rods which now protrude out of the banana trunk are secured to the can by strings and wires. The surface of the can is then covered with coloured crepe paper and decorated with paper ribbons. Sometimes, a label to identify the donors is glued to the side of the can.

For branches midribs of pinnate leaflets of the coconut palm (*kaanmapraaw*; Malay: *lidi*) are used. About fifteen of these are required but the actual number depends on how many banknotes are available. The thinner end of each midrib is discarded leaving a length of 20-40 centimetres. The thicker end is sharpened and left bare. Crepe paper ribbons are attached and a paper or plastic flower is tied to the opposite extremity. The sharpened end pierces the trunk at a slight angle. When all the midribs have been inserted they appear to be growing out of the trunk. Banknotes are then secured to these "branches" by folding the shorter side of each over the midrib and stapling its double

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1 Commonly a container for infant food or chocolate-flavoured drink powder, approximately 25 centimetres high and 18 centimetres in diameter.
thickness so that the greater part of it dangles. When all the notes have been attached the overall result resembles a miniature Christmas tree with a foliage of banknotes.

There are also other ways of making money trees. Instead of a banana trunk, bamboo strips fastened with metal wires are often used for the basic structure. Banknotes are attached in similar manner as above. The most innovative variant appears symbolic of a major occupation in Baan Maalaj. This is a tobacco tree, which is replanted roots and all in a tin can container and decorated with banknotes, artificial flowers and paper ribbons.
APPENDIX B - continued
Second Page of the Batchœn

JUMLAHAN MEMBUAT PAHLA DALAM PERAYAAN
PENBUKAAN PINTU GERBANG DAN PAGAR
DI WAT PHATHUMVIHARN
KAMPUNG BALAI, PERUPOK, BACHOK, KELANTAN, MALAYSIA.
TARIKH 19-22. HB. MEI 1983

Dengan daya usaha pehak berkuasa Wat Phathumviharn telah mem
bina pintu gerbang dan pagar wat itu, pembinaannya telahpun siap dengan
sempurna. Dengan demikian pehak berkuasa bersetuju mengadakan peraya
an membuka pintu gerbang tersebut mengikut adat resam kaum Buddha,
Oleh itu kami menjemput kaum Buddha sekalian datang beramai-ramai mem
buat pahla dalam perayaan tersebut, Harapan kami agar kaum Buddha se
mau dapat datang memberi kerjasama sambil menderma dalam perayaan ini.

ATURCARA PERAYAAN

Hari Khamis 19hb. Mei 1983
Hari permulaan perayaan
Jam 06.09 pagi Pembukaan perayaan
Jam 09.09 pagi Upacara pembukaan pintu gerbang oleh yang Berhor-
mat Ketua Besar sami Negeri Kelantan Ven. Phra Vi-
charanayannuni serta 9 orang sami membaca ayat
ayat suci, doa.

Hari Jumaat 20hb. Mei 1983
Jam 08.00 pagi Ceramah (Thessana) dan bagi peluang untuk semua
kaum Buddha membuat pahla seterusnya

Hari Sabtu 21hb. Mei 1983
Jam 08.00 pagi Caramah (Thessana)
Jam 02.30 ptg. Upacara perarak an benda-benda "Khreang than"
Jam 04.00 ptg. Penyerahan benda-benda "Khreang than" dan cera-
mah (Thessana)

Hari Ahad 22hb. Mei 1983
Jam 10.00 pagi Membuat pahla "Tak Bat" dan tutup perayaan

PEHAK BERKUASA

PHRA:
VEN.PHRA VICHARANAYANAMUNI
VEN.PHRA KHRU VISUDDHISACCAMEDI
VEN.PHRA VIRIYASANGWORN
VEN.PHRA MOKKHONKHANABADI
VEN.PHRA JEAK PAPHAASSARD

Pengurusi Perayaan
Penolong Pengurusi Perayaan
Penolong Setiausaha Perayaan
Penolong Setiausaha Perayaan

TAI KI TION
KOO AH GIAN
NAI DENG NILABUT
KU A WAN

Pengurusi Perayaan
Penolong Pengurusi Perayaan
Penolong Pengurusi Perayaan
Setiausaha Perayaan

AHLI JAWATANKUASA

NAI CHAI CUNKERD
NAI WA BUNYARAK
KOO OR LEONG
NAI DENG PNANTHUSARN
NAI BUT JOTSUWAN

OUI KIM KEE
KU CHENG KIM
LOW AH WANG, DAN
SELURUH KAUM BUDDHA DI KAMPUNG INI.

PERHATIAN:- Ada pertunjukkan dalam perayaan ini.

Di Citek Songtai golok Press
Appendix C

Pig Taboo Among The Malays
And Commensality With The Siamese

Although commensality between the Siamese and the Malays often takes place it is not widespread and is usually limited to special occasions only. The general rule is that while the Siamese are expected to eat at Malay houses, the Malays are not expected to do likewise at Siamese houses.¹ Malay avoidance of eating at Siamese houses is governed by the Islamic prohibition on certain types of food. The prohibition varies in degree from haram (forbidden) to makruh (not recommended; not encouraged). Pig occupies the top of the list in the haram category. The prohibition is so strict that even contact with a pig is ritually defiling, not to mention eating its flesh. Dog is another haram animal and contact with it is equally polluting. Included under the same haram category is the flesh of permitted animals (such as cow, goat and chicken) which are not slaughtered according to Islamic prescription. However, the nature of ritual defilement resulting from such contact is not as serious as that caused by pig or dog. The flesh of animals killed in ways other than that prescribed by Islam cannot be consumed by Malays since it is ritually impure. Forbidden food also includes intoxicating drinks, typically those that contain alcohol.

The taboo on the eating of pork or on being in contact with pig has nothing to do with physical danger associated with diseases transmitted by the animal. However, Golomb (1980:211, note 32) seems to suggest otherwise when he says "Even highly educated Malays may harbor beliefs about physical danger in eating well-cooked pork or foods which have come in contact with lard or pork." In fact, the taboo on pig and its

¹For an interesting discussion on the relevance of pig and pork-eating as a boundary marker between ethnic groups, see also Pillsbury (1976:152).
derivative products is religious, the real danger lies with the 'ritual pollution' resulting from the contact rather than with physical dangers associated with pig parasites. The issue is ritual defilement, hence the phrase *kena babi* (having been in contact with something of *haram* nature -- in this case, pig) comes into common use.

The taboo on pork stretches beyond eating the flesh itself. The same taboo is rigidly applied to containers used for pork which are thereby ritually polluted and should not be used by Malays unless they have undergone a special ritual cleansing. In this procedure, called *samak*, the containers are washed with a solution of water and clay, and then rinsed with clear water. This process is repeated at least seven times. Again, this requirement has nothing to do with the physical cleanliness of these utensils. Even if they have been washed with water and detergent, no matter how many times, the taboo on such utensils remains, unless they undergo the prescribed ritual procedure, which no Siamese or Chinese would bother to perform.

Fear of ritual pollution is the main reason for Malays not eating at Siamese and Chinese houses, even if the food does not contain pork. The main source of this this pollution is the serving containers or the cooking utensils which could have previously been in contact with pork or any of its products, including lard. However, drinks may be consumed by Malays in the same house because it is obvious that the serving vessels are not likely to have been used to contain pork. Despite this some Malays who observe strict commensality rules even avoid drinks, especially tea or coffee, for fear that the hot water could have been boiled in ritually contaminated containers.

For similar reasons Chinese food shops are avoided by Malays unless such places sell only Muslim food. Because of this Chinese coffee shops that offer pork and other *haram* food are required by the authorities to display a prominent notice to the effect that the food served is not fit for Muslim consumption. In towns like Kota Bharu, there are many shops which display these signs, but in smaller towns most Chinese-owned coffee shops rely on Malay clients and hence no pork is served. These shops always employ Malay workers as a guarantee of the ritual purity of the food.
Because of the fear of ritual pollution, Malays attending temple celebrations are not expected to eat at the temple's kitchen. The Malay stereotype of the Chinese and Siamese as pork-eaters who use equally polluted cooking utensils also applies to the temple. However, if there is a need for a Siamese to feed their Malay neighbours or friends for one reason or another, then the host normally makes special arrangements to see that the Muslim taboo on pork is properly observed.

In Baan Maalaj there was a wedding held in 1982. As it is the custom for Siamese to invite Malays to their weddings and vice versa, the father of the bridegroom did so. He invited most of his Malay friends, but being very wary of the pig taboo he chose a special day to feast them, one week prior to the day of the wedding. The Malay guests were entertained and served with food prepared by Malay men and women from the neighbouring villages. All the containers, cooking utensils, serving plates and drinking vessels were borrowed from the host's Malay friends and none of his own utensils was used for the occasion. Hence, the ritual purity of both food and containers was assured.

Most of the invited Malay guests attended this special wedding feast, in which *laksa* (a kind of rice noodles) was served. Before going home the guests also contributed some money (ranging from two to ten dollars) to the host, a customary thing at such occasions. However, what makes this particular case all the more interesting is the fact that the feast for the Malays was organised one week prior to the actual wedding day, when a bigger feast was held. Pork was served as one of the main dishes to the Siamese and Chinese guests. Why was the feast for the Malays held one week prior to the wedding day? Certainly this man was not putting his Malay guests before the Siamese and the Chinese. I suggest one crucial factor was the Malay taboo on pig. Had the feast for the Malays been held after the one for the Siamese, it could turn into a disaster and a clear cause of embarrassment because the majority, if not all, of the invited Malay friends would not go to the function. No self-respecting Malay could eat at a Siamese house when they knew that only a few days before pigs had been slaughtered and consumed there. To the Malays the level of ritual pollution resulting from the pig slaughter would
be too fresh to risk contamination; the house, the compound and most of the the cooking utensils would be still freshly charged with traces of pig pollution (bekas babi). Knowing full well that he was going to slaughter pigs at his son's wedding, the groom's father chose to entertain his Malay guests in advance to avoid any complications.

Malays also associate the culinary preferences of the Chinese and the Siamese with the eating of other animals prohibited by Islam, such as tortoise, iguana, lizard, turtle, squirrel etc. Golomb (1980:77) also mentions that Siamese are known to eat animals that have fallen dead due to accident, or from unexplained circumstances. According to Muslim dietary laws animals whose flesh is permissible to Muslims must first be slaughtered according to religious rites. Otherwise, the same animal, if killed by any other means, will be known as mampus (Malay for 'dead' in the sense of not being ritually slaughtered, such as in the case of being hit and killed by speeding motor vehicles or have fallen into water and drowned). Eating of flesh of mampus animals is forbidden to Muslims whereas there are no such restrictions for the Siamese. Hence many cows and chickens that have died in this manner find their way to the Siamese kitchen. Because of this the Siamese are considered ritually unclean by the Malays.

There is, however, a concession with regard to commensality with some rural Chinese, who, because of their long residence in Malay villages, have dispensed with pork as part of their normal diet. Their eating habits have been so much influenced by the Malays that some have even found pork quite repulsive. These Chinese families usually exchange cooked food with their Malay neighbours as a matter of course. Tan (1982:35) mentions that some rural Chinese occasionally do take pork but this is done with the utmost discretion lest Malays know about it. From my observation this happens only in isolated villages which are exclusively Chinese. Even then the Chinese take great precaution not to exhibit their purchase of pork openly to Malays by hiding it in unsuspicious containers when travelling through Malay villages.

In the village where I grew up, there are a number of Chinese families who have
been there for generations. To the best of our knowledge pork is never part of their regular diet -- at least it is not used in their kitchens. This is common knowledge among the Malay villagers -- because of the proximity of their houses to those of the Malays and because of constant exchange of brief visits between neighbours most housewives know exactly what takes place in one another's kitchens. Exchange of cooked food between these Chinese families and their Malay neighbours takes place regularly. Also there is a constant borrowing between these neighbouring families of items of food that one runs out of momentarily, such as sugar, salt and spices. To the extent that these Chinese families have never been seen to be bringing pork into their kitchens, the Malay fear of ritual pollution from pig has been allayed.
Appendix D

A Tale About Stolen Monk's Bowl

The following story illustrates the local belief shared by both the Siamese and Malays regarding the magical power found in a monk's bowl.1 The belief conforms to the general pattern that the Siamese are noted for their powerful magic because of their access to Buddhist religious objects; a used monk’s bowl (baat) is one.

The Siamese belief is that the bowl is quite harmless if found within the temple compound. Once taken out of the sacred ground it will become fully charged with magical power; if kept under a house the occupants may suffer some strange illness as a result of the bowl’s curse.

In many practices associated with Siamese sorcery and magic, some of the items used include pieces broken off from old and discarded bowls. These metal pieces, known as lek baat (Malay: besi baat), are used to inflict misfortune and illness on intended victims. To do this all that one needs to do is to find the right Siamese specialist who will activate the power found in these lek baat by inscribing on the metal surface an appropriate yantra formula. These pieces are then buried under the house of intended victim. In no time the victim, if not the whole household, will suffer some kind of sickness, mainly hysterical fits and unexplained sorts of ailments. Sometimes pieces of lek baat are turned into projectiles2 and victims will experience blows from invisible flying objects.

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1For a description of the monk's bowl (baat), and the making of it, see Levenberg (1972).
2For the use of magically charged objects as projectiles see Textor (1960:116).
So much awe is placed on the magical power of the bowl that even minute pieces of its metal are enough to cause problems if found outside the temple compound. That is one of the reasons why, according to the villagers, monks do not wash their bowls outside the temple's compound in case minute pieces of the metal would be washed out with the rinse water.

The Siamese also believe that the magical power is something that develops only when the bowls have been actually used by monks. Thus bowls that have not been used by monks may be handled quite safely. No curse falls on anyone who carries an unused bowl or keeps it in the house especially before giving it to monk during merit-making ceremony.

While in Baan Maalaj I heard a tale about a stolen monk's bowl and a Malay. The truth of the story is not really the point here, but the fact that this tale is quite popular among the Siamese is illustrative of the Malay fear of things associated with Buddhist ritual objects.

As the story goes, once upon a time a Malay man asked his Siamese friend to steal a monk's bowl from the temple. At first his request was rejected mainly because the bowl is not only a sacred object but also because of the curse associated with its power. The Malay, however, insisted that he would bear the responsibility should anything happen. As there were so many used and discarded bowls lying around the temple, the Siamese stole one for the sake of his Malay friend.

The Malay first hid the bowl under his house waiting for the right moment to use it for magical purposes. Although nothing unusual happened on the first night, on the second his entire household could not sleep because of strange noises emanating from under the house. No one in the household, apart from the Malay knew about the stolen bowl.

Fearing further disturbances he hid the bowl in a bamboo grove some distance away
from his house. At night the Malay noticed that the grove was ablaze and all sorts of strange noises, giggling and eerie laughter could be heard coming from the same place. Next morning he went to check the grove but there was no sign of any burning despite of what he saw. So he left the bowl alone thinking that it would be all right, but at night the same kind of noise could be heard again, this time even worse.

Fearing discovery from his fellow villagers the Malay went to hide the bowl at a road junction in the village. At night the place became haunted and anyone passing by was disturbed by the strange and eerie noises, causing quite a stir in the village. So the next day the Malay removed the bowl from the junction and quickly asked his Siamese friend to return it to the temple. The morale of the story: the monk’s bowl is not something people can play around with.
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